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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY: A STUDY OF  
DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES POLICY  
IN THE STATE SECTOR.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work  
at Massey University.

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....as long as it is unsafe for two women to stroll arm-in-arm along a sunny daylight beach: as long as there is loathing, fear and disgust and embarrassment, there will never be freedom for any of us. But we will not go away, and we will certainly not lie down and die and be trampled over, not any more. For we demand the right to love and rejoice in that love, with dignity and grace and pride.

We will never go away. Never. Never. Never. For we are your technicians, waitresses, doctors, cashiers, mental workers, teachers, potters, dentist, cabin crew, shop-keepers, lecturers, nurses, bus drivers, secretaries, drain layers, florists, undertakers, telephonists, DJs, paperhangers, carpenters, hairdressers, mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, brothers, sisters, daughters, sons. We are truly everywhere and we will never, ever go away.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku. Transcription of unwritten opening speech, National Lesbian and Gay Conference, Auckland, Easter 1989, " Dykes & Queers: Facts, Fairytales and Fictions " in Mana Wahine Maori ( 1991 ) New Zealand Womens Press Ltd., Auckland.

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S .

No piece of work can be solely attributed to efforts of one person. This study is no exception. There are many people who have contributed in various ways to the final presentation. The lesbian social workers in the Department of Social Welfare are perhaps those who have made the most significant contribution. However, there are members of the lesbian community and personal friends who have also given considerable support. Mary. R., and Kathryn. R., were part of my ethics group and pilot study. They gave energy and attention to the development of the questionnaire and concepts. Thank you also to Mary. N., who gave valuable criticism and support. My supervisors, Celia Briar and Mary Nash have been challenging and provided personal as well as academic guidance.

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Not least in the process have been those who have shared my personal life and endured my absences, both physical and psychological for some considerable periods of time. The sacrifice on their part has not been forgotten. The deaths of my maternal grandmother and both my parents over the past three years are also losses that have been woven into my efforts to complete this study. My life is intrinsically linked to theirs and while they did not have the benefit of a formal education and neither would they have understood the significance of the study, they nevertheless would have recognised the achievement. I thank them for the opportunities, visions, courage and strength of character, they always gave me.

## A B S T R A C T

The purposes of this study are twofold. The first is to look at the experiences of lesbian social workers in order to describe the themes and patterns characteristic of discrimination within the context of their professional and employment status in the state sector. The second is to examine whether the policy of Equal Employment Opportunities for women in the Department Of Social Welfare adequately addresses discrimination against lesbians, and the extent to which the needs of lesbians can be met within the existing framework of the policy.

It has been proposed in this study that discrimination against lesbians in the workplace is a real and tangible source of oppression termed 'heterosexism'. Lesbian social workers' employment experiences indicate that these are qualitatively different from those of heterosexual women. Analysis of these experiences relies upon an understanding of the historical social, sexual and economic dynamic of male power over women. Heterosexuality has been emphasised as the only acceptable sexuality and therefore, an institutionalised form of control over all women's lives. One of the consequences of this control is the denial of the existence of lesbianism. This is because lesbianism represents an independent and alternative lifestyle and family structure. While this threatens the traditional male defined nuclear family relations it also challenges the view that women should be treated as economically dependent upon a man.

There is strong evidence to suggest that gender is a significant determinant of employment opportunities. Thus, there is a clear basis for recognising women as a

target group for special attention under an Equal Employment Opportunities policy. However, this study challenges the assumption that the needs of all women can be adequately addressed within the context of a hetero-relational model. For example, it is argued here that the underlying criteria for access to employment opportunities is based on conformity to traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This reinforces women's economic dependency on a man and a male controlled labour market. The view that women's equality should depend on their social, sexual and economic relations with men is therefore questioned. In contrast it is argued that lesbians should be able to benefit from their social, sexual and economic independence from a man and that any measure of their employment position in relation to men is a measure for all women. The radical potential for Equal Employment Opportunities policy for all women may well depend upon the inclusion of lesbians and their legal protection from discrimination.

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N .

This study seeks to provide a radical feminist interpretation of one aspect of women's inequality. It focuses on the institutionalisation of heterosexuality and hetero-relations which underlie the state's policy on Equal Employment Opportunities ( E E O ), for women. The research explores the workplace experiences of lesbians, as women who do not conform to traditional sex and sexual roles. The occupational and employment context of the research is social work within the Department of Social Welfare ( D S W ).

As part of the state sector the D S W is required by law under the State Sector Act 1989 to implement an E E O policy which includes an affirmative action programme for women. It therefore provides an ideal opportunity for identifying some of the issues raised as a concern for equal treatment for lesbians. At the same time the Department's services in the distribution of welfare benefits and income support, and in particular its statutory responsibility for social services in the care and protection of children, youth justice, and the allocation of funding to community based services, reflect the political, social and economic priorities of the state. According to feminist analysis these services have all been applied within the hetero-relational context of women's traditional role and therefore highlight some of the different forms of treatment lesbians might be expected to experience.

In broad terms the aim of an E E O policy is to address the arbitrary and biased perceptions towards women that have been traditionally applied in the workplace. This includes sexist and sex role stereotypes along with practices such as sexual harassment. As part of affirmative action for women the main focus is to mediate between the needs of the workplace and the responsibilities many women have for children and domestic duties within the nuclear family household. E E O provisions have included child care facilities, the flexibility of the eight hour working day, and the creation of part time and job share positions. There has also been a re-definition of the merit criteria so that some of the experiences women have gained doing voluntary community work while they have also cared for children and a home go some way towards their skills.

While some lesbians have similar responsibilities for children to heterosexual women's, the concerns which underlie E E O are presented predominantly as concerns which reflect women's traditional and stereotyped roles as mothers, wives and housewives. The underlying assumption is that all women have a commitment to these maintaining these roles and more implicitly, that they have a commitment to the standard model of the family which involves their emotional, sexual bonding with men and with their economic dependency upon a man.

I have argued that the justification for E E O policy generally, and the assumptions which have guided its practical implementation, have effectively defined and confined the goal of equality of opportunity for women according to their social, emotional, economic and sexual relations with men. As a outcome of this, women's position in paid employment exemplifies what has been termed the institutionalisation of hetero-relations.

(Raymond,1986) Thus, lesbians as women who fall outside the categories that are assigned to their 'sex' are neither protected against discrimination in the work place, nor adequately catered for within a programme which attempts to compensate women for lost opportunities.

The exclusion of lesbians from equal opportunities has particular implications for all women because it ties the benefits and privileges that are received according to whether they conform to the traditional heterosexist roles and stereotypes. It also ensures that lesbians do not benefit by their independent economic, social and sexual status from a man. Although women are seen to be rewarded for conforming to the heterosexual gender roles and stereotypes it can be shown that the benefits and privileges they gain by this have not been seen to constitute any real form of power. For example, privileges may be little more than 'short term 'bribes in exchange for 'self discovery and collective power'.  
( Bunch, 1979:26 )

" The degree to which you receive those benefits depends on race, sex, class and how much you are prepared to play by [ men's ] rules. Through heterosexual privilege a woman is given a stake in behaving properly ( or in the case of a lesbian of pretending to behave properly ) and thus maintaining the system that perpetuates her own oppression." ( Bunch, 1979:26 )

The provisions under E E O policy might well be argued as giving women a 'stake' in upholding the traditional social sexual roles of women. It allows them to maintain their primary responsibilities for home and family while at the same time they are able to

participate in the workforce as 'working mothers'. This definition of the working woman has been significant as an ideology which protects the image of women as economically dependent upon a man. ( Eisenstein, 1981 :212 ) Even though job share positions give women equal access to fringe benefits and employment protection there is also the tendency for less than full time employment to confine the female workforce to lower paid and status work. ( Briar, 1986:388-9 )

The analysis of this study attempts to conceptually link the control over women's sexuality with control over economically productive resources such as paid employment and opportunities.

#### Outline Of Chapters.

Chapter one briefly outlines the development of equal employment opportunities in the state sector and covers the research and background to the implementation of the policy within the D S W. The provisions of the policy in relation to women have then been set out including the extent to which lesbians have been accommodated within the programme.

The limitations of the policy have been identified in order to justify the research proposals set out in this chapter. These have been prefaced with some of the concerns established indicating discrimination against lesbians is a problem within paid employment.

Chapter two establishes the context within which the research itself has taken place. This has included examining some of the historical and current concerns

raised about social work and its interpretations and definition of women's social, sexual and economic role. Because social work is directly implicated in the implementation of state policies towards women, feminists have been critical of its function of control. For example, it has been argued that the state's priorities have not always been in the interests of women's psycho-social and economic independence. Instead the status of women has tended to be affirmed only when it can be measured against conformity to female stereotypes, role models, and their position as dependents within traditional, male defined, nuclear family structures. ( Pascall, 1986., Tennant, 1986., Dale & Foster, 1986., Saville-Smith, 1987., Walby, 1990. )

Chapter two also examines some of the research and literature on lesbians in social work and in employment. Although these have tended to refer to experiences in countries such as Britain and the U S A there are similarities with Aotearoa in that neither of these countries has legal protection for lesbians. In addition it is clear that there are problems of discrimination encountered by lesbians within the social work. The points raised include the lack of recognition and support within the profession for lesbians; the lack of attention paid to the needs of lesbian clients; the low profile of lesbians in social work; limited research and education, and the impact of negative social attitudes.

Across a wider range of employment experiences both anecdotal evidence in lesbian and gay literature and research studies have established that there are some patterns of discrimination. Furthermore, there is a reasonable basis for accepting that discrimination against lesbians is more widespread than previous research has indicated. ( Levine & Leonard, 1984 ) An

indicator which has relevance to this research, has shown that lesbians employed in occupations involving personal services with socially vulnerable groups of people such as children and youth may be at greater risk of discrimination because of the prejudice and fear that lesbians are morally and sexually dangerous people. ( Egerton et al., 1987 )

Chapter three outlines some of the theoretical concerns which make the link between sexuality and economics a possibility. For the purposes of this research discussion has been biased towards a social constructionist account of women's oppression. From a radical feminist perspective this has been a useful analytic tool because of its ability to account for the personal and political realities of lesbian experience without subsuming it to heterosexual, or biological explanations. Nevertheless the theoretical conclusions have been tentatively drawn. This is because there are many contradictions at this point which may not be entirely resolved.

The argument for equal opportunities for lesbian and the use of radical feminist interpretations present one contradiction. The former reinforces individualism and the split between the public and private spheres and is difficult to extricate from its liberalist tendencies. In contrast radical feminism treats lesbianism as a social and political construct and seeks to extricate lesbianism from the realms of liberalism by providing political re-interpretations and constructions of lesbian experiences. ( Kitzinger, 1987 ) Accordingly, some radical feminists have tended to reject liberalist and reformist policies as goals for social change because they do not challenge the structural basis of power

between men and women. ( MacKinnon, 1983 ) A more pragmatic approach and one that might suggest there is some ground for conciliation, has relied on the view that the limitations of liberalist policies in themselves provide the potential basis for radical social change. ( Eisenstein, 1981 ) Of equal consideration is the argument that women need to make a distinction between reformism and reform wherein the latter should not necessarily be seen as an end in itself, but one step towards achieving the goal of equality. ( Bunch, 1987. )

Chapter three proposes several definitions. While historically, lesbianism has comprised different meanings at different periods of time it has been argued by some feminists that there is a connection between all forms of female bonding regardless of the contemporary labels. ( Rich, 1981 ) What makes lesbianism significant today is its resistance to compulsory heterosexuality. Furthermore, it has also been recognised as being more than a role relationship, or merely an expression of sexual activity. It is strongly emphasised as an identity linked to a sense of community, history and culture. Even so, our understanding of lesbian community and culture may not yet be inclusive. For example, while it has been refuted that lesbianism is confined to a modern and Pakeha development, contemporary communities and cultural activities have tended to represent the lifestyle of only some lesbians.

The definition of heterosexism and the concept of lesbianism as a culture of resistance has been linked with two historical themes. One has been women's increasing economic independence and the other has been the existence of women who have formed bonds with other women and live what is now termed a lesbian lifestyle. Feminism has had some considerable influence over the

increasing possibilities of both economic and sexual autonomy. At the same time women have been subject to theories of female sexuality and encouraged to become sexually liberated only insofar as their relationships are conducted with men. Thus, historically there has been some effort to divert the course of liberation by conscripting women into heterosexuality and subjecting lesbianism to medical and legal controls in attempts to repress it. This is portrayed in the way that heterosexuality has become the basis for the legal rights, rewards and benefits accrued by women. In particular heterosexual marriage and its de facto equivalent has become the site of 'privilege'. It is a means by which control is maintained over access to resources, life chances and opportunities and therefore provides an understanding of how heterosexism operates as a form of oppression for lesbians. Heterosexism also establishes a conceptual link between other forms of oppression for women such as class, race, age and ability.

Chapter four examines the empirical evidence of women's employment status and further discusses the imperatives behind the state and labour market control over economic resources. It is argued in this chapter that the imperative behind this control has been to reinforce and maintain institutionalised hetero-relations and the male dominated, nuclear family along with women's economic dependency. The discussion identifies the impact this has had on Maori women. For example, their traditional status and role has been undermined by what is regarded as a clear direction on the part of the state to ensure a racially specific family form has superseded collective responsibility. This has overturned the social and economic relations between Maori men and Maori women.

As a further consequence Maori women have been denied aspects of their own culture which gave examples of independent and strong women and the honoured practice of loving one's own gender. These have almost been lost in the male translations of history and white colonisation. ( Te Awekotuku, 1984, 1991 )

Chapter four also examines the possibility that the position of women in paid employment has been constructed on the basis of their already socially devalued role. In addition it is argued that this role is a sexualised one which has become the basis of exchange for employment opportunities. For example, there is evidence to show that the criteria for skills are saturated with a sex bias against women. Their qualifications for employment also rely upon conformity to male standards of femininity, beauty, sexual attractiveness and heterosexuality. The heterosexual requirement for women has been clearly portrayed by the practice of sexual harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, standards of beauty in themselves have become what is termed a legitimate, or 'bona fide job qualification' which makes sexuality exempt from discrimination. Wolf, ( 1990 ) has termed this the 'Professional Beauty Qualification' which provides the exception to the rule of E E O and is widely institutionalised as a condition of women's hiring and promotion.

In chapter five the methodology for this research focuses on some of the priorities of feminist research. In particular it highlights the concerns raised by lesbian and gay male researchers. Some of the criticisms levelled at previous research on lesbians have included the tendency to assign lesbians to categories reflective of hetero-relations, or alternatively as co-categories alongside gay males. One of the criticisms levelled at

feminist research by lesbians has concerned the analytical separation of sex roles and the sexual division from the institution of heterosexuality. ( Ferguson et al., 1982 ) There have been claims made that early research has been limited by the heterosexist debate on women. These limits are defined as marriage, family, heterosexist sex roles, and masculine / feminine divisions of labour. ( Cavin 1985:176 ) It is clear that a heterosexist bias has affected previous research on lesbians at all levels. It has influenced the types of questions being asked, the methods being used and the interpretations and findings. As a consequence lesbian experiences were not entirely extricated from the pathological models of earlier explanations. Even at its best research has tended to concentrate on comparing lesbians with heterosexual women with the intention of dispelling the notion that lesbians were less well adjusted than heterosexual women. Lesbian researchers have suggested that methods of 'scientific inquiry' and objective measures should be discarded in favour of including the personal experiences of lesbians as a valid criteria for data. ( Sang, 1978:84 )

Feminist researchers generally, have argued for the same methodological approach on all women and it is significant that the radical feminist priorities have been justified as a basis for rejecting orthodox and traditional research methods. The personal experiences of lesbians and their political interpretations have thus formed the basic methodological tool for this research.

Chapters, six, seven and eight all deal with the presentation of the data of the research. Essentially these three chapters allow the experiences of lesbian social workers to be expressed in their own words. Some of the interpretations of these experiences have been

prefaced, or extended by the use of secondary sources of data in order to highlight characteristic patterns and themes of discrimination against lesbians.

Chapter six describes workplace dynamics and their impact on lesbians. It describes both the potential for and actual discrimination as effective forms of control over the visibility of lesbians. This chapter also highlights the compensatory strategies lesbians use in order to avoid discrimination. Forms of discrimination such as harassment and ostracisation and the daily survival in a predominantly heterosexist work environment are discussed in terms of the stressful impact they have on the working lives of lesbians. Notwithstanding the effect of these dynamics, most lesbians brought a special perspective to their jobs which enhanced their role as social workers.

Chapter seven describes the way in which non-institutional policies have been used to allow harassment, hostility and other unofficial actions to be taken by supervisors, managers, co-workers, clients and other professionals outside the Department. For instance, lesbians have not enjoyed the same freedom to socialise with co-workers at work based functions or through contacts outside the usual work hours, or to develop intimate relationships through their workplace associations. Their interactions with their co-workers, supervisors and managers have been characterised by negative reactions towards them as lesbians ranging from indifference to overt hostility. The development of lesbian networks is also impeded by various mechanisms which operated in the workplace and there were clear indications that differences between lesbians themselves served as a function of the 'divide and rule' strategy that could so easily become a focus for heterosexual

managers and co-workers for denying the validity of lesbian networks within the workplace.

This chapter highlights the concerns lesbian social workers have had in their contact with young female clients; their work with sexually abused children; their involvements in reports to the courts on custody disputes, and their roles in the development of E E O for women. On the basis of these experiences it has been possible to identify whether lesbian social workers were subject to detrimental conditions of employment.

Chapter eight examines ways in which formalised procedures often deny lesbian social workers access to employment opportunities such as being hired and promotion, complaints procedures, professional guidance and supervision, and other workplace rewards and benefits. At this level the use of direct forms of discrimination such as anti-lesbian attitudes have shown that there are limitations on employment opportunities for lesbians. In other instances such as access to leave provisions and other entitlements it has been possible to identify the heterosexism inherent within seemingly neutral workplace policies.

The final chapter shows that the research itself has had a role in raising the consciousness and awareness of lesbians to the various aspects of discrimination. As a consequence there has been the suggestion that this research could be used as a tool for workplace education and as a basis for developing policy on lesbians and E E O. These conclusions have been used to argue that lesbians are not afforded the same terms of employment as

their heterosexual counterparts and that they are subject to detrimental conditions of work because of their sexual identity status. Recommendations for change have been proposed with the view to including lesbians as a 'target' group with the Department's E E O policy. While this research itself has provided a basis for arguing that changes are necessary, the impetus may well need to come from women and in particular, lesbians themselves. Their initiatives could include strengthening networks and resources both within and out-side the D S W.

## C H A P T E R   O N E .

**EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE.**

" Affirmative action goes beyond equal opportunity programmes. Equal opportunity programmes seek to neutralize discriminatory practices, to ensure equal treatment. But equal opportunity cannot be achieved until there is some distinct redress of past discrimination." ( H R C. 1987:18 )

Introduction.

This chapter briefly discusses the development of E E O within the state sector. Specifically, it focuses on the research within the Department of Social Welfare and the provisions relating to women under the E E O management plan. Discrimination against lesbians has not been seriously addressed and neither have they been identified as a 'target' group for affirmative action under the policy.

This research does not intend to discredit the Department. However, it does provide an opportunity to explore the effectiveness of its E E O policy. Furthermore, the state's example, in promoting Equal Employment Opportunities might be an important measure of

workplace conditions for women in the public sector, and sets an example to private sector employers.

This chapter also sets out the aims and objectives of this research. These have been based on a set of propositions which have been formulated as a justification for recognising the special needs of lesbians in the workplace.

#### The State Sector And Equal Employment Opportunities.

The demand for Equal Employment Opportunities ( E E O ) policy has developed out of the inadequacies of equal pay legislation and as a corollary to anti-discrimination laws for women. Its development as a formalised policy for women within the state sector began under the auspices of the State Services Commission in mid 1984. ( D S W , 1986 ) At this time the state's apparent commitment to addressing the position of women in employment was also in part a commitment to women in all spheres of public life. For example, the establishment of a government portfolio on women and a Ministry of Women's Affairs extended and formalised the state's activities in a manner that it had not done so previously.

The current legislative requirement under the State Sector Act 1988., for all state departments to implement an equal employment opportunities programme, including affirmative action for women, has been an expedient response on the part of the state. It reflects a culmination of social, economic and historical factors, rather than a substantial commitment towards equality of opportunity and outcomes for women. It might also be fair to claim that the state's current commitment to

E E O policy could at best be described as fragile. Although the provisions within the State Sector Act ( 1988 ) requiring state departments to implement E E O and affirmative action have so far remained intact, the state has rescinded some of its commitment to women and more particularly those in the private sector. This has been evidenced by the repeal of the Employment Equity Act., 1990, which included measures for redressing pay discrepancies.

The Employment Equity Act., 1990, was introduced for such a brief time that it did not have the chance to become operational. The equal pay provisions and the introduction of gender neutral job evaluations had the potential to redress the current imbalance. For example, the legislation included a basis for a conceptual framework which had the ability to measure aspects of women's work traditionally ignored by management bias. The repeal of this law has coincided with dramatic changes in the economic policies of the state and there have been dramatic moves into a 'free' market economy and a reduction in the role of the state as a provider of welfare. Employment protection has also been eroded by the repeal of the Labour Relations Act., 1987. This has been replaced by the Employment Contracts Act., 1991, and now essentially leaves women's employment even more vulnerable than previously. With high unemployment, restricted access to unemployment benefits, and the power of employers to determine workplace conditions on the basis of individual contracts, it is not difficult to foresee that women who do not conform to the requirements of male employers will lose their jobs.

The Department Of Social Welfare.

As part of the state sector the Department of Social Welfare is an organisation within which the policy of E E O is apparently operating. It is the third largest state employer of women. Despite the fact that there are larger numbers of women than men employed in D S W, women occupy, on average, lower status positions and typical 'female typed' jobs within the occupational hierarchy. ( D S W , 1986 )

The Department's initial role in the development of E E O involved an analysis of the representation of women within occupational classes. It verified that although women formed the majority of the staff ( 70 % ) they were under-represented in middle management and in positions of seniority. ( D S W, 1986 ) Two research projects were conducted. The first in 1985 was aimed at identifying obstacles and establishing priorities for affirmative action. ( D S W, 1986 ) The second was a comprehensive study on the career patterns and aspirations of men and women staff. ( Burns, et al., 1987 ) Concurrent with this a special working party was set up to address complaints of sexism. ( D S W, 1987 ) As an outcome of these research projects the Department concentrated on addressing the lower average ranking and vertical segregation of women in the workplace. Women were said to be restricted in opportunity because of unequal treatment in the areas of training and promotion. In addition the career ambitions of women were said to be strong, but constrained by their domestic responsibilities. ( Burns et al., 1987 )

The research findings also briefly referred to discrimination against lesbians. ( D S W, 1986, 1987,

Burns et al., 1987 ) For example, it was claimed they had been subject to hostility and derision from their colleagues, labelled 'radicals', and not listened to. Other incidents included sexual harassment and lesbians being forced out of their jobs. ( D S W , 1987 ) The observations of one Departmental woman employee identified sexist and anti-lesbian attitudes of male co-workers as the problem.

" Staff being subtly and overtly put down because of their sexuality. The more vociferous you are about your stand on sexist / sexual issues, the more you come under attack from male staff members. [ There is ] the lack of recognition by male staff members of [ women's ] issues. They don't want their position undermined so they lower your self esteem. A women's meeting [ that ] was organised was picketed by male staff members. " ( D S W , 1987:194 )

Because of their experiences lesbians have claimed there is a need for educational programmes to promote their visibility in the workplace and for their involvement in policy and decision making processes. ( D S W , 1986 )

In 1986 the Department put forward its first management plan for E E O policy. In principle it stated the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination including those on the grounds of 'sexual preference'. This did not include lesbians as a 'target group' under the affirmative action provisions. Thus, there was no recognition of whether workplace policies favoured heterosexual women and operated as barriers to opportunities for lesbians. This has remained the case. There has also been no evidence of educational

programmes, or the formal inclusion of lesbians in policy and decision-making processes.

Although the parameters of the Department's policy on equal employment opportunities for women are consistent with the requirements set out under the State Sector Act., 1988, there have been no restrictions imposed on employers as to which groups might be included in the policy. It is therefore, open to the possibility for lesbians to be formally recognised as a 'target group'. However, the legislation specifically refers to the need for the policy to recognise cultural differences and the aims and aspirations of Maori and other ethnic, or *minority groups*. Special attention also must be made to the employment requirements of Maori, women and persons with disabilities, or *minority groups* who are targeted as groups within an affirmative action programme. ( State Sector Act 1988, Sections 56 & 58 )

The broader parameters of the law state that the Department as a 'good employer' must operate a personnel policy containing provisions generally accepted as necessary for the fair and proper treatment of *all employees in all aspects* of their employment. The employer is obliged to provide a safe working environment free from hostility and harassment and impartial and fair procedures in the recruitment and promotion of suitably qualified persons for employment. E E O is defined as a programme aimed at the identification and elimination of all aspects of policies, procedures, and other institutional barriers that cause, or tend to cause, or perpetuate, inequality in respect to the employment of *any persons or group of persons*. ( Section 58 (3) State Sector Act 1988.)

### The Policy.

Equal Employment Opportunities policy portrays a three dimensional approach to the problem of women's employment position. At its basis it is concerned with increasing equal access by identifying and eliminating workplace barriers which restrict opportunity. One of the ways in which this has occurred is by re-definition of the 'merit principle'. The second and positive aspect of the policy 'targets' women for affirmative action. This involves some means of redress for past discrimination. On this basis it is concerned with outcomes. The policy is also a corollary to anti discrimination law which adheres to the notion of 'fair treatment' for women which in turn is based on equal access, opportunity and the merit principle.

The D S W programme has gone some way to eliminating barriers and workplace policies which in the past, have tended to restrict women's access to opportunities. For example women who have dependent children are able to take job share, or part time positions. There is also the provision for research on child care needs and for the development of work, or community based facilities. In order to address the problem of women's lower average ranking, management training has been implemented along with the opportunity for women to act in supervisory positions. This is the closest the policy comes to a 'fast tracking' system by way of compensating women for past discrimination. For example, a more obvious method would need to rely on quota systems such as in the United States where women have been fast tracked into top management positions.

A modification of the merit criteria for appointments at the levels of recruitment and promotion the policy has gone some way to recognising the activities women have typically been involved in. These have included activities such as child care, voluntary community work and informal qualifications as legitimate skills and experience. These are also taken into account when assessing starting salaries.

Sexist attitudes, stereotypes and harassment have all been addressed through the distribution of educational programmes such as videos, posters and pamphlets. Sex biases have been removed from job descriptions and interview panels have to include women. Personal grievance procedures have been clearly outlined for dealing with complaints as an option to the procedures under the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977.

The policy ostensibly encourages the development of women's communication networks and has provision for regular meetings. In addition to this women, as a target group, have had special representation under E E O. The monitoring process has incorporated what is termed the 'results orientated approach'. This means that a statistical data base on women and their position must be maintained in order to assess the effectiveness of the programme. This includes collating information on the numbers of women who apply for positions, the numbers selected for interviews and the numbers appointed to positions.

The responsibility for the implementation of the policy has been designated at various levels of management from the executive management group consisting of the chief executive, Head Office personnel and the E E O unit, to regional and district office management

levels. In addition to this women, as a target group, have had special representation under E E O with a position designated within the Head Office E E O unit.

The effectiveness of the policy's implementation has been questioned by the Public Service Association ( P S A ). Several areas of concern have been identified which have now become crucial under the current restructuring of the Department into separate business units. For example, the levels of resourcing allocated, the need for ongoing maintenance of a separate statistical data base, the effectiveness of training for managers, the need for the establishment of locally based E E O monitoring committees, and the conflict between E E O and human resource / personnel policies, are all indications of how the policy can, and may have been undermined. ( P S A, Bulletin., August, 1991 ) The proposals for the near future involve the dismantling of the Head Office E E O unit with the establishment of a national E E O monitoring committee. The committee will have responsibility each year for advising on the goals and objectives to be incorporated into the new E E O programme and to advise on the network perceptions on progress and on problems and issues that have national application. ( P S A, Bulletin, September, 1991 )

Insofar as the policy recognises discrimination against lesbians, it has claimed in principle, to ensure the provision of a safe work environment free of discriminatory practices based on 'sexual preference '. There has been no suggestion that this should include educational programmes, or publicity on the practices that are deemed discriminatory. The requirement for dealing with discrimination against lesbians has involved the establishment of procedures for dealing with

complaints of discrimination under the personal grievance guide-lines. Essentially this means that lesbians must rely upon union delegates who may be inadequately informed and ill equipped to handle complaints of this nature.

Indications that the policy has not regarded discrimination against lesbians as a serious problem can be shown by the limited responsibility assigned to managers. Their awareness and competency in the implementation of E E O has been confined to 'one-off' training programmes. Within this they have been expected to only verbally demonstrate their understanding of discrimination against lesbians ( and gay men ). There have been no guide-lines to operationalise this understanding.

The E E O unit has been assigned responsibility for identifying 'doubly' disadvantaged groups within the Department. Thus, there is the potential for lesbians to be recognised as a 'special' group under the category of women. For example, Maori women have been targeted as 'doubly' disadvantaged '. This has indicated there is the need to address differing tensions and priorities for equal opportunities amongst women. Nowhere is the evidence greater than that which shows the position of Maori women in paid employment and their greater chances than Pakeha women of being beneficiaries of the welfare system. ( Horsfield & Evans, 1988 and Department Of Statistics & Ministry Of Woman's Affairs, 1990 ) The recognition of racism and its impact on opportunities belies the claim that gender is a sole, or primary determining factor of discrimination. The lack of research on lesbians in employment has meant that it has not been easy to identify the link between sex

and sexual identity status as a factor determining the employment opportunities for lesbians.

#### The Research On Lesbian Social Workers.

A reason why there is a lack of research on lesbians in employment, ( or on lesbians anywhere ), is because of the potential for discrimination. There has probably been a reluctance on the part of lesbian researchers to undertake work that might be discredited, or jeopardise their own employment. Lesbians themselves are also likely to be hesitant to participate in research because the public disclosure of their personal experiences often makes them objects of heterosexual voyeurism. Because of this there is a degree of mistrust that has developed from what Ferguson et al., ( 1982:164 ) have described as the consequence of the 'all too often' infiltration and exploitation of the lesbian community by heterosexuals.

Lesbians have only recently been acknowledged as employees in the D S W. Within the social work profession itself there has been little recognition of their presence. As a lesbian and a social worker I have found the lack of acceptance of lesbians amongst my own professional group an inconsistency in an occupation which professes to administer social justice. As other studies have suggested, lesbians are employed within a wide range of occupations and their involvement in social work has been no exception. As long as lesbians remain invisible social work will lag somewhat behind other professional groups in Aotearoa / New Zealand. For example, there have been lesbians and gay groups formed within the professions of medicine, teaching, the law, and psychology, to name a few. Some of the members of

these professions have already begun to take a public profile in speaking out on issues related to lesbian and gay needs. Some have also identified services specifically aimed at addressing the needs of lesbian and gay clients. These pre-conditions have been motivating factors towards my interest in undertaking this research.

The main focus of this study concerns equal employment opportunities for lesbians. In plain language what the research seeks to address is whether lesbians get a fair deal under E E O policy for women. For the purposes of the study the D S W has been defined as a workplace which provides a link between social work as an occupation that is apparently concerned with issues of social justice and as part of the state sector it is set apart from private sector employment because of the legal requirement to implement an E E O policy.

Although there is considerable justification for the feminist view that sex and gender are primary determinants of equal employment opportunities for women, ( Egerton et al., 1987 ), I have expected that the experiences of lesbians within paid employment will be qualitatively different to those of heterosexual women. There are three inter-related reasons for this. All, or any of the reasons separates the workplace concerns of lesbians from those of heterosexual women. ( Schneider, 1984 )

The first one is that lesbians are likely to be denied employment opportunities because of prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes in the workplace. Associated with this prejudice they are also likely to be subject to particular forms of harassment and hostility because of myths and stereotypes which portray them as morally and sexually 'suspect' and 'dangerous' women. As Raymond

( 1986 ) has explained the real basis for this hostility is because lesbians are not in the control of a man. Despite the fact that lesbians do not tend to adhere to traditional sex roles and stereotypes their participation in paid employment has been made invisible by their experience of occupational and hierarchical segregation alongside their heterosexual counterparts into traditional sex stereotyped paid work. The trap is that the closer they are involved in caring female roles the more it appears they are at risk of being seen as threatening, or 'morally contaminating'.

The second reason why the experiences of lesbians could be expected to be different to those of heterosexual women is because access to workplace rewards and benefits is dependent upon conformity to traditional sex roles and stereotypes and therefore a model of hetero-relations. ( Egerton et al., 1987 )

The third reason relates to the lack of legal protection for lesbians against discrimination in employment and in the use of other services under the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977. Thus, lesbians are not formally recognised as a group who may seek redress for discrimination. Despite the fact that some redress may be negotiated under a collective agreement and the terms and conditions of employment, lesbians as a group have even less bargaining power than their heterosexual counterparts. Both the voluntary status of union membership and the male domination of unions and bargaining agencies are factors which restrict organisation around lesbian issues. For example, it is not likely that unionisation will be promoted by seemingly 'unpopular', or marginal causes. This effectively controls workplace visibility of lesbians and is likely to ensure that they endure

workplace conditions and the lack of opportunities as a 'fact' of their 'inferiorised' employment status. This is bound to have an effect on the strategies they use to survive the workplace, their relationships with co-workers, supervisors and bosses, and the psychological impact on their personal and working lives.

I have relied upon the accounts of twenty three lesbians who were employed as social workers within the D S W. As descriptive value these accounts form the very basis of the research wherein I have argued that the following propositions may be valid and may therefore justify the inclusion of lesbians as a category within the E E O affirmative action policy.

1. That lesbians are subject to discrimination on the grounds of being refused, or not offered the same terms of employment, or conditions of work that are made available to other employees.<sup>1</sup>
2. That lesbians are subject to detriment in circumstances in which other employees in the

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1. As an interpretation of discrimination I have referred to the legal definition set out under the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977. This definition is relevant to the Department's employer / employee agreement which currently forms the basis of the contract negotiated by the Public Service Association who have acted as the employee's bargaining agent. At the time the Department formulated the E E O policy, the State Sector Act., 1988, made all state department's subject to the conditions of employment under the ( then ) Labour Relations Act., 1987. This has now been repealed and replaced with the Employment Contract Act., 1991. However, the definition of discrimination has remained the same.

D S W are not.

3. That the E E O policy favours women on the basis of heterosexuality and thus reflects the institutionalisation of hetero-relations as a form of social sexual control over all women.

In summary the objectives of the research are to firstly examine the assumptions upon which E E O is predicated and the extent to which it addresses discrimination against lesbians and affords them equality of opportunity on the same, or similar terms as heterosexual women. Secondly, it describes the experiences of discrimination against lesbians in the workplace with the view to making those experiences valid as a basis for further research and in depth study, and to promote legal and employment rights for lesbians.

#### Conclusions.

The fact that research within the Department has established both the existence of lesbians as employees and made some acknowledgement of discrimination towards them would indicate there is at least a superficial commitment to ensuring that lesbians are not subject to detrimental conditions of employment. This in itself has provided a starting point for the research. Both the employment position of lesbian social workers and their experiences of discrimination described in chapters six, seven and eight have provided some measure of the effectiveness of the policy.

The following chapter shows that social work as a developing profession and occupational class within the

D S W, may not be unique in its historical and social characteristics as a 'female typed' job. However, it does portray the personal and professional contradictions and dilemmas for lesbians who carry out a role which involves elements of social control over women's lives. At the same time it is a role that professes to be concerned with causes and social justice. The following discussion focuses on some of the issues raised for lesbians in social work. These have placed discrimination in an historical, social and political context.

## C H A P T E R   T W O.

**SOCIAL WORK OR SOCIAL CONTROL ? ACCOUNTING FOR LESBIANS  
IN RESEARCH AND EMPLOYMENT.**

" What ever is felt upon the page being specifically named there, --- that, one might say is created, it is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named." ( Willa Cather, 1922., cited in O'Brien., 1984. )

Introduction.

This chapter focuses on the concerns underlying social work as a context for social change for women. According to a feminist critique there have been historical, economic, social and cultural implications in its development as a statutory role and as a welfare service. These have highlighted the hetero-relational model of social, sexual and economic relations between men and women. As a consequence statutory social work has been tied to the priorities of the state in serving the interests of a male dominated society.

As an occupational category social work has traditionally been designated as a 'female typed' work activity. Although this has not meant that men are not employed as social workers, observation shows that the tasks carried out have been differentiated and remained almost fixed according to stereotyped sex roles. Thus women are more likely to be involved in the care and protection of children while men are likely to be involved in the area of youth justice and youth offending. Furthermore, the occupational segregation of women within the social work hierarchy reflects the common pattern of women's lower position within employment.

Some of the issues raised in this chapter indicate that the presence of lesbians within social work presents a contradiction in terms of the traditional views that are still upheld about women. As independent women, lesbians challenge the ideas we have about the self sacrificing, feminine stereotype. The role of social work itself has been built on altruistic values and a dedication to serving others seen as 'less fortunate. These are values closely associated with the social role of women in our society. Lesbians are not regarded as good female role models.

The extent to which lesbian social workers may experience discrimination compared with those employed in other occupational fields has not been clearly established. Research more generally on lesbians in employment has also been limited and mainly confined to overseas studies. However, findings to date have shown that employment opportunities are likely to be affected by forms of discrimination which single lesbians out against their heterosexual counterparts. There is also some suggestion that they are vulnerable to

discrimination when they are involved in occupations and services which continue to uphold the traditional views on women's social and economically dependent role.

Social Work: A Feminist Critique.

Social workers as an occupational class portray features which apparently separate them from other occupational groups within the D S W. Their links with a professional body <sup>2</sup> outside of the employing agency potentially subject them to influences and directions of a wider social and political concern than other employees within the D S W, as a group, may have an interest in. Associated with this professional link there are philosophical and ethical concerns directed towards the interests of minority groups which underlie social work practice. Social work educators in Aotearoa / New Zealand have been clear about the political directions and concerns of the profession.

" Social work is concerned with individual and social well-being and it is distinguished by its focus on the interactional field between humanity and the social environment. Social justice is the underlying precept which determines the nature and purpose of social work practice." ( Shirley, 1981 )

" [ Social justice ] is expressed in terms of equality of opportunity, equality of treatment and equality of results. " ( Shirley, 1981 )

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2. The New Zealand Association Of Social Work.

These ideological concerns have been translated into a practice which ideally uphold a belief in the uniqueness of individuals and the right of 'self actualisation' and 'empowerment'. ( Shirley, 1981 )

As meaningful as social work values may be to individual social workers and educators, the interpretation of social problems has often proved to be detrimental to the interests and welfare of the clients it has predominantly served. On close scrutiny it can be found that social work itself has difficulties applying its own philosophy and ethics in relation to women. For example, feminist critics of the statutory social work role have been thorough in their analysis and have claimed that it has reinforced women's subordination, rather than empowered them. ( Brook & Davis, 1985; Hanmer & Statham, 1988; Dominelli & McCleod, 1989. ) The justification for this claim has relied on uncovering the historical perceptions of women as the problem and the part social workers have played in assisting them to fulfil their socially ascribed roles as dependent wives and mothers more effectively. This approach has been challenged with the view to re-defining the site of the problem. It has now been demonstrated that is it the male construction of social relations, and women's economic position that need to be addressed, not the individual women themselves. ( Dominelli & McCleod, 1989:24 )

Hanmer and Statham ( 1988:15-23 ) have pointed out that it is difficult to take women into account when there is no statutory responsibility towards them in the same way that there is towards children. This has often limited the kinds of decisions that can be made in women's interests and allowed prejudices and assumptions to frequently go unchallenged. These authors have also stated that even when it is evident to women social

workers they do not meet their women clients as equals they are likely to find this difficult to resolve. In part, this is because social work has not provided a clear analysis of its role in relation to women and it is easy for the commonalities between women as social workers and women as clients to get lost. At the same time differences have tended to be viewed negatively with some being emphasised more than others. For example, income, relationships with men and education are highlighted rather than race, class, disability, age, or lesbianism. Because these diversities also reflect differences in power, status, and access to resources, employment and education they need to be addressed.

Langan's ( 1985:43 ) analysis has had a less optimistic tone, but is nevertheless provocative. She has pointed out that the difficulties women social workers encounter are not easily resolved on an individual level. This is because although the impact of wider economic, social and political implications might be recognised, women social workers have to manipulate a system that is already welded to the way the state manages and regulates women's lives, including their own. There is also some degree of ambivalence for women as social workers in the way they conduct their role as a direct involvement in the lives of women as clients. To a greater degree it is a role that is coercive, albeit that it is portrayed as caring and usually conducted on personal terms. As Langan has explained, women clients are often exploited by their willingness to agree to some form of intimacy, while at the same time they are pressed into conformity to traditional sex roles by the negotiation of available financial and material resources.

The Impeccable Woman And the Impoverished Woman: Morality  
And Sexuality.

Concerns raised by feminists in relation to the way social work has been conducted as a form of social control over women's lives have also reflected a general concern with the role of the state in upholding women's traditional role. Feminists have argued that since the colonisation of Aotearoa / New Zealand the impact of the state's policies has been to create women's economic dependency on men, to entrench them in lower paid and lower status employment, to create conditions of poverty for women who live independently of men, and to effectively confine them to a heterosexual model of family relationships based on marriage and a sexual division of labour. Women who have not adhered to this model have nevertheless, been defined in relation to it. ( Novitz, 1987: Saville-Smith, 1987 )

The historical precedents within social work show that its development as a statutory role is clearly linked to creating differences between women as a form of social control. For instance, the state has capitalised on class, racial and marital status differences between women in order to conduct a campaign against poor women, or those who did not conform to the prevailing concepts of morality. Wife desertion was often perceived as a lack in women themselves and they were blamed for their economic plight. ( Tennant, 1986) The effect has been to cast women in what Summers, ( 1975: 311-3 ) has called a role of either 'gods police', or 'damned whores'. White middle class women of 'good moral standing' have been able to extend their public lives as the providers of charity to poor and destitute women, while the recipients have been expected to be indebted to these socially

privileged women because their children have been rescued from poverty and immorality. ( Voight, 1983:85)

The state's campaign over economic independence has also been evidenced by the various laws that have been introduced at different points in time to control women's sexual independence. The attempt to control prostitution with the implementation the Contagious Diseases Act ., 1869., is an example. Prostitution was a practice women were held directly responsible for because of their 'bad' character. The fact that women entered prostitution because of the lack of employment opportunities where they would have some degree of independence was not given serious consideration. ( MacDonald, 1986) As Robinson, ( 1987:187 ) has pointed out in her analysis, there was a need to control the prostitute because she challenged the sexual division of labour and the ideologies derived from it and shifted what is a private activity into the public arena. Because the prostitute removed herself from the domestic into the commercial sphere this created anomalies in the gender order and to the existing concepts of women, as 'wife', 'family', 'home'. As a consequence the prostitute has been socially ostracised and labelled as a deviant.

Social ostracisation and deviancy have also historically been extended to other categories of women. These have tended to correlate with women's economic independence. Robinson's ( 1987:187 ) comments have made a clear link between the history of medical, religious and state intrusion on the lives of 'loose' women.

" Any public declaration of their deviancy has often invited state intervention and attempts at repression, with the women concerned being primarily censured not for what they have done

criminally, but for who they are sexually. "Whore" and "Queer" are two accusations that symbolise lost womanhood and a lost woman is open to direct control by the state. " ( Robinson, 1987:187 )

Similarly, other feminists ( Raymond, 1986:64-70 ), have drawn parallels between the state's control over women's economic independence and their sexual autonomy. Women who have been more likely to be labelled as 'loose' and 'immoral' are those who have been perceived as 'manless' and therefore not under the control of a man. At different times this has included prostitutes, spinsters, lesbians, and even nuns. Raymond's interpretation has added to the view that the preoccupation with women's morality is essentially a concern with their heterosexual fidelity.

Women who are 'out of control' are also women who are not fit to care for children. Wilkinson ( 1986:96 ) has claimed that the statutory social work role has been clearly implicated in upholding this view. Her argument is based on the assessments made according to legal standards which are more often than not, predominantly concerned about a woman's 'morality' and 'goodness' rather than whether she is adequately able to care for her children. According to Dale and Foster, ( 1986 :48 ) lesbian mothers perceive themselves as vulnerable vis a vis their contact with welfare agencies because they fear their children may be removed from their care.

" Justifications for removing children from women can involve economic or social factors as well as negative assessments of mother - child interactions. For example, the risks of being physically removed from giving care to their children are high for women who are persistent

offenders. They are also high for lesbian mothers regardless of the standard of care provided. " ( Rights Of Women, 1984 and Rights Of Women Lesbian Custody Group, 1986, Hanscombe & Foster, 1982, cited in Hanmer & Statham, 1988:60 )

Chesler's ( 1986:128 ) account of Family Court decisions in the U S A on the custody of children involving both lesbian and heterosexual women has clearly indicated that there is a fear lesbian mothers will morally contaminate their children and that this fear is related primarily to their sexuality. Lesbians have sometimes been allowed to retain custody of their children under the condition that they did not 'practise' their lesbianism. By contrast heterosexual mothers have not been viewed as 'infectious', or 'diseased' and neither have they 'excited the same visceral disgust' that lesbians do. Chesler came to the conclusion that women who chose to love and live with other women were seen as a threat to male defined sexuality and law and order. Thus, in creating the non-heterosexual family lesbians have set a dangerous example to other women. At the same time that this has set a precedent it has also aroused disgust in heterosexual women because it has criticised the conditions under which most women had to mother.

Gould, ( 1984:154-5 ) has also commented that while lesbian mothers may not be automatically prevented from retaining custody of their children they nevertheless must convince courts to set aside prejudices about lesbianism along with traditionally upheld views about the nature of motherhood. She claims that heterosexual

law interprets custody to lesbian mothers as 'morally impossible'.

" Lesbians are considered morally suspect because of the stereotypes portraying them as child molesters and cheer leaders for lesbians....In addition, the psychiatric labelling of lesbians as sick or even severely neurotic conveys the impression that lesbian mothers are emotionally and mentally unstable. In both moral and psychiatric terms, lesbianism has traditionally been synonymous with unfitness. " ( Gould, 1984:155. )

Hanmer and Statham, ( 1988:54-6 ) have argued that all women are vulnerable when heterosexual assumptions along with other beliefs about women's social and caring role are applied. Therefore, the rationale of the unfit mother needs to be challenged by social workers who seek to incorporate a feminist understanding into their methods of working. A similar argument has been proposed by The Birmingham Women and Social Work Group ( 81 ), ( 1985 ) who believe that it is essential for social workers to extricate themselves from what has been a major focus on the real, or 'illusory' stereotypical family.

#### Lesbianism: A Closet Issue In Social Work ?

Although there are some reservations in generalising the findings of overseas studies to the Aotearoa / New Zealand context, studies from the U S A., and Britain have highlighted some of the concerns of lesbian and gay male social work practitioners in those countries. These have been directed at the level of service delivery where it is claimed there is a lack in meeting the needs of gay

and lesbian clients. Schoenberg and Goldberg ( 1985:1 ) have contended that this failure reflects the necessary commitment on the part of social work to its dual emphasis on people and their social environments, and concerns about the interactions between individuals and society. They add, that since social work ideally involves advocating for social change aimed at improving all people's lives, it should include those of sexual minorities.

Goodman ( 1977:36 ) has argued along similar lines and claimed that because the difficulties encountered by lesbians are a direct consequence of negative social attitudes towards them, this in itself necessitates some degree of adaptation in the provision of social work services.

" The social work profession has always defined its basic role as mediator and defender of the oppressed--the poor, the racially abused, protector against exploitation of children, workers and women. This ideal is non-existent where gay people are concerned." ( Goodman, 1977:36 )

Small studies within the United States have revealed that social workers tend to show negative attitudes towards lesbianism and homosexuality in general. A possible explanation for this has been the lack of lesbian and gay male visibility within the profession. However, heterosexist attitudes may significantly affect the professional climate and make it difficult for public disclosures of sexual identity. For example, DeCresceno ( 1984:115-35 ) compared the attitudes of social workers with those of psychologists working in a particular area of the mental health sector in the U S A. She found

that social workers more than psychologists tended to view lesbianism and gayness according to stereotypes. They were also more likely to believe that it was linked to psychopathology and mental illness and were less accepting of the idea that a member of their own family could be 'sexually different'.

Messing et al., ( 1984 ) found that within the health services professional 'ignorance' limited the number of lesbians and gay male clients that were able to be identified by social workers. They also often failed to acknowledge the impact of discrimination and hostility on the lives of these clients. Although Messing et al., based their conclusions on anecdotal evidence they claimed there was a demonstrated need for education amongst social workers in order to dispel the myths and prejudices.

The situation in Britain bears similarities with that of the U S A. For example, Donadello ( 1986 ) has stated that social work education has not addressed sexuality issues. She has claimed that despite that at least ten percent of children and youths do not follow the heterosexual pattern there is no perspective, or conceptualisation on the development of a lesbian or gay male identity.

" It is a national disgrace that 10 percent of young clients of social service agencies are undeserved, unserved, or inappropriately served because of homophobia within the profession of social work." ( Donadello, 1986:295 )

Donadello's ( 1986:290-5 ) suggestion is that the potential for confronting myths and stereotypes would be significant if all lesbians and gay male social work

practitioners, educators and policy makers were to become visible. Her conjecture has been that the numbers would be astonishing ! She has also argued that the incorporation of feminism into social work also needs to include a wider and more public acceptance of lesbians and gay men in its ranks.

".....it has been suggested that the fate of all minority groups is linked and that the lesbian and gay male minority might in fact be the lynchpin in effecting major changes that will promote social justice. It is essential that social work be openly and clearly active on behalf of all oppressed people and give up its ambivalent attitudes about lesbians and gay men for feminist visions to be realized. "

( Donadello, 1986:296 )

The concerns of lesbian and gay male social work practitioners overseas may have relevance in Aotearoa / New Zealand. The dearth of research itself indicates the low priority and profile lesbians have. Articles in local social work journals have been non-existent and the social work educational curriculum gives it minimal attention by adding it onto one day works shop on sexuality.

Lesbians in social work may find themselves in a position that is contradictory to the historical perceptions of 'gods police'. Because of their sexual identity status they challenge the image of the 'impeccable woman'. This suggests that their involvement in social work may also be a source of personal strain. For instance, they must operate within a professional model and workplace environment that does not yet legitimate them as workers, or clients. Feminist analysis

has indicated that the influences and controls over women in general might have some bearing on the difficulties and conflicts lesbian social workers are likely to encounter as they constantly are brought into contact with the institutionalised views and practices that reinforce heterosexuality as the 'norm' for women.

#### Lesbians In The Workplace.

According to the available literature lesbians and gay men have been said to represent approximately ten percent of the population. Given that there are no valid statistics the accuracy of this figure is not able to be established.

" Employment statistics for lesbians can only be estimated, but given what is known about the incidence, it is probably safe to assume that all employment figures include a fair proportion of lesbians. " ( Gould, 1984:156 )

Yet, as a recognised ten percent this has to be statistically significant in social and political terms and is comparable with other minority groups. ( Woodman & Lenna, 1980 )

While there have been no systematic studies done on the employment patterns and work status of lesbians the research to date has tended to suggest that the crucial determinant of job opportunities may relate to gender rather than sexuality. Thus, it could be expected that lesbians will be engaged in employment which conforms to their gender role rather than their sexual identity

status. ( Egerton et al., 1987:55 ) Gould ( 1984:156 ) has also noted that there are no female occupations readily perceived of as lesbian given that they do not experience occupational socialisation in the same way that gay men do. However, some studies have suggested that lesbians belong to no particular economic class and are likely to be employed in a variety of occupations. ( Jay & Young, 1979 cited in Egerton et al., 1987 )

Identifying factors which might affect the choice of work place, or occupation, Egerton et al., ( 1987:56 ) found that the opportunity to work in an atmosphere which does not demand a rigid adherence to female stereotypes and, or one that is more likely to accept lifestyle differences may influence employment patterns for lesbians differently to heterosexual women. For example, they are likely to be employed within politically progressive environments located within the voluntary sector, or within organisations known to promote E E O for sexual minorities. There is also evidence to suggest that some lesbians are involved in work that has traditionally been designated as 'male' and as women they are disproportionately represented in such jobs. The attraction of higher pay and status are said to be two reasons for this. ( Egerton et al., 1987:66 ) They also represent work related activities which challenge the assumptions of the female stereotype as passive, weak and inferior. ( Powell, 1978:37-8 )

#### Lesbians And Workplace Discrimination.

The extent to which lesbians are discriminated against in paid employment has not yet been thoroughly researched. Although there has been considerable anecdotal evidence

which suggests that lesbians are subject to hostility and harassment, it has not always been clear whether some forms of discrimination are those all women are subject to by fact of their gender, or whether sexual identity status is a predominant factor. For example, Gould ( 1984:157-8 ) has claimed that even though both sexism and heterosexism shape the jobs traditionally available for women, the status of this work is so devalued that for lesbians the fight against employment discrimination may primarily be against sexism. Egerton et al., ( 1987:41 ) also note that unless lesbians clearly indicate their sexuality when they apply for jobs sexism and racism will probably play a larger part in selection. However, Egerton et al., have commented that employers will sometimes tolerate an open lesbian or gay male as long as there is no suggestion they will campaign for their cause, or against heterosexuality. This raises the question of whether it is lesbianism as such that is the problem, or being open and positive about it that is threatening.

Despite the view that discrimination against lesbians may be primarily one of gender rather than sexual identity status Levine and Leonard ( 1984 ) consider there is evidence to suggest this is because it has been an understated problem. To date research figures have represented a low estimate and therefore an imprecise gauge. Although most reports have tended to be anecdotal the authors also claim that because studies tend to rely on self reports many instances of discrimination may not be recognised where employers refuse to acknowledge their motives for such actions. Furthermore, in conducting their own study, Levine and Leonard computed their results with those of previous research projects and concluded that discrimination against lesbians was a significant problem. The nature of

it was such that anticipated discrimination where disclosure was expected to jeopardise employment, and actual discrimination such as not being hired, being fired, not being promoted, or being harassed physically and verbally, all constituted serious problems in the workplace.

Importantly, Browning, ( 1984 ), and Hart and Richardson, ( 1981 ) have claimed that the exclusion from legal protection has been bound to affect employment opportunities for lesbians because it allows discrimination to go unchecked in the workplace. They have also expressed concern at the stereotypes which define lesbians as morally dangerous people and the extent to which this has affected job security in occupations such as teaching and social work. Case studies carried out within a local D S W office reveal that lesbianism is potentially discrediting information for social workers. Some of the prejudices have related to the belief that lesbians provide dangerous role models for discontented and unhappy women in heterosexual relationships; that disclosures of sexual abuse by children have been coerced by the vindictive attitudes lesbians supposedly have towards men; and that being openly lesbian is a statement of sexual interest towards female colleagues and clients. ( Raven, 1989. Unpublished study ).

Gould ( 1984:157-8 ) has noted similar views and claimed that an admission of lesbianism places employment at risk especially where this has involved occupations associated with close contact with children. She has also commented that while lesbians confront similar problems to heterosexual women in employment these take on new dimensions which often require secrecy. Along with the risk of being fired one of the consequences of secrecy is

that they are prevented from developing the support and friendship networks that help most women sustain the tedium of their jobs.

#### Profile Of Lesbians In Workplace Studies.

Because the dimensions of workplace experiences for lesbians have not been explored in any systematic way, research to date has been somewhat limited in representations of class, race, degrees of ability and age. Thus, the diversity that is so characteristic of the lesbian population has often not been adequately reflected. This has tended to lead to assumptions about lesbians which portrays them as a particular 'class', 'category', or 'type' of woman. Hence, there is a danger in generalising research findings where population samples have often been confined to a particular occupation, or to a specific setting.

Information gained from some of the earlier overseas research has given some indications that need to be tested in more in depth studies. For example, the conclusions of Simon and Gagnon, ( 1967 ), Hedblom, ( 1972 ), Minnegerode and Adelman, (1976 ) ( All cited in Schneider, 1984:213 ), have suggested there are consistent indicators that lesbians have stable work histories, have been higher achievers than comparable heterosexual women, and had a serious commitment to work as a priority because they must financially support themselves. This would suggest that lesbians have not been subject to discrimination and that in fact they have had access to employment opportunities. However, these

conclusions have been drawn from small and select groups of lesbians and have not indicated whether employment success is tied up with high levels of secrecy in the workplace.

The limitations of more recent studies have been shown by the predominance of a white and middle class population of lesbians. For example, in Schneider's ( 1984 ) study on 228 lesbians in paid employment only 10 percent were women of colour. They were employed across a wide variety of workplaces with 57 percent in professional and technical occupational categories such as teaching and social work. The remainder were distributed in administrative and managerial positions ( 10 percent ), clerical ( 11 percent ), craft ( 7 percent ), operative ( 5 percent ) and sales ( 2 percent ). Fifty two percent worked in predominantly female work places including 25 percent in work places with eighty or more females and only 10 percent in work places with eighty or more males. Eighty two percent had attained educational qualifications at least at college graduate level. Their ages ranged from twenty one years to fifty eight years.

The Levine and Leonard ( 1984 ) study included a similar profile in that their sample represented lesbians who were primarily white collar, middle class and highly educated. Similarly, Hall ( 1986 ) focused on employment in corporations and obtained experiences from lesbians where 31 percent held positions in the lower and middle management, 31 percent were in technical fields, 23 percent in clerical, 8 percent in sales and 8 percent in

personnel. All worked in organisations employing more than one hundred staff, and 16 percent had been with the company for ten years, 8 percent for seven years and 76 percent from one and half to four years. The age range of the sample was twenty two years to forty years.

Two studies carried out in Aotearoa / New Zealand, although related to a profile on lesbian mothers, have shown some similarities to overseas research. The sample Hanna ( 1986 ) used was predominantly Pakeha with one out of twenty respondents identifying as Maori and one as Rarotongan. On a more in depth level Saphira ( 1984 ) found that of seventy respondents to her questionnaire about 8 percent identified as Maori with the remainder being Pakeha. Almost 35 percent of the group had some university education which she claims was considerably higher than the 1.4 percent of the national female labour force. As a group whose ages ranged from twenty eight to forty years, the main occupations cited were teachers, nurses, secretaries and social workers, but the range included doctors, artists, photo finishers, waitresses and drivers. Using professional and occupational status as a socio-economic indicator of class, Saphira concluded that both lesbian mothers and their partners were highly represented in the upper groups compared with the N.Z. Urban average.

A recent study conducted in Aotearoa / New Zealand focused on the experiences in the workplace as a source of personal strain for lesbians. The sample was small and the respondents were chosen for their diversity in relation to socio economic and occupational status, educational levels and racial and cultural origins. Ages ranged from twenty six years to forty six years.

( Atmore, 1990 )

Lesbian Social Workers In The Department Of Social Welfare.

The data from this research shows that lesbian social workers were aged from twenty nine to forty four years. The majority were thirty five years and over. Three quarters of the group had identified as lesbian for ten years or more. This included three who had identified as lesbian for fifteen years and over. Four had identified as lesbians for between five and ten years, and one had identified herself as a lesbian for a few months. As a group, their 'maturity' was reflected by age and also by the number of years most of them had identified as lesbian. This contradicted the view that lesbianism is a 'passing phase' or adolescent experimentation.

This research did not expect lesbian social workers to adhere to a set definition of lesbianism. What was taken into account was a lesbian's self conscious commitment, or decision in taking on the identity. As Ferguson et al., ( 1982:154-8 ) have maintained it is not meaningful to conjecture someone is lesbian if she refuses to acknowledge herself as such. They have also pointed out that there is a connection between lesbianism as a self conscious cultural choice and the increase in opportunities and economic dependence from men. These possibilities have almost always been associated with the growth and development of feminism which has raised the consciousness of women and thereby increased their dissatisfaction with male dominated families and relationships. It may be no surprise that this generation of women who now identify as lesbian also grew up with the feminist wave of the late sixties early seventies. Twenty lesbian social workers described themselves as being interested in feminism and in promoting the

interests of women. Some were very emphatic about this commitment.

Kitzinger ( 1987:115 ) has claimed that the link between feminism and lesbianism is essentially political in that it is a challenge to the male definitions of women. While some lesbians may feel they didn't have a choice and that they discovered, or accepted what they have been all along, this has not discounted the impact feminism has had on advancing the position of women and increasing their lifestyle options. Up until the 1930's it was difficult for most unmarried women to exist economically independent of men. Even if some 'practised' lesbianism it was not possible for most women to take on an independent lesbian identity and lifestyle.

Lesbian social workers in the D S W were not a racially homogeneous (sic) group. Although it would be more accurate to claim that the lesbians who participated in this research were predominantly Pakeha. For example, most identified as a New Zealander, or European. Some included ancestry such as Irish, Scots, English and Scandinavian. One lesbian identified as Maori / Pakeha and two as Maori. While the racial predominance of Pakeha lesbians does not indicate any difference in the incidence of lesbianism between Maori and Pakeha women it is however, likely to reflect the mono-cultural nature of the organisation and the employment patterns within social work and the D S W.

Class characteristics of lesbian social workers showed that their current socio-economic status was invariably middle class. One lesbian defined this as 'lower' middle class. Over half of the group ( 14 ) claimed this represented an improvement on their working class backgrounds. The remainder had stated that they had

come from middle class families and had thus experienced no change in status as adults. Over two thirds of the lesbian social workers earned between \$30,000 - \$ 40,000 per year. Four earned between \$41,000 - \$45,000 per year.

Most lesbian social workers ( 19 ) had a tertiary qualification including approximately half who had post graduate degrees. One had a partially completed undergraduate degree and one had a diploma. <sup>3</sup>

Over half the lesbian social workers had been employed in the D S W for five years and over. With the longest period of service being twenty years and the least being a few weeks. A quarter of the group had been employed between one and three years. These patterns are

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3. Asher, on researching the qualifications of social workers in social service agencies throughout Aotearoa / New Zealand, found that only 21 percent of all social workers employed in D S W had a social work qualification. ( N Z Social Work Journal, Vol. 9., No 3/4, December 1984:5-7 )

In the Burns et al., ( 1987 ) study only 12 percent of all participants, including men and women, had graduate degrees and 1.9 percent had post graduate degrees. Only 2.5 percent had a formal qualification specific to social work.

Figures released by the Minister Of Social Welfare, July 1991 indicate that of the 1,233 social workers employed by the D S W only 346 hold tertiary qualifications and of those only 131 hold specific social work qualifications. ( Hon. Jenny Shipley. Press Statement, Beehive Foyer, July 1991. )

similar to those of all women in the Department. ( Burns et al., 1987 )<sup>4</sup> Of the twenty three lesbians who responded to the questionnaire six had resigned their positions and were working in a different occupation, or as social workers within another organisation. The period of time since resigning ranged from three months to four years. Of those still employed in the D S W, fourteen had remained in social work positions while three were still employed by the D S W, but no longer in the social work occupational class, although still doing work relevant to it.

Just over half of the lesbian social workers occupied positions designated at a senior social work level. A small number were in positions graded above this and a third occupied basic grade social work positions. Their low representation in the higher grades has suggested that the positions they occupied were comparable with those of non-lesbian women.<sup>5</sup>

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4. The Burns et al., ( 1987 ) research which included a group of predominantly heterosexual women across all occupational categories, showed that 3.7 percent had been employed between four to six years, 40 percent had been employed between eight and ten years, and 24.1 percent had been employed for ten years and over.

5. The grading of women social workers in the Burns et al., ( 1987 ) research clearly showed a sex differential in distribution across grades. Women were clustered in the lower grades with men more likely to occupy the higher graded positions. Seventy five percent of the women were in positions below senior social work level, 8 percent at senior social work positions and 12.5 percent in positions above this. Baskerville's ( 1983 ) earlier report claimed that 56.7 percent of women employed as

The majority of lesbian social workers in the D S W. were employed in what they described as large city offices, although some were urban based. Two were employed in offices within a rural setting, and others in smaller offices in provincial towns. The total numbers of social workers employed in each office obviously varied according to size. These ranged from nine to ( at one time ) sixty social workers, with most offices employing between fifteen and twenty social workers. The vast majority of social workers employed in each office were women. In some places women represented almost 100 percent of the social work staff, with only one office having equal numbers of men and women social workers.

Levine and Leonard's ( 1984:708 ) research on lesbians and employment discrimination has indicated that;

"...individual attributes such as age, occupation education and income have minimal impact on anticipated and actual discrimination, or coping strategies. What does count is the work setting. "

Included in the work setting is size and location. For example, the medium sized and bigger public institutions situated within suburban areas are settings have appeared to create environments where lesbians are more likely to be affected by the anticipation of, and actual experiences of discrimination. ( Levine And Leonard,

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social workers were in positions designated senior social worker and below, 46.6 percent were in positions designated at senior management level and 20 percent in social work administrative positions.

1984 ) The fact that the Department is a large public institution may well have had some bearing on the nature and patterns of discrimination. However, this comment can only be made tentatively in the absence of any comparative data.

### Conclusions.

This chapter has indicated lesbian social workers conduct their role within an historically defined context of social sexual control over women. This context epitomises the inherent contradictions between social justice for women and the conditions under which lesbians as social workers conduct their working lives.

Previous research and feminist comment have also indicated that there is the need for further studies on the employment experiences of lesbians. This needs to be conducted with the view to giving validity to their workplace experiences and to legitimating the role of lesbians within social work.

## C H A P T E R   T H R E E .

## CONSTRUCTING WOMEN'S SEXUALITY WITH ECONOMICS.

" When gender -- women and men -- is discussed, sexuality per se is left to be inferred. [ ] when sexuality is discussed, gender tends to be glossed over, as if sexuality means the same thing for women as it does for men." ( MacKinnon, 1979:21 )

Introduction.

This purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical analysis of women's sexuality and the inter-relationship of this with their economic position. It presents a radical feminist argument which takes the position that sexuality is socially constructed. Within this it is argued that heterosexuality is a form of social, economic and psychological control over women.

Essentially the radical feminist position challenges the view that women can be defined as an economic category, or that the sexual division of labour is the only basis to consider women's oppression from. It also challenges the liberal view which claims that women are merely disadvantaged because of arbitrary and irrational sex biases. In contrast radical feminism makes a clear

link between personal experience and the politics of power relations.

In order to describe how those relations of power have also been historically manifested this chapter has included some comment on patterns which have notably discouraged and repressed the social, economic and sexual autonomy of women. This has been clear in the repression of lesbianism and is a response that has occurred when the existing social order and relations between the sexes are threatened. As more women generally have sought economic independence their continued adherence to heterosexuality has become increasingly enforced at the level of paid employment.

#### Sexuality And The Sexual Division Of Labour.

A particular position taken by radical feminists includes the argument that sexuality exists as a specific form of oppression for women. However, it is claimed that while women are defined and exploited on a basis that is largely independent of the relations of production, this does not necessarily exclude the fact that they are also exploited and defined in forms that are appropriate to economic arrangements and disparities. ( MacKinnon, 1982:3 ) This position assumes that women share a common experience of oppression because of the socially constructed distinctions that have been made between the sexes. Early radical feminist argument had the tendency to create false generalisations by ignoring differences between women. However, more recent developments have recognised the uniqueness of each woman and the specific categories they occupy according to their race, class, culture, age, dis/ability, and sexual preference. As an

example, it has been shown that sexuality and economics are inter-sected by other power dynamics which combine to impact in ways that will be different for women within each social category. ( Eisenstein, 1984:132; Donovan, 1985:156; Laurie, 1987:60 )

This study highlights sexuality as an aspect of difference amongst women. At the same time it also attempts to show that there are common ideological and material factors which have determined the social sexual and economic position of all women. More particularly, those in westernised, industrial countries. This is dynamic is referred to as 'political' in the sense that it relates to a power structured relationship whereby one group of people is controlled by another. ( Millet, 1981:23 )

" ....[ male dominance ] itself is but one form of institutionalized inequality which is both cause and consequence of power relationships -- relationships of dominance and subordination. " ( Ehrlich 1981:129 )

The oppression of women is defined by the relations of sexual and economic power men exercise and maintain over women. Feminist theorists have relied upon this statement by showing the resilience of male domination throughout historical and economic modes of production. For example, Millet ( 1977:25 ) has maintained that male dominance exhibits great variety in history and locale, yet is a social constancy that is so deeply entrenched that it has cut through all other political, social and economic forms. MacKinnon (1983:683 ) has also described male dominance as an historically tenacious and pervasive system of power. Walby, ( 1990:200 ) also has claimed that while both the form and degree of male domination

have varied from one period of history to the next, men have remained the dominant sex. Her analysis shows that the relations of production constitute a particular form of power that is shown to vary independently and historically from those of gender relations. These may well have transformed class structures, but have had little effect on gender relations.

In the process of developing the analysis of women's oppression, socialist feminists have emphasised the inter-relationship between social sexual roles, paid and unpaid labour. This has clarified ways in which men have controlled both reproduction and production through a sexual division of labour. ( Kuhn & Wolpe et al., 1978; Eisenstein, et al., 1979; Sargent et al., 1981 ) This has led to the conclusion that women's oppression fundamentally lies in the control over their labour power for the purpose of serving men in various ways and for producing and rearing children. ( Hartmann, 1981 ) An important aspect to this claim is that men have organised to exclude women from paid work through the sex segregation of jobs. This has served to lower women's wages in the work that is available to them and operates as a pressure on women to remain economically dependent on men. The cycle is completed by men's demand for a family wage. ( Walby, 1986:43 )

For radical feminists the sexual division of labour theories have provided only a partial picture of how and why women are oppressed. Both Millet ( 1977 ) and Dworkin ( 1981 ) have powerfully critiqued male domination as a theory of sexual politics. Millet ( 1977:24 ) has claimed that sexuality is synonymous with 'sex' as a status category with political implications. She has emphasised the inferiority of women as a state that has been maintained through force and programmed through

ideological conditioning. Both have been primarily sexual in nature and have reflected the perverse nature of heterosexuality. ( Donovan, 1985:145 ) For Dworkin, ( 1981 ) sexual politics reside in a misogynist culture which makes sexuality pornography for women as both cause and effect of their oppression. ( Walby, 1986:27 )

While the radical feminist argument that sexuality is the basis of oppression for women has tended to exclude a thorough analysis of the sexual division of labour, it has made some powerful connections between male ideology on women and forms of male violence. It has been claimed that both are effective forms of social sexual control over women which have profoundly affected the material conditions of women's lives. This makes it more than the control over labour power that is at issue. It is control of *her*, because she is female. ( Ehrlich, 1981:126-7 ) Some feminists have not been fully convinced that forms of male violence relate to sexual control over women.

" [     ] it is not clear why some of the acts [ considered ] to be central to women's oppression, such as sexual harassment, rape and pornography, are not considered to be primarily acts of violence in which the medium of sexuality is rather incidental." ( Walby, 1986:27 )

To fail to recognise that rape, pornography, sexual harassment and battering are all 'sex specific abuses' which express male control over sexual access to women, ( MacKinnon, 1987:92 ), is to also ignore the fact that most abuses towards women are carried out within the context of women's subordination and a sexual division of labour in the family and workplace. This in itself provides strong justification for accepting that women's

access to economically productive resources is closely linked to the control over sexuality.

Equally, there has been some considerable argument against defining women merely as an economic category. As Ehrlich ( 1981:111-23 ) has pointed out economic explanations of women's position rely upon adding women into economic theories. These do not and cannot account for the fact that women are oppressed because they are women and the fact that it is men who benefit from women's economic subordination. MacKinnon, ( 1979:15-6 ) has also raised the question of why it is that even if the current economic system requires some group of individuals to occupy low pay and low status jobs, this should be biologically female. Evidence shows that employers often do not hire women qualified for the job even when they could pay them less. As MacKinnon has suggested, there is more than the profit motive involved.

What has become clear from the feminist debate is that women's economic subordination is not merely a matter of addressing the sexual division of labour as if it is a problem that rests solely with an explanation of the relations of production and reproduction. ( Ehrlich, 1981 ) In order to clarify how and why those relations exist there needs to be some understanding of the sexual structures which maintain them and how it is that women across different social categories can be subject to such a specific form of control. For the purposes of this study this means addressing the possibility that there is a link between sexuality and the means by which access to economic resources is controlled. ( MacKinnon, 1979:58 )

With recent developments in feminist theory it may now be possible to address the conceptual and analytical gaps that have existed in the past. For instance,

Ferguson et al., ( 1982:174 ) have claimed that it is not a matter of simply examining the sexual division of labour as if it is the only material base to consider women's oppression from. Sexuality also deeply informs us of ways in which we perceive each other, our physiological responses and our emotional identities. Furthermore, the context in which the sexual division of labour has been made possible resides firmly within the institutionalisation of heterosexuality. Ferguson et al., have therefore, argued that it is a mistake to treat the sexual division of labour as analytically distinct from the institution of heterosexuality. Cavin ( 1985:176 ) has also maintained that the focus on sex roles in marriage and the family, and male-female divisions of labour, has confined the debate in terms of women's relationships with men. The tendency to restrict women to heterosexist categories has meant they can only be defined by concepts such as the 'working mother', the 'housewife', the 'solo mother' and the 'single' woman. It has therefore, denied the applicability of relationships which exist out side of those frameworks.

#### Sexuality As Power.

The process of linking the sexual division of labour with sexuality must inevitably start with an exploration of how and why sexuality fits into the scheme of power relations. To begin with, this also includes defining a process whereas, 'sexuality' has been falsely conflated with 'sex' as a biological given. There is sufficient evidence to show that 'sex', 'gender' and 'sexuality' are not mutually exclusive and invariable categories.

( Millet, 1977:26-33; MacKinnon, 1979:149-158 ) However, it can be argued that each has been constructed inter-

dependently. For example, 'sex' has referred to the biological categories of male and female whereupon cultural, social and psychological meanings of masculinity and femininity have been assigned as 'gender' distinctions. ( Millet, 1977:29; Oakley, 1981:41 ) 'Sexuality' refers to the social process of defining sex and gender as a power dynamic.

" Sexuality is that social process which creates, organises, expresses and directs desire, creating the social beings as we know women and men, as their relations create society. " ( MacKinnon, 1982:2 )

Weeks ( 1986:45-6 ) has described the construction of sexuality as an 'elaborate facade' wherein the fundamental differences between men and women have been maximised to create a theory of complementarity between the sexes. He has claimed this process has been falsely built on the 'biological imperative'. This has resulted in the inevitable link between sexuality and gender. Weeks describes gender as the social condition of being male, or female and sexuality as the cultural expression of desire and pleasure. For example, the genital and reproductive distinctions between biological men and women have been justified as a necessary and sufficient explanation for claiming different sexual needs and desires. Furthermore, they have been used to justify male dominance over women. As Weeks has claimed both gender and sexuality have become inextricably linked to culturally and socially defined boundaries between masculine and feminine behaviours. These boundaries are usually clearly defined and if they are crossed there is the consequence of deviant labels and sometimes harsh punishments.

The 'sexuality as power' theory has been argued by MacKinnon, ( 1982:15-16 ) as the 'eroticisation' of dominance and submission. This has essentially required the moulding, directing and expression of sexuality in order to organise society into two sexes and to create a division which underlies the whole of social relations.

" Heterosexuality is its structure, gender and family its congealed forms, sex roles its qualities generalized to social persona, reproduction a consequence and control its issue. " ( MacKinnon, 1982:2 )

According to MacKinnon the status of being female is acquired and ascribed through a complex experience and unity of physical, emotional, identity and status affirmation. It is an experience through which women learn what they need to know in order to become women as socially constructed beings. For example, they learn certain qualities, acquire certain characteristics and are assigned a status that varies independently of biology, but is attributed to them as natural. Not only are women sexualised in this process, but their sexuality is organised and expropriated to define them as a 'sex'.

According to Weeks ( 1986 ) and MacKinnon, ( 1982 ) sexuality has been constructed as heterosexual desire. Jeffreys' ( 1990:1-4 ) view on this is similar in that she has concluded that sexuality and the construction of heterosexual desire are a political function in maintaining the oppression of women. This originates in the power relations between the sexes and has taken the form of eroticising their subordination. For example, she has claimed that it is in heterosexual desire that women's subordination is depicted as 'sexual' or 'sexy'.

Hetero-sexuality And The Sexual Division Of Labour.

Atkinson (1973:5 ) and Eisenstein ( 1979:44 ) have argued that the cultural and political definition of sexuality as 'heterosexuality' has linked women's oppression to the institutionalisation of a specific family form. In part, this family form is controlled through marriage and the cultural and legal protections which enforce these relations. Ehrlich ( 1981:111-29 ) has claimed that the institutionalisation of hetero-relations is the basis of control over both women's sexuality and control over their access to economic resources. For example, it is one of the most central ways in which their relationship to paid and unpaid work is able to be structured. Not only is the continuation of heterosexuality consistent with forced sexual and psychological loyalty to men, it is basic to control over reproduction which essentially ties women to domestic labour for a large part of their lives.

Raymond's ( 1986:57 ) analysis has also very succinctly pointed out the political function of heterosexuality and its concomitant social and economic roles for women within the traditional nuclear family. She has argued that the justification for heterosexuality cannot be sustained on the basis that traditional family roles, the sexual division of labour, gender defined child rearing and education are necessary and natural consequences of the need to procreate and reproduce. Procreation and reproduction are not exclusive to continued heterosexuality. The fact that they can occur through normal male-female intercourse in a variety of contexts strongly suggests that the control over women's sexuality in a white male dominated social system has more than a biological imperative.

Rich ( 1981:1-23 ) has argued that the context within which heterosexuality occurs questions the very idea of it as a choice or preference for women. She has claimed that it is a powerful institution affecting mothering, sex roles, relationships and societal prescriptions for women. Furthermore, the institutionalised forms of marriage and motherhood have meant that men have been able to command and exploit women's labour as unpaid production, and through the vertical and horizontal segregation of women in paid employment. Accordingly, Rich has been prepared to argue that heterosexuality is compulsory for women. Her justifications have relied in part, on the view that heterosexuality, as an institution, is the 'beachhead' of male dominance. One of its biases has been to treat lesbian existence on a scale ranging from deviance to abhorrence, or to render it invisible. She is also critical of the way many feminist texts have treated lesbianism as less than a reality, or as a source of power and knowledge for women.

#### Putting The 'Hetero' Into Sexism.

The best known tenet of heterosexism is that which defines who can have sexual relationships with whom. Thus, as a set of ideas it dictates a set of practices and punishes those who deviate. ( Egerton et al., 1987:9) It retains a core belief that heterosexuality is essential to the continuance of the human race. It uses methods sanctioned by society at large to maintain heterosexual dominance both in numbers and ideologically ( Egerton et al., 1987:13 ) As a system of ideas and practices it is based on the belief that heterosexuality is the normal and natural sexuality for both men and

women. Heterosexism lays down the rules and conditions under which lesbianism is valued, or devalued in our society and penalties, or benefits are awarded accordingly. ( Egerton et al., 1987:19 ) It is institutionalised within all aspects of society, as a legitimate and only basis for social / sexual relations. As a consequence lesbians and gay men are subject to legal and social discrimination in the denial of their rights as a political concern. ( Kramarae, & Treichler, 1985:191 )

Cavin ( 1985:1) has maintained that heterosexism is the major basis of male supremacy. It is an ideology which economically sanctifies heterosexuality especially procreative intercourse as sacred and ordained by imaginary gods as the only normal purpose of sex. At the same time it treats lesbianism as a perversion, a sickness , or abnormality, or as a crime. She reiterates the view that a heterosexist social system gives straight <sup>6</sup> people privileges, social status and economic incentives and rewards people to be exclusively heterosexual by taking away the civil rights and social status of lesbians and gay men.

The heterosexist assumptions are that all women are, or should be heterosexual. Thus, it is assumed that lesbians do not really exist. These assumptions also include the view that masculine and feminine roles are

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6. 'Straight' is an euphemistic term used by lesbians and gay men referring to heterosexuals and heterosexual lifestyles. It literally means to be unable to bend, to be uniform, perhaps rigid. ( Oxford English Concise Dictionary, 1963 )

biologically determined as if they are the only sex roles humans can take. ( Cavin, 1985:2 ) It is clear that the boundaries and distinctions that are made between masculinity and femininity operate as critical and powerful social divides in all spheres of personal, social and economic life. For example, as Weeks ( 1986:47-59 ) has claimed these distinctions are references to power differentials and historical situations where men have had the power to define women. This has included the power to define maleness and male sexuality as the 'norm' by which women are judged. Not only are women confined by sex roles and sexist stereotypes, but also by the fact that these are consistent with sexual roles and sexual stereotypes. It is therefore, possible that sexism would fail to have any meaning without the institution of heterosexuality.

#### Defining Lesbianism.

The term 'lesbian' is a renaming of the gender; 'woman'. ( Rich, 1981 ) What makes lesbianism distinct from heterosexuality is that lesbianism is assumed to involve same sex intimacy and / or bonding between women. It also refers to the possibilities of alternative family structures which do not rely upon a male headed household, a sexual division of labour, economic dependence upon another adult, or the isolation of adults and children within small household units. However, a feminist position on lesbianism has only recently emerged. In the past it has been defined as an illness, a deviancy, or alternatively, a sexual preference. Each of these views has presumed that it is the problem of the individual. This has included more recent liberal arguments which have now shifted the site of the problem

from the lesbian to the heterosexual 'bigot' who is now more politely referred to as the 'homophobe'.<sup>7</sup> The liberal position on lesbianism has also attempted to convince the heterosexual world that lesbians are just like everyone else and that sexual practices and who we love are a private affair.

The liberal interpretation of lesbianism has essentially de-politicised its meaning. ( Kitzinger, 1987 ) Both Rich ( 1981:11-23 ) and Kitzinger ( 1987:64 ) have argued that lesbianism has to be placed within the context of compulsory heterosexuality. For example, heterosexuality is far from a natural state, or personal choice, but constructed as an instrument in the perpetuation of male power. It therefore needs to be studied as a political institution. ( Kitzinger, 1987: 64 )

".....the lesbian is rarely allowed to define herself in terms of her role, socio-political location, her representation of herself as a challenge to [ male domination ]." ( Kitzinger, 1987:45 )

Within the context of compulsory heterosexuality lesbianism is also a re-definition of sexual identity. Kitzinger, ( 1987:187-8 ) has argued, that this is both

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7. Homophobia is a liberal humanist label for heterosexuals who as individuals exhibit prejudiced behaviour and attitudes towards lesbians and gay males. It is described as an irrational, persistent fear, or dread of homosexuals and homosexuality and will usually be manifest in the expression of hostile and sometimes violent reactions towards homosexuals. it is considered treatable. ( Kitzinger, 1987 )

socially constituted and historically determined. She has rejected the idea that the concept of lesbian, or that the term itself is of relatively recent origin.<sup>8</sup> For example, the historical existence of same gender sexual activity has to have had particular implications for identity. Rich, (1981 ) has also accepted this view and has argued that her concepts of lesbian existence and the lesbian continuum reflect historical and cultural forms of female bonding that are all examples of resistance to heterosexuality. Other feminists have used political definitions in a similar way. These have included lesbianism as a practice of solidarity between women, ( Monique, 1980 cited in Kitzinger, 1987:115 ), and lesbianism as the rejection of male defined ideas of love and sex, ( Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, 1981 ). On a personal level it can therefore be described as the potential for self empowerment and self affirmation.

Lockard ( 1986:84-5 ) argues that lesbian identity cannot be solely defined by sexual feelings and activities. This is because in the process of forming

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8. The terms lesbian and lesbianism are said to have historically derived from the Greek 600 B C Isle of Lesbos and the reputed female homosexual band associated with Sappho of Lesbos. The feminist dictionary also defines lesbian as a woman who is woman identified, having rejected false loyalties to men on all levels. A woman feared and unknown, an outlaw. ( Kramarae, C., & Treichler, P.A.,, 1985:227-8 ) Other historical versions cite lesbianism as originating in myth. For example, the storm goddess DIKE of Greece was a warrior and avenger against men who tried to challenge the old women-oriented traditions, meaning ' the way, the path', she was the grand-daughter of GAIA. ( Grahn, 1984 )

that identity individual women vary in their psychological and emotional responses. While identity may be self defined, it can also be expected to mean different things to different lesbians and may take on different forms of expression in different social environments. Thus, personal interpretations and personal responses are likely to be linked to social acceptance, social pressures and expectations.

" The term "lesbian identity" epitomises the set of meanings ascribed by the individual to whatever social, emotional, sexual, political, or personal configuration she understands about her lesbianism: the emphasis being on the way in which a woman constructs her lesbianism and the story she tells about it. " ( Kitzinger & Roberts, 1985 cited in Atmore, 1990:1 )

In addition to this Ponse ( cited in Krieger, 1982:99 ) has suggested, a definition of lesbian identity has to include more than just the idea of a role, or orientation. She has claimed that it refers to a state of 'being' linked to collective experience.

" It implies an expansion of experiences and self and a finding of community of which sexuality is a mere part. "

#### The Culture Of Resistance.

In developing an understanding of the lesbian identity Grahn ( 1984 ) claims to have discovered the continuities evident across cultures, time, language and myth. The symbolism and reality of a past and present lesbian and

gay existence she describes, make it compelling to accept the idea of cultural identity. As Grahn explains,

" What gives any group of people distinction and dignity is its culture. This includes a remembrance of the past and a setting of itself in a world context whereby the group can see who it is relative to everybody else. " ( Grahn, 1984:xii-xiv )

These historical connections have been made from Sappho on the isle of Lesbos in the fifth century B C through the burning of the women in medieval Europe, to communal households and activities of today. Thus, lesbian lifestyles go beyond individual relationships and since mainstream society provides no context for such an existence, lesbians have formed their own culture. ( Goodman et al., 1983:71 )

Insofar as being able to describe, or interpret historical and cultural links with a lesbian existence in Aotearoa / New Zealand, there is very little that is for the public record. Because of this, as Laurie ( 1987: 151 ) points out, the exact contours of lesbian experiences may be hard to define. However, she indicates that overseas research shows there are many areas in which to search for earlier life stories. Sources include the professions such as nursing and teaching, along with tales of women who cross dressed and led adventurous lives on the gold fields, in sailing ships, on farms and in forests.

Te Awekotuku ( 1991:17-9 ) claims that loving one's own gender is an ancient, even tribal practice, honoured and revered. Her interpretations of women in Maori history include the example of Wairaka, as a strong role

model for independent women, who resisted arranged marriage by refusing to live with her husband and instead set up her own settlement with predominantly women supporters. The claim that homosexuality was introduced into Maori society by Pakeha and had no place in traditional society has also been rejected by Maori lesbians. On the contrary, it has been suggested that female and male homosexuality was not uncommon in pre European times and that it was accepted more than it is today. ( R C S P . The April Report, 1988, Vol 2:167 ) Since Pakeha colonisation it has also been evident that Maori lesbians have survived attempts of assimilation into heterosexuality. In her personal description of lesbian lifestyles in the late 1950's Laurie ( 1987:65 ) confirmed the visibility of Maori lesbians who dared live openly in lesbian communities within the larger cities. Pakeha lesbians were less visible and tended to confine themselves in suburban households.

A more contemporary lifestyle has been established on what has been described as 'communities of interest' and 'cultures of resistance '. Although these are loosely organised it is significant, that at times, they have emerged as powerful political organisations. ( Weeks, 1986:31 ) The most common characteristic of the lesbian community reflects the networking and bonding that is based on a shared sense of sexual identification. It is based more on socio-psychological unity than on locality and it is likely that for many lesbians it refers to an alternative form of family. While there has appeared to be a core set of values associated with belonging, the community is by no means homogeneous ( sic ). There have been many less fundamental values that are not shared among all lesbians. ( Lockard, 1986:85-94 ) Furthermore, not all lesbians 'belong' to a community, such as older

lesbians and minority lesbians. Perhaps the single, most significant feature of lesbian communities, if the concept of a lesbian culture is to make any sense at all, is the diversity of racial, ethnic, class and other backgrounds and experiences amongst lesbians themselves. This in itself is said by Lockard to contribute to the possibilities of extending social and cross cultural boundaries.

#### Historical Themes.

There have been notable periods in history when persecution against, and repression of, lesbianism and homosexuality in general are said to have peaked. These periods have often been under political, or religious authoritarian regimes. ( Baird, 1989:44 ) For example, lesbians were put on trial and suffered death by drowning and hanging between the 12th and 17th century.<sup>9</sup> 'Suspicious' women have been burnt as witches. Under Nazi Germany thousands of gay men and lesbians were incarcerated in concentration camps and then later refused compensation under repatriation schemes extended to other survivors by the allies. ( Heger, 1980 ) In both the Chinese and Cuban revolution gay men and lesbians were forced into heterosexual conformity and in Cuba they were sent to rehabilitation camps and then later expelled from the country as social undesirables. ( Weeks, 1986:

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9. The view that early laws did not take lesbianism seriously is challenged by Crompton ( 1985:11-25 ) and Eriksson ( 1985 :27-40 ) in their studies on the execution of lesbians in Germany, France, Italy and Spain from 1270 to 1791.

12 ) In the 1950's under the McCarthy era, in the United States, homosexuals were regarded as a national threat to security and many lesbians and gay men were fired from jobs. ( Weeks, 1986:35 )

In 1985, in Aotearoa / New Zealand the lobby to decriminalise male homosexuality and to introduce protection for lesbians and gay men under the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977., resulted in a petition signed by 800,000 people. Although some doubt was cast on the validity of many signatures, Ryan, ( 1988:76 ) has commented that the petition was a powerful reflection of widespread opposition. In Britain in 1988, legislation governing local authorities included a clause known as " Clause 28 " aimed at preventing local councils from promoting homosexuality, either directly through publications, or indirectly through funding groups. Amendments exempting any action designed to counter civil rights, or to provide counselling to school pupils were excluded. The opinion at the time was that this law appealed to the feelings of blame and hostility engendered by the AIDS epidemic and it also coincided with the Thatcher promise to restore traditional British standards. ( Pink Triangle, Issue 70. March / April, 1988:16 )

Although lesbianism has never been a criminal offence in Aotearoa / New Zealand in the same way that male homosexuality has been the reasons for this omission are not clear. But, it is very likely that the development of legal codes on homosexuality have been directly influenced by British attitudes. Queen Victoria's apparent attitude was that women simply would not do 'such awful things' and she had all references to lesbianism and removed from the intended laws on sexual activity. ( Gould, 1984:151 ) Later in 1923 attempts to

pass an amendment including lesbianism to the existing law against male homosexuality were defeated because of the grave concern that the legal recognition of the possibility of sexual intimacy between women would bring it to the attention of those who had never heard, or thought, or dreamed of such a thing. ( Weeks, 1977: 106-7 )

Despite the fact that lesbianism has not been 'outlawed' in this country it has often been treated as an unnatural state. Considerable weight was once given to the medical view that it was a pathological condition and therefore should be treated. In 1975 the psychiatric profession had a change of attitude. However, considerable damage had already been done to individual women. For example, there had been attempts to 'cure' lesbianism through the use of electro-convulsive shock therapy and mind altering drugs. ( Saphira, 1984:17 ) According to a lesbian report in 1985 the suggestion for this form of treatment was revived by an extremist group who suggested that lesbians and gay men should be forcibly detained on an island with compulsory psychiatric treatment. ( Cited in 'Snapdragon' bookshop submission to Statutes Review Committee, Homosexual Law Reform, 1985. )

Patterns show that intimacy and allegiances between women have tended to be discouraged and repressed at different times in history when they are seen as problematic and threatening to male dominance. Thus, lesbianism has been seen as a threat when it becomes an alternative lifestyle and is associated with an instability of the social order based on the existing relations between the sexes. ( Baird, 1989:44 ) The gains made by the feminist movement in the 19th and early 20th century brought about women's increasing opportunities

for independence from men. Woman had encroached into male domains such as athletics, middle managerial positions, and more generally into the paid work force. Early feminists also attacked marriage for its sexual slavery of women and some promoted the idea of spinsterhood and celibacy. ( Faderman, 1986:28-30 ) This had the effect of potentially undermining the existing order of relations between men and women.

In order to counter the idea of women's autonomy, theories of female sexuality began to influence views about their psychosexual development. It was claimed that healthy development was synonymous with heterosexuality. At the same time any suggestion of intimacy between women was attacked. Hence, romantic relationships that had earlier been viewed as normal and acceptable became a category of perversion and retarded social sexual development.

" It is apparent that many people found female independence disturbing in the late 1920's. Since lesbianism had been associated with the desire for independence, and since sexologists had made it clear that love between women was abnormal, to accuse a woman who wanted to be independent was a logical ploy for those who preferred the status quo. It was also logical that the public should welcome explicit discussion of lesbianism in literature as long as that discussion showed love between women to be unhappy and abnormal. Here then would be clear demonstration of the dangers concomitant with being a new woman. " ( Faderman, 1986:32 )

As Jeffreys ( 1984:44 ) has claimed, despite the new scientific justifications the sexual revolution was not

about the liberation of women. Instead it has represented a concerted effort to conscript women into participation in sexual intercourse with men.

".... the underlying ideology of [ ] sexology represents a counter-attack against feminism and women's increasing independence; that, in the guise of scientific objectivity and 'liberalism', it asserts men's right of access to women's bodies, thus reinforcing the social control of women by men and contributing to the maintenance of male supremacy. " ( Jackson, 1984:53 )

#### Structured Inequality.

Research conducted in the U S A has shown that public attitudes towards lesbianism and homosexuality in general have been a persuasive factor in denying lesbians and ( gay males ) legal rights and employment. For example, opinion polls in 1980 showed that lesbians and gay men continued to be regarded as a security risk in government jobs, also that they would tend to corrupt their co-workers in any employment and that they should be denied the right to enter clerical life, be a school teacher, or a judge, and that they should be debarred from the medical professions and government service. Overall homosexuality was believed to cause the downfall of civilisation. While a more liberal attitude may prevail in the 1990's, anti-discrimination and equal rights legislation has not extended protection to lesbians ( and gay males ). ( The New Internationalist, September 1989:17 ) A small scale research conducted in Aotearoa / New Zealand in 1982 was not able to make comment on the extent to which negative views towards homosexuality were

held by the public. However, it was shown that there was a strong tendency for negative attitudes to be associated with rigidly upheld views about traditional nuclear family life. ( Barton, 1982 )

Although many of the legal restrictions in Aotearoa / New Zealand against women's right to own property, to the custody of their children, and to divorce have been repealed along with other laws restricting their participation in paid employment, the state can now be said to have formalised the continued discrimination against lesbians by the fact that legal protection has failed to be achieved. Within this it has sanctioned the attitudes and practices of individuals, organisations, and the public in general as a means of informal coercion in the denial of access to housing, goods and services, the custody of children, personal safety and welfare, and employment. Furthermore, the privileges and benefits that are accrued in this society remain built into the heterosexual criteria associated with legal ( and de facto ) marriage. This is the cornerstone to access to other legal rights and benefits that is perpetuated on a more informal basis in the way of 'perks' by workplaces, organisations, clubs, and other public and private services. ( The N Z AIDS Foundation. November, 1990 )

Immigration policy in Aotearoa / New Zealand continues to treat heterosexual relationships differently to lesbian ones. For instance, partners in de facto relationships seeking residency status only need to prove the relationship has been in existence for a minimum of two years. The criteria for lesbians requires proof of a relationship that has been in existence for a minimum of four years.

The current policy on housing is also shown to indirectly discriminate against lesbians because they are excluded from state rental accommodation by a points system. Although a government report has indicated that an increasing number of women, including lesbians were choosing to share housing, the income criteria for eligibility discounted them. The alternative private rental sector with high rents and the potential to be refused access has also made it difficult for them to obtain low cost secure housing. In seeking mortgage finance they are further disadvantaged in that alone they not able to meet repayments, or because finance companies are cautious on account of the view that lesbian relationships are less stable than their heterosexual counterparts and that if they split up this will lead to problems over the divisions of property, or refinancing the assets. ( R C S P. The April Report, Vol 2, 1988:233-4 )

The rights of lesbian partners are not recognised under the law in the same way that it guarantees protection of an equal share of property for heterosexual women. Furthermore, the law does not recognise partners as legitimate next-of -kin, or automatic heirs to an estate on the death of a partner. In some cases where partners have inherited property under the terms of a will this has been successfully contested by biological family. (N Z., AIDS Foundation, 1990 ) Partners can also be excluded from consultation over medical matters and can be denied hospital visiting rights if biological, or legal families want to restrict access to their sick, or dying daughter and sister. Such precedent has been set, where lesbians have been denied all rights to continue their relationships, or maintain contact with partners,

who become dependent through accident or illness.<sup>10</sup>

Other informally implemented policies clearly favour heterosexual relationships and disadvantage those of the same sex. For example, both private and state owned insurance companies give a reduction of rates to heterosexual couples. In some cases lesbians ( and gay men ) are being denied insurance, or forced to pay higher premiums solely because of their sexual identity status and it has been evident that questions about sexual activity have been confined to a homosexual context and the AIDS risk ( N Z AIDS Foundation, November, 1990 ) Associate memberships to clubs and organisations are given at a cheaper rate to heterosexual partners. Even where there is no requirement for the formal gathering of members in order to maintain active memberships, such as in the Automobile Association, lesbians have been actively denied access to reduced rates. ( Personal observation, 1991 ) One of the first companies to publicly promote its discriminatory policies against lesbians ( and gay men ) in its employ has been Air New Zealand. In their refusal to extend their usual perquisites of cheap air fares to the partners of these employees the company has denied that their policy discriminates on the basis of any status other than homosexuality.

" Unless, and until, there is a change on the law regulating discrimination on the ground of sexual' orientation, the company does not intend to recognize such relationships. " ( N Z Herald, December 13, 1990. )

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10. See Thompson, Karen., & Andrezejewski, Julie., ( 1988 )

While some laws and state policies reflect a less rigid attitude towards 'common law' marriages between heterosexuals, this flexibility has not been extended to lesbian relationships. The fact that this has given rise to anomalies in the way heterosexual women in relationships are denied access to certain benefits in their own right portrays the extent to which the state is prepared to maintain the legitimacy of heterosexuality and to exclude non-heterosexual relationships. This is done in some instances by simply ignoring the existence of such relationships by not including them as a category in statistical data such as the census. Where the statistics do include provision for 'single' women and 'solo mother', these options imply the absence of a male partner, or not being in the state of marriage and thus do not appropriately define the nature of the 'lesbian' relationship.

In other instances, lesbians are denied access to welfare benefits on the grounds that their relationships are not recognised. These include access to the 'widows' and 'women alone' benefits where the criteria for entitlement is based on the loss of, or absence of a male partner. These benefits apply only to women who have been married and lost the financial support of a man. Entitlement to other welfare benefits such as the 'unemployment allowance', sickness and invalid benefits are paid to individuals at a single rate of pay, or extended to partners where there is a relationship in the 'nature of marriage'. Because same sex relationships are not included under the criteria for marriage, lesbians in relationships are advantaged by being able to claim access to these benefits as individuals.

Lesbians with dependent children are also somewhat advantaged over heterosexual women because of their

eligibility for the Domestic Purposes Benefit when their partner is in full time paid employment. Since lesbian relationships or domestic arrangements are not deemed to be in the 'nature of marriage', lesbians benefit by being treated as economically independent. On an individual basis this ironically may balance out the disparity between the lower incomes earned by women in paid work in comparison with the male who is paid as the 'family provider'. However, it also serves as an example of the anomaly created by continuing to treat heterosexual women as dependents within the family, while at the same time reinforcing hetero-relations to the point of excluding lesbians from access to other resources and services. This advantage could be equally applied to heterosexual women by treating them as non dependents and is similar in effect to that of family income assessments for 'family support' which has essentially served as an informal means of regulating and controlling heterosexual women by regarding them as dependents within nuclear families. ( Pascall, 1986:25 )

#### Mis-Information And Invisibility.

Various forms of direct discrimination are endured by lesbians on a daily basis. These usually relate to incidents of harassment and hostility and are effective forms of control over behaviour which might lead family, co-workers, bosses, and members of the public to suspect lesbianism. For example, the expectation of even disapproval, as a mild reaction, from the public might discourage lesbians from using public facilities such as restaurants, motels and hotels. This creates an atmosphere of secrecy and denial which in itself becomes a pervasive form of discrimination. Denial also operates

at other levels beyond self censorship. Images in popular literature and in the media are almost exclusively heterosexual. This reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is 'normal' and creates a perception of lesbianism as 'odd', or deviant because it remains hidden from public view. On a more personal level families often operate in the same way. They will often deny the lesbianism of one, or more of their members and exclude them and, or their partners on festive and celebratory occasions.

Because lesbians have no access to redress through the law when they have been subject to discrimination their experiences can only be addressed at the level of their own support networks. Thus, many of the incidents that occur may never be revealed beyond the lesbian communities. This makes discrimination appear non-existent to the public eye. It is therefore difficult to gauge both its extent and impact as long as public and self censorship surrounds the issue of lesbianism. In addition to the silence and the withholding of information this is often supplemented by myths and stereotypes that hold lesbians and homosexuals in general, responsible for the moral decay of society. ( Egerton et al., 1987:18. )

Positive images and role models of lesbians as those who have achieved in their field, contributed to community services, or held important positions in public office, have not been available. This is because of the secrecy most lesbians are forced to maintain to protect their positions. <sup>11</sup>

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11. The exception to this was Marilyn Waring, Member of Parliament 1975 to 1984.

Lesbian ( and gay male ) service and social groups also find it difficult to obtain access to public funding for their programmes. Those who have managed to get grants have sometimes lost them as a result of their activities being made public. ( Personal observation ) The exception to this has been AIDS programmes which has allowed some of the issues relevant to gay and lesbians groups to be aired through the media. However, the boundaries within which these programmes are able to operate is often narrowly confined and not usually able to be extended to education on sexuality, or the promotion of lesbian and gay lifestyles. ( Personal observation. )

### Conclusions.

This chapter has sought to provide a theoretical perspective on sexuality and women's oppression. This has included cultural and historical themes of repression of lesbianism along with radical re-interpretations of its existence. It has been argued that institutionalised heterosexuality is compulsory and therefore, central to the control over women.

The following chapter describes the economic position of women and examines some ways in which conformity to heterosexuality and traditional gender roles and stereotypes are linked to the control over women's access to economic resources at the level of paid employment.

**GENDER DEFINED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: UNDERMINING  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE:**

" We need an economics which comprehends the institution of heterosexuality, with its double workload for women and its sexual division of labour, as the most idealized of economic relations. " ( Rich, 1981:37 )

Introduction.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the economic status of women and to offer an explanation of how gender defined employment has been tied to policies and practices which have operated at the level of the state and the labour market. It highlights the ways in which these have impacted on Maori women compared to Pakeha women. Yet, it has also been well established that women as a group are under represented within some occupations and within occupational structures and that they are paid, on an average, less than their male counterparts. This chapter discusses some of the ways in which women's labour is organised to ensure that the disparities between men and women are maintained. Accordingly, it is argued here that women's labour is 'domesticated' and 'sexualised' as an underlying and implicit requirement for women to conform to a heterosexual model.

For example, at the level of both unpaid and paid employment heterosexism has operated to ensure

that women are marginal and secondary wage earners in the nuclear family, that their primary caregiving role keeps them tied to the home and family, or when they are in paid work, it keeps them tied to a double working day. It determines their participation more predominantly in part time than full time work. Although not all heterosexual women appear to conform to the traditional sex roles and stereotypes, lesbians represent a group, who by the fact of their sexual identity status have rejected adherence to not only sex roles but sexual roles and to the traditional nuclear family model. They are therefore, an anomaly and contradiction to the view that women are marginal and secondary wage earners. Despite the fact that lesbians do not fit into this category they have continued to be confined to employment that is 'gender defined'.

Employment policies and research on women's employment have assumed that because gender is a significant determinant of job opportunities this implies that all women should be treated as if they occupy the same position in relation to the traditional, male defined, nuclear family. Thus, heterosexism has operated at the level of analysis and policy development. This is because women's subordinate position has continued to be discussed as a problem of sex roles in marriage, the nuclear family and the male-female division of labour. This has defined women only in terms of relationships with men and has conceptualised them as the 'working mother', or the housewife', or the 'solo mother', and the 'single woman'. ( Cavin, 1985:176 )

Because lesbians are treated as the invisible minority it has been difficult to identify their location within the workplace. Furthermore, hostility, harassment and the potential for unfair treatment are factors which

make it difficult for lesbians to publicly identify. Thus, their appearance of conformity to heterosexual, female sex roles and stereotypes makes the assumption seem 'true'.

The Role Of The State And Women's Economic Status.

The route to equality for women in Aotearoa / New Zealand could well be described as an 'uncertain' one. For example, it has been disputable that economic resources have been distributed in women's favour. ( Saville-Smith, 1987:198 )

" It is rarely stated that men withhold economic resources from women : that male decision makers both deliberately and consciously formulate policies which favour men. " ( Aitken, 1980:21 )

Despite the fact that the state has not always acted in the interests of women they have actively pursued their right to equal citizenship and participation at all levels of society. In doing so women have turned to the state for action and lobbied for reform of discriminatory laws. ( Saville-Smith, 1987:198 ) Some feminists claim that the effectiveness of this struggle can now be measured by the fact that since women

have been formally incorporated as a political force at the state level, it has not engaged in any significant attempts to exclude them from paid employment. However, it has taken considerable political pressure to bring about changes in law which recognised equal pay and discrimination. ( Walby, 1990:161-3 ) This view might well be called into question. For example, both pieces of legislation have been undermined by lack of resources, limited sanctions against employers, and exceptions which favour employers. ( Gregory, 1987 ) In addition, the repeal of the Employment Equity Act., 1990., was a significant attempt on the part of the state to directly undermine women's employment. As O'Donovan ( 1985:174-5 ) has claimed, there is a qualitative difference between laws which merely formally recognise women's equality and those which actively seek to remove barriers to it. Formal equality has assumed that the free market ideal can be improved by women's equal access. It also presupposes that there is a freely negotiated bargain between women and their employers without any constraints, or inequalities of power, or restraints arising from family commitments and trade union intervention.

Historically, it has been clear that women have always worked. It is also clear that women have actively fought to resist their exclusion from the best jobs. ( Walby, 1990:58 ) The demands of earlier feminists were focussed on not only the right to vote, but equal rights in divorce, custody of children and equal employment opportunities. These demands were broadened somewhat by the 1980's to include equal political influence, improved working conditions, equal pay and a diversification of paid occupations, the provision of state funded social and welfare services including health and welfare facilities, the provision of community based and funded

child care facilities, and the dismantling of the state's control over women's reproductive capacities.

( Aitken, 1980:1; Bunkle, 1980:64 ) There have been minimal changes achieved such as the removal of protectionist laws which prevented women's access to paid employment, and policies such as the marriage bar which forced women to relinquish their jobs on marriage; to laws promoting their interests such as the right to maternity leave, and limited provisions under equal pay and anti-discrimination legislation. ( Walby, 1990: 161-5 )

The preconditions for demands such as equal pay and opportunity have arisen from the material conditions of women's lives. Their experiences have been clearly characterised by economic and social inequality. For example, Pakeha immigrant women had little choice in their means to economic survival. The occupations available were limited to service and domestic work, prostitution, or unpaid service within marriage. ( Sutch, 1966:56 and MacDonald, 1986:16-24 ) With industrial development opportunities for paid work may have been extended, but then so was the exploitation. As public awareness was drawn to practices such as sweated labour the response of the government was to bring in legislation limiting the number of hours women could work each day for pay. ( Sutch, 1974: 71-2 ) In contrast there has never been a limit put on the number of hours which women could work unpaid. The increasingly high rate of desertion of women and children by men, was also a noticeable feature concerning their poverty. One that belies the view that marriage economically secures women's livelihood. The meagre form of welfare introduced by the state to counter the poverty evident amongst women did little more than introduce a different form of control over women's lives. ( Tennant, 1986:40-2 )

Even though the growth and development of industry demanded an expanded work force, women were not seen to benefit by increased opportunities. Primarily this was due to the state's attitude on wage labour and male dominated unions which have clearly formulated policies restricting women's employment and favouring the male right to work over women's economic independence. For example, the attitude of the arbitration court in 1922 reflected a protectionist attitude towards the male wage when it refused to apply a minimum rate in women's favour. Men however, were seen as being entitled to a fair standard of living and to be able to purchase a livelihood commensurate with the comforts marriage would give them. Thus, it was firmly fixed in men's minds that women would provide the unpaid labour of society and that this would be secured by the economic dependency on a man.

" ...Very few would assert that the average man can live a normal and complete life without marriage. Now support of the family properly falls upon the husband and father, not the wife and mother. The obligation of the father to provide a livelihood for the wife and young children is quite definite as it is to maintain himself. Consequently he has the right to obtain such a livelihood on reasonable terms from the bounty of this earth. If he does not get his measure of remuneration his personal dignity is violated. "  
( Cited in Iverson, 1987 )

It was not until 1937 that the arbitration court set a minimum wage for women and then it was at 47 percent of the rate set for men. It is evident that women had no

personal dignity to be protected in the eyes of the male policy makers.

It has clearly appeared as if the economic position of women has been a situation that state has not been eager to resolve. For example, successive governments have shown a continued resistance to meet the international obligations set out under the United Nations declaration and the International Labour Organization during the war and post world war II era when the demand for labour was high. It was also cheap labour as long as women could be paid less than men. Although seventy two countries had ratified the policy of the I L O conventions by 1972, Aotearoa / New Zealand did not do so until 1983. Since this time the state's apparent commitment to equal pay and the elimination of discrimination against women, has been seen as an extension to the legislation implemented in 1972 and 1977 respectively, which failed to overcome the disparities in women's income, or enforce sanctions against the ongoing practices of discrimination.

#### The Pakeha, Male Economic Model.

Historical patterns have been important in the way that both colonisation and the imperatives of the traditional white nuclear family model, have impacted on Maori and Pakeha women in different ways. For Maori women, the breakdown of traditional social and economic structures was essentially achieved through the legally and physically forced dispossession from a land based economy and communal lifestyle, ( Kelsey, 1984:20-3 ) Culturally, the status, power and authority of Maori women has been defined and symbolised matrilineally. It has also been

integrally linked to a concept of the land wherein both have been regarded as providers and sustenance to humanity. ( Pere, 1982:17-8; Department Of Statistics & Ministry Of Women's Affairs, 1990:13 ) With the erosion of communal life Maori women's economic survival became increasingly dependent upon the availability of paid work under a Pakeha economic structure which in turn emphasised a city based industrial and manufacturing labour force.

The consequence of a competitive and individualistic economy has resulted in what Maori women have claimed is a devaluing of their autonomy and worth because it is measured by a monetary exchange for labour and does not extend to valuing child minding and domestic work roles. Furthermore, it has required a new process of adaptation to whanau relations that has confined Maori women to household arrangements structured along the hetero-relational model of the male dominated family.

" Maori people could either sell their resources ( ie., their land, fish ), or their labour. Under the Pakeha model the demand was only for males. Gradually the attitude of the Maori men began to change. They began to model themselves on the Pakeha boss and work mates, regarding their earnings as belonging to themselves and thus deciding what portions should be meted out and to whom. With this new psychological shift, Maori women began to experience a new social order, not only the new individualistic attitude, but a new attitude towards them as decision-makers, partners, wives, mothers, nurturers, caregivers and sisters. This had a dramatic effect on the whanau. " (Kupenga, Rata & Nepe, 1988:6 )

The impact of colonisation has gone further than re-organising economic relations for Maori women.

" Often for young urbanised Maori women, this has been magnified by the sexist and heterosexist nature of the rules -- how to be a real Maori woman. Her role is defined by men, frequently both Maori and Pakeha. Add a touch of colour to a dirty joke, a teenage love comic, a song at a stag party and you will find racist sexism at its worst. Brown girls are seen as slags in Aotearoa society -- slags and scrubbers, all of us, so damned. To be a Maori women further sharpens the focus; the isolation from Maori men as sexist; the alienation from white women as racist. "

( Te Awekotuku, 1984:274 )

Racism has clearly shown that equality of opportunity for Maori women has had diverging dimensions from those of Pakeha women. As a result of this there has been some criticism of the way in which Pakeha women have attempted to determine the priorities for social change.

" White feminists do this by defining " feminism" for this country by using their white power, status and privilege to ensure their definition of " feminism " supercedes ( sic) that of Maori women. " (Awatere, 1984:42 )

The demand for social change has reflected cultural concerns and the need to conserve the future of the land with its equitable distribution to Maori. Along with this there has been the demand to restore Maori women's autonomy and their right to participate in the management

of the resources of the country, and their inclusion in decision making processes of economic and social development under the Treaty of Waitangi to promote whanau, hapu and iwi structures. ( Kupenga et al., 1988:8 )

For Maori lesbians, ( wahine takatapui ), ( Te Awekotuku, 1991:59 ), their priorities have strongly suggested a move away from what has been called the Maoritanga problem which emphasises racially exclusive definitions of women in relation to men and their power over women. ( Te Awekotuku, 1991:61-2 ) In contrast there is a call for Maori heterosexual women to recognise the limitations of their continuing loyalty to men and to create alliances with Maori lesbians in articulating a women orientated vision based on a matriarchal heritage.

" Heterosexual Maori women, through the fact of their loyalty to men, must inevitably place their energies in the ethnic struggle -- the realization of their Maori being, Mana Motuhake, is the immediate priority. Although perhaps occasionally considered, their women being is examined only as it relates to this primary commitment... The patriarchal inheritance, which is power over people, instils and ensures the continuing oppression of women. *This happens irrespective of race.* ( Te Awekotuku, 1991:64 ) ( Ellipses mine to indicate portions have been deleted for the sake of brevity. )

'Gender' Defined Employment: The Structuring Of Subordination And Exploitation.

It has now been well established that in paid employment, all women as a group, occupy low status, less powerful and politically influential, and lower paid positions than do men. The statistics show that women aged fifteen years and over represent 51 percent of the population, and men 49 percent. From these figures, 55 percent of women and 79 percent of men are in paid employment. ( Household Labour Force Survey, 1987 cited in P S A Research Discussion Paper, No 22, March, 1988 ) In 1990, 63 percent of the female population aged between fifteen and sixty years, were either employed in paid work , or seeking to be. Women currently comprise 43 percent of the total labour force. However, these figures include a growing proportion of women employed in part time work. The trend for Maori women has been somewhat different. They are more likely to be unemployed than are Pakeha women. When they are involved in paid work this is more likely to be full time than part time employment, especially beyond the age of thirty years. ( Department Of Statistics & Ministry Of Women's Affairs, 1990:57-8 )

The economic position of all women has been associated with two factors. One is the trend of occupational segregation and the other is their lower average ranking within industries and occupational groups. Both help to explain women's lower rate of income. For example, patterns have consistently shown that women are confined to a narrow range of employment opportunities and are predominantly employed within service industries including social, community and welfare services, and the wholesale and retail trade.

This sphere counts for 63 percent of all female employment. Within this social services such as health, education and welfare are 63 percent female. This ratio is consistent within the banking industry with 60 percent and the hotel and restaurant business representing 60 percent of those employed as women. ( Department Of Statistics & Ministry Of Women's Affairs, 1990:62 ) Differences for Maori women show they are more highly represented within production, labouring and transport jobs than any other kind of employment. ( Census 1986 cited in Wilson et al., 1988:40 )

Segregation into 'sex-typed' occupations has been a systematic process as evidenced between the years of 1972 and 1982 when the growth of women's participation in 'female typed' occupations showed a rapid increase. At the same time there was a decrease in their participation in 'mixed sex' occupations, and only a very small increase in their employment within 'male typed' occupations. This increased concentration of women into traditionally low paid, 'female' jobs has been regarded as having the potential to absorb the numbers of all women entering employment during this period. ( R C S P. The April Report, Vol 2, 1988:376 ) As pointed out by Hyman and Clark ( 1987:36 ) the labour market has shown a high degree of flexibility in avoiding equal pay at a time when women were becoming increasingly involved in paid work. Given the inadequacies and limitations of the law, employers were seen to have an entirely legal means to avoid the implementation of equal pay legislation by re-organising women so that they were not doing comparable work to men. ( Pascall, 1986:32 and Gregory, 1987:22-3 )

This pattern has been observed overseas, and according to Walby, ( 1990:53-9 ) documentation on occupational segregation of women in Britain has shown

that where male dominated industries have been unable to exclude women then segregation is a strategy to minimise direct competition for higher wages and to maintain the lower status associated with women's work. Walby's conclusions are relevant to the situation in Aotearoa. She has claimed that the protectionism over men's interests and their control over economically productive resources has included strategies which site the problem at the level of the labour market, rather than at the level of the nuclear family. Along with the exclusion of women from particular jobs designated as 'male' and the segregation of women to lower paid and lower ranking positions, a further tactic has included the collusion of men with male dominated unions and a male dominated state, as forms of control over higher paid and higher status jobs.

Women's lower average ranking within industries and workplaces has been evidenced by a consistent pattern. For example, even though they comprise 73 percent of the staff in primary schools they are only 16 percent of the principals. In state secondary schools they represent 50 percent of the staff and only 16 percent of the principals, and in the banking industry 70 percent of those in lower grade positions are women and only 5 percent occupy the executive positions. ( Clark, 1988: 18 ) In the state sector 437 positions have been designated as 'senior'. Of these only thirty one were held by women in 1988 and only one of these was held by a Maori woman. ( Horsfield & Evans, 1988:40 ) In the Department Of Social Welfare approximately 75 percent of employees have been women. The percentage of those in higher senior and management positions has been minimal compared to their overall numbers. ( D S W. 1986 ) Within the social work occupational class women have represented approximately 57 percent of those employed as field

social workers and within this only 12.2. percent have been Maori women. The distribution across the grades has shown that 77 percent of women social workers occupy positions below senior grades and only 6 percent occupied positions of Assistant Director, or an equivalent grading. ( Burns et al., 1987 )

The twofold segregation of women in paid employment has had a considerable impact on women's income levels. Statistics show women as a group earn 43 percent of all income from salaries and wages. This amounts to 51 percent of the income men earn. ( Household Labour Force Survey, 1987, cited in P S A Research Discussion Paper, No 22, March 1988, see Department Of Statistics & Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1990:71-3 ) The effect of equal pay legislation resulted in an increase of average ordinary-time hourly earnings to 79 percent in 1976, and to 81 percent in 1990. However, in calculating women's average total weekly wage in 1990 they earned 73 percent of men's. The difference between hourly and weekly wages is due to the tendency for women to work shorter hours while men have a greater propensity to work overtime. ( Department Of Statistics & Ministry Of Women's Affairs, 1990:73 )

In 1989 the average yearly income for Maori women in full time paid work was \$11,520 compared to Pakeha women in full time work whose average yearly income was \$13,765. ( Department Of Statistics & Ministry Of Women's Affairs, 1990:75 ) In 1986 only 3.1 percent of Maori women and 6.8 percent of Pakeha women received a total yearly income, ( ie., income derived from all sources ) of \$20,000 or above compared with 17.7 percent of Maori

men and 31.2 percent of Pakeha men. ( Census, 1986 cited in R C S P. The April Report, Vol 3, Part 1, 1988:332-3 )

The impact on Maori women, both economically and socially has been regarded as a significant indicator of policies which reflect Pakeha male interests. The overall effect has been manifest in all aspects of their lives.

" Looking at the status of Maori women in New Zealand society today one can see she suffers a multiple dilemma. That of being female alone is enough, and she is usually working class. She forms the major part of an unskilled and underpaid factory labour force; she must meet the daily economic demands of a larger than average family, and supplementing her husband's comparatively low income. More and more she is setting up house in a new housing development, and coping with the pressures of being away from the whanau -- Maori extended family--and in the nuclear family environment of a suburb." ( Te Awekotuku, 1991:46 )

#### Sex Differentiations And The Sexualisation Of Women In Paid Labour.

In seeking to explain the basis for the differences in income between men and women arguments have traditionally focused on women's lack of skills, training and education. Defined in the language of the labour market these are referred to as 'human capital factors' that have typically been used to justify the merit criteria for employment. ( Hyman & Clark, 1987:23 and Walby, 1990:29-32 ) However, there is evidence based on overseas

studies which suggests that even when women compare favourably with men in terms of education and qualifications this does not proportionately improve their status, or income opportunities. For instance, Japanese women are claimed to be the best educated women in the world, yet only one fourth of the major companies have women in middle management , or higher positions. ( Time, 1990:41 ) Women in the United States have been found to have earned 64 percent of the male wage even when computed for age and education. The wage difference was found to be the smallest where women occupied the smallest of the occupational category, and the highest in jobs employing predominantly women. ( MacKinnon, 1979:13-4 )

As Hyman and Clark ( 1987:36-7 ) have claimed there is a strong predisposition towards accepting that the differences in 'male' and 'female' classifications in employment are based on gender rather than the nature of the work itself and the skills required to carry it out. This raises the question of whether it is the type of work women are assigned to that is undervalued, or women as 'sex' that are devalued.

The view that being a woman is a devalued status has been identified by Phillips and Taylor, ( 1986 ) who have claimed that it is evident that 'sex' rather than job classifications is the measure of women's employment skills. For example, they have stated that 'skill definitions are saturated with sex bias'.

" Women workers carry into the workplace their status as subordinate individuals, and thus this status comes to define the value of the work they do. Far from being an economic fact, skill is often an ideological category imposed on certain

types of work by virtue of the sex and power of the workers who perform it. " ( Phillips & Taylor, 1986:55 )

As a result of research Phillips and Taylor have come to the strong conclusion that categories of work that are defined as inferior are classified, not on the basis of the skills required to carry them out, but on the basis of the inferior status of women who perform them. Both the nature of the work women do and the positions they occupy within paid employment is therefore, work defined according to their sex. In addition to this, the occupational segregation of women means that they also perform jobs that reflect their gender role; while their lower average ranking within occupations is consistent with their dependency upon the goodwill and approval of male bosses for their hiring, firing and advancement. ( MacKinnon, 1979:9-17 )

Although it has been argued that the sexual division of labour and the relationships of economic dependency of women on men are the most crucial determining features of women's inequality, ( Briar, 1986:36-7 ) this has not taken into account the qualitative differences between the way women and men are required to sell their labour. For example, women are also required to sell their femininity. Thus, paid work has become another aspect of the way they are sexualised. ( MacKinnon, 1979:18-23 ) Accordingly, not only will women be employed because they are women in jobs such as secretarial, waitressing, domestic service and child care work etc., but they will also be required to market sexual attractiveness and availability to men.

" Women historically have been required to exchange sexual services for material survival in one form or another. Prostitution and marriage as well as sexual harassment reinforce this arrangement. " ( MacKinnon, 1979:174-5 )

There has been considerable differentiation in the way in which the participation of women<sup>in</sup> paid employment has emphasised irrelevant gender based stereotypes and their sexual objectification. ( MacKinnon, 1979:70 ) The evidence also confirms that the idea of a qualified woman is one that fits with the notion of what women's proper social sexual role is. ( MacKinnon, 1979:18 )

It is perhaps significant that the only jobs where women earn more than men do is when they 'sell' their bodies, rather than their skills. In considering women's best economic option, prostitution and fashion modelling rate as very highly paid compared to secretarial, clerks, teachers etc., As Wolf ( 1990:21-27 ) has pointed out, financial value that has been assigned to women's bodies has been used as a basis for undermining equal rewards in employment and for legitimising discrimination against women. She claims that as women have attempted to breach the power structures and to escape the sale of their sexuality in marriage, this has been met with a nearly identical barter system in the labour market. For example, as women tried to exchange economic dependence for independence the standards of beauty and sexual attractiveness have become a 'bona fide occupational qualification' for women. This fixation has been seen as a direct consequence of some women's entry into powerful positions.

" [ It ] came about as a result of real fear, on the part of the central institutions of our society, about what might happen if free women made free progress in free bodies through a system that calls itself a meritocracy." ( Wolf, 1990:28-9 )

The requirement that women exchange sexual attractiveness and availability as part of the employment contract has been borne out by the systematic practice of sexual harassment in the workplace. As Rich ( 1981:15 ) has claimed, sexual harassment means that women very quickly discover that heterosexuality is a 'true' qualification for employment whatever the job description. Women who are decisive in their resistance to sexual overtures by male bosses and co-workers are accused of being 'dried up', 'sexless', or lesbian. Furthermore, women also learn that employment opportunities are often contingent on their compliance with sexual harassment.

The reality of the heterosexual imperative means that women's economic vulnerability and the power men have to enforce sex role stereotypes on unwilling women ensures compliance. For lesbians this is not just a matter of denying the truth about their private lives, but in pretending to be a heterosexual woman by dressing and acting in a feminine and deferential manner. ( Cline and Spender, 1987:154-5 )

" In the workplace, sanctions for non-conforming women range from patronisation, exclusion from major decision-making process, failure to achieve promotion to sexual harassment. In the workplace, sexual demands between male boss and female employee are particularly coercive because women's economic livelihood is at stake...in the workplace

more than anywhere else men's power to enforce their sex -role stereotyping on unwilling women was particularly crucial to the employment of feminist or lesbian women." ( Cline & Spender, 1987:154-5 ) ( Ellipses mine to indicate portions have been deleted for the sake of brevity. )

#### Defining The 'Working' Woman.

Women have generally regarded the formal introduction of a policy on equality of opportunity as going some way to the elimination of barriers to their full participation in paid employment. As a radical feminist priority it has also been claimed as an important step towards social and economic independence from men. ( Bunch, 1987 ) On a more specific level it has been argued that it is a necessary response to the inadequacies of equal pay legislation in correcting the discrepancies in income between men and women. ( Hyman & Clark, 1987 ) These justifications have all represented a response to the increasing participation of women in paid employment.

The view that women seek economic independence because of necessity, or desire ( or both ), is a challenge to the belief that their disadvantaged economic position comes from the refusal, or inability to work. The Royal Commission On Social Policy ( The April Report, Vol 2., 1988:195 ) recognised that assumptions held about women's participation in paid employment were clearly restrictive to the idea and reality of women's economic independence.

" Women have always participated in the paid workforce, but this involvement has been limited

by their unpaid work responsibilities. The assumption being that all women have these responsibilities works against those who do not. " ( R C S P., The April Report, Vol 2., 1988:195 )

The fact that some women have always worked in underpaid employment, such as poor women, minority women and those without male economic support has often historically gone unrecorded. Although their struggle for better working conditions and pay has been relevant to the cause of women's equality it has tended to be given only minimal attention. Eisenstein, ( 1981:206-13 ) has commented that the demands of white middle class married woman, who as a group have become increasingly involved at the level of paid employment, has drawn a response from the state to the need for equal opportunities. She claims that this is because, as a group, they have been more readily perceived as 'working mothers'. They have provided the image of the 'real woman' who fulfilled her obligations in the home as mother, wife and housewife.

" The notion of the " working mother" is the latest attempt to define the consciousness of these wage working women. This attempt to adjust ideology, to be more in line with the reality of the "working mother" is partially to protect the [ ] image of woman as dependent on man." ( Eisenstein, 1981:212 )

Accordingly Eisenstein has argued that the ideology of the 'working mother' has been maintained as a means of denying that women work for wages. Women were typically defined as wives and mothers. For example, 'women's place is in the home' is an adage that applied to the realities of many women and hid the realities of many others. The shift to the idea of women as secondary wage earners and

working mothers continues to emphasise that motherhood is their primary duty. It has also emphasised the way that social sexual relations are constantly defined as women's relationships with men, a concern for the sexual division of labour, and a concern for their economic dependency.

On a wider level these concerns have been reflected by the social and cultural affirmation women are given for their conformity to motherhood. Waring, ( 1988:154-68 ) has commented that women's worth has tended to be measured in relation to their role in reproduction and the production of the next labour force. She explains that women whose sexuality does not conform to the boundaries of reproduction are socially outcast. This especially applies to lesbians who may consciously reject conception and reproduction. At the same time lesbians with children might gain access to some of the privileges heterosexual women do.

### Conclusions.

This chapter has highlighted women's economic subordination and exploitation as a fact of both their gender and sexual role within a hetero-relational context. It has shown that the state has had a clear role in maintaining women's economic dependency. The implications of this also relate to male social sexual control over women.

This chapter has referred to the empirical evidence on women's economic status and their position within paid employment. While this information tells women they are unequally placed vis a vis men, it does not tell them how or why this occurs. On an implicit level women understand

that it is their sex that is devalued and therefore the skills they have and the work they do is devalued. On another level, and one that has not been usually recognised, is the issue of women's sexuality, or heterosexuality. It has been argued in this chapter sexual roles and stereotypes have also informed women of their social and economic sex roles and stereotypes. These are roles that have become the basis for our economic exchange of labour.

It has been argued in chapter three that heterosexism functions as a dynamic of those roles and social definitions. These are both culturally and politically defined. The belief that women should be sexually and psychologically dependent on a man is so intertwined with the belief that they should also be economically dependent on them, that both have been structured to compliment the other. In other words each serves to reinforce the other.

## CHAPTER FIVE.

**METHODOLOGY.**

" It is the political choice on the part of feminists to find in favour of women but this is no different from non-feminist researchers who have exercised their political choice by almost always finding in favour of men. The difference is that feminism acknowledges it politics."  
( Spender, 1980:8 )

Introduction.

This chapter addresses the methodological concerns of feminist research and those that have been raised as issues pertinent to research on lesbians. It is clear, that in the past both feminist and orthodox research methods used in studies on lesbians have been deficient and continued to perpetuate views on lesbianism that portray it as a deviancy, a social problem, or merely a sexual practice. More recent lesbian research conducted overseas and some of it in this country, has tried to extricate itself from the past problems. This research represents part of a growing body of information on lesbians, albeit a new and tentative area.

Although feminism now has a developed methodological framework, there appears to be no fixed rule on how this

could include lesbians. It would therefore be accurate to say that research methods are 'experimental' and should be viewed as a process that is an integral part of the research itself. The methodology applied to this research draws on the radical feminist principle of the 'personal as political'. Thus, both the quality of the data and the conclusions drawn from it are critical aspects. Insofar as they confirm the use of any particular method they have to be viewed as part of a context within which they have arisen.

#### Placing Lesbians Within The Conceptual Framework.

Feminism has justified its methods on the basis that it is an articulation of women's experiences from a perspective that is both subjective and partial. Thus, research has the potential to validate women's lives and make visible their concerns that have previously been silenced, distorted, or marginalised. In addition to this, research should be capable of criticising the very conditions under which women have lived and the systems that have represented and confined their lives with the view to contributing to the development of new and transformative theories. ( Gross, 1986 ) Despite the radical potential involved in this approach there has remained a gap and void in the kinds of experiences considered worthy of study. Furthermore, feminism has often been concerned with justifying women's 'sameness', or equality with men and has therefore overlooked, or ignored the aspects which make us different, even amongst ourselves.

This research has been concerned with both similarities and differences. Although its primary aim

has been to show that lesbianism, as a difference, is not represented in the area of feminist research. It is also an attempt, albeit tentative, to challenge the frameworks of equality and 'sameness'. For example, equal employment opportunities policy adheres to an essentially, liberalist framework which presupposes 'sameness' while the concepts of 'sex' and 'sexuality' presuppose difference. ( MacKinnon, 1987:33 ) It is therefore, incongruous to focus on what makes lesbians similar to heterosexual women ( apart from an obvious biological fact ) so that they are seen to blend and conform to the existing social order, rather than on what makes their sexual identity status different for them, and what forces are in operation to deny and make those differences invisible.

Previous research has either, ignored the existence of lesbians, or dealt with them as co-categories within conceptual male frameworks as if they share the same experiences as gay men. This lack has discounted lesbians unique experiences as women and made their perceptions of their social world invisible. ( Atmore, 1990:4-5 ) Equally so, feminist research has tended to treat lesbianism as peripheral to the 'real' problem of women's subordination. For instance, sex roles and the sex division of labour have been treated as analytically distinct from heterosexuality. As Cavin ( 1985:176 ) has pointed out the categories women have been assigned to are heterosexist ones which presume women can only be defined in relation to a man.

Feminism And Methodological Concerns.

In the development of feminist research various criticisms have been levelled at what has been termed 'sexist' social science. Thus, in order to justify feminism as a particular theory and social practice a great deal of attention has been paid to the limitations of orthodox and traditional research methods. In particular, it is an activity that has primarily been the sphere of men. This has been said to have resulted in the male bias in the definition and choice of problems, and bias in design and interpretation of findings. There has also been some attention paid to the ideology of science itself, which in feminist terms, has resulted in a dichotomised view of the world excluding the experiences of women. Some attempts to redirect research in the interests of women have resulted in treating women as subjects within existing male frameworks. For example, existing theories of oppression have unsuccessfully been modified and adjusted to account for women's specific experiences. Contemporary feminism has therefore, sought to extricate itself from the problems of the past and in the need to move away from evaluating women against male standards has focused on taking account of women's needs, experiences, and interests so that research can be instrumental in improving their lives in some way. ( Klein, 1983:90 ) In doing this, one of the essential tasks has been to develop new criteria for what counts as knowledge on women. ( Stanley & Wise, 1983:29 )

On a practical level this research has sought to respond to problems which are said to confront any researcher at the start of an investigation. The first is the concern with identifying the intellectual and epistemological justifications upon which a methodology

is based and the status accorded to the kind of knowledge that is produced. ( Plummer, 1981 ) MacKinnon's, ( 1983:635-9 ) uncompromising feminist stand-point deals with this problem by rejecting all claims to an objective, abstract, and universal experience. She has proposed that feminism can only emerge from the particular, partial and subjective experiences of women which at the same time cannot yet transcend the specificity, totality and context of male power. Accordingly the feminist methodological principle of the 'personal as political' is also its epistemology.

As MacKinnon further explains, male epistemology is an historical reflection of male power to define the world from a male point of view and according to standards which have stood for point-of-viewlessness, meaning a false objectivity. As she points out this is the very basis upon which women have been objectified and in the process their voices have been silenced and their experiences have been personalised and privatised. This research has focused on the dynamics of that process for lesbians wherein it is argued that male theories of women's sexuality have divided the world according to male interests. On this basis it has also been possible to understand how the absences, gaps and silences around the question of lesbianism serve to make heterosexuality compulsory for women. As Gross ( 1983:183 ) has suggested,

" The research and development of theory must be capable of articulating the role that these silences and masculine representations play in the suppression of [ feminism ] and of affirming the possibility of the other alternative perspectives."

The second problem the researcher must deal with is a technical one associated with how the research is going to be conducted and the basis upon which claims to reliability and validity can be made. ( Plummer, 1981 ) While it has previously been assumed that the manner in which the researcher conducts the research should be as detached as possible, feminists have claimed that a closer involvement is now central to the process. For example, Reinharz, ( 1983:174 ) claims that research should be experiential, involving the researcher in a dynamic process which requires growth and understanding on the part of the researcher, on the problem investigated, and on the method used. However, she maintains that researcher bias should be eliminated insofar as determining the problem and the types of questions that need to be asked on women's lives. So that diverse opinions can be included in formulating the research, Reinharz has suggested that there should be a method of collaboration between the researcher and participants.

A form of collaboration was carried out for this research by way of consultation on the formulation of the problem and the types of questions that were asked of participants. Two lesbian social workers agreed to participate as an 'ethics' group which was designed to function as a form of accountability on the part of the researcher. The group also carried out a pilot study on the questionnaire and recommended changes in design and format which were eventually distributed to other participants. The group were Pakeha, including myself, and thus there was some concern at the lack of representation of Maori lesbians. Challenges were made regarding the tendency of research on lesbians to marginalise the experiences of those from other cultural and class backgrounds. Thus, there was some concern that

the methods used in this research would not reflect the diversity of lesbianism, or be culturally sensitive to Maori lesbians who might not want to participate if they were not at ease with the method of filling out a questionnaire. These difficulties were not easily resolved and as Atmore ( 1990:5) has pointed out 'well-educated' white and middle class researchers tend to reinforce a partial perspective, ".... affecting not only the area of study and its results, but also the choice of sample."

The issue of who conducts the research, their affiliations and sympathies with the participants, and the extent to which their differences, or similarities in terms of class, race etc., either impinge on, or enhance the research process have been debated concerns. There is also the relationship of the researcher to participants and the kind of involvement that is intended in the process of conducting the research. For example, the options can include a distanced and 'professional' involvement, a contract of mutual exchange and expectations, or a highly interactive, highly involved and highly reciprocal relationship. ( Plummer, 1981 ) Feminists believe that distortions are less likely to occur if the research is conducted by women and in a manner that is less detached from the participants. For instance, the interview process is focused on breaking down the hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee ( Oakley, 1981 ) As a priority for feminist research this takes on added significance for lesbians who are more likely to resist the sex role stereotype of the compliant, or submissive woman. They are also likely to be distrustful of the interpretations placed on their experiences by 'outsiders', more especially heterosexuals.

Lesbian and gay male researchers in the area of homosexuality have been scathing of the traditional methods of research conducted in the past and have pointed out that bias and ignorance have been damaging to lesbians ( and gay men ). For example, Suppe ( 1985 ) has claimed that past research literature has been highly defective and consequently findings and interpretations have been suspect. He has stated that one reason for this has been that experimental bias has involved inadequate and distorted sampling. Another has been the use of classification systems that force respondents into categories of predominantly heterosexual concerns. Concepts such as masculinity and femininity tend to reduce lesbianism to a biological explanation, or reduce it to social sexual stereotypes that do not have the same relevance amongst lesbians. Other serious defects have included the types of questions that have been asked and the factors selected for inclusion. As Suppe explains these have strongly influenced the issues, claims and concerns of research domains that have primarily been concerned with what goes on in the bedroom and the psychological conclusions drawn from such findings.

" Research in this area has largely been the product of heterosexual voyeurs. Thus the questions asked and factors selected often reflect heterosexual stereotyping, experiences, culture, and values. Frequently these have little relevance to typical homosexual experiences. Male homosexual researchers on lesbians are only slightly better equipped than heterosexual men to do unbiased research. "  
( Suppe, 1985:75-7 ),

In view of these concerns Suppe, ( 1985 ) claims that at the very least there appears to be the necessity for

'acculturated' input into the design of conceptual tools. The essence of capturing a particular perspective therefore demands that the objective stance should be discarded and that research on lesbians would be improved if it is conducted by those who share the same orientation.

Examples of research bias conducted by both heterosexual male and female researchers have included the assumption that single heterosexual women have the same relationship status as 'single' lesbian women; the use of clinical jargon such as the 'homosexual condition' and 'cross gender symptoms'; and comparative studies on the differences between heterosexual women and lesbians which are devoid of social context. Proposals for new research directions for lesbians have focused on the need to treat a research project as a collaborative effort and to view the work of one person as a contribution to the ongoing process rather than the final product. In 1978 the kind of research lesbians identified as improving their lives was the need to provide documentary evidence of oppression against them; issues relevant to lesbian relationships and living; directions for the future. ( Sang, 1978:80-87 )

Faraday, ( 1981:112-29 ) has set out the priorities for research in order to avoid further stigmatising lesbians and contributing to their oppression. She has claimed that the lesbian definitions within previous social science have been politically significant. Researchers must now be concerned with the power of 'naming' and creating categories. This means presenting lesbian identity as a positive choice and a level of consciousness which challenges the oppressive and restrictive nature of male defined and male enforced femininity.

" [ It ] is essential that notions of "the lesbian" are reconceptualized within the context of her oppressed social position as women and not as 'female homosexual'. Any discussion of lesbian women can and does do great harm and injustice to lesbians, indeed to all women, if it fails to examine the power differentials between the sexes, the implications for those power differentials for relationships between women and between male researchers and female research 'objects', or if] it presents a definition of 'lesbian' in sexual terms without examining the socially constructed and male-defined nature of sexual meanings."

( Faraday, 1981:112 )

Similar priorities were shared by Hall ( 1986:64 ) in her study on lesbians employed within corporations,

" Because I am a lesbian I had to have a method of analysis that acknowledged the inter-subjectivity between interviewer and interviewee. "

Hall chose a phenomenological approach which emphasised the inclusion of the observer in the phenomena observed. She also emphasised non measurable aspects of experience and thus was more concerned with qualitative data than quantifiable standards. This has become somewhat of a standard approach amongst feminist researchers in that it focuses on a 'communal' rather than 'agentic' style and rejects any attempts to manipulate reality with the use of variables. Thus, the focus is on naturalistic observation, sensitivity to qualitative patterning and a

greater personal participation by the interviewer. ( Bernard, 1973:23 and Carlson cited in Bernard, op cit. ) Atmore ( 1990:17 ) also chose a similar approach in her study on lesbians in the workplace wherein she explained that the kinds of questions she asked were an attempt to describe the actor's subjective meanings. In using this method Atmore acknowledged there was a close interpretive component between the researcher and the subjects. Inter-subjectivity was taken a step further by Cline and Spender ( 1987 ) who included their own autobiographical accounts along with the biographies of other women. As Roberts ( 1981:16 ) has claimed, this refers to a method that is both political and controversial since it implicates the personal and political sympathies of the researcher.

While the development of a feminist method has been important, it is clear that this has not always gone far enough in terms of being able to account for lesbian experience. Furthermore there are several problems that have yet to be overcome if lesbianism is to be extracted from conservative and damaging interpretations. In summary, Kitzinger ( 1987:1-64 ) has perhaps offered the clearest argument for analysis as the primary methodological tool. While she has strongly adhered to the use of subjective data she is sceptical of any claims that varying methods and authoritative pronouncements might make to validate a particular social science method. Further to this she has stated that the personal and insider point of view does not always guarantee that research will be rescued from traditional and non liberating methods. She has argued that the justification for scientific methodology merely becomes a powerful form of legitimation for science itself, while on the other hand it is merely the status of the expert that is used to persuade an audience of experiential authority.

Further to this Kitzinger claims that neither scientific expertise, or personal authority are a guarantee that the differences between lesbian and heterosexual values, beliefs and behaviour will not be minimised and reduced to forms congruent with the dominant order. Thus, research methods, insofar as they are a tool for analysis, cannot radically reinterpret our understandings of social events. Instead it is the analysis itself that will provide the component to establishing a radical alternative to the personalised and individualised interpretations of lesbian experience.

#### The Research Question.

The purposes of this study are twofold. The first is an exploratory one in that it looks at the experiences of lesbian social workers with the view to describing the themes and patterns characteristic of discrimination within the context of the employment. The second is to examine how the policy within the Department of Social Welfare addresses Equal Employment Opportunities for women, and more especially the extent to which the needs of lesbians can be met within the existing framework of the policy.

This research has not included comparative data on the workplace experiences of non lesbian women therefore the justification for accepting that the experiences of lesbians are qualitatively different to those of heterosexual women rests within the meanings and interpretations given by lesbian social workers. The research questions were formulated on the basis that heterosexism is a real and tangible source of oppression. This involved some prior understanding of both the nature

and dynamic of heterosexism as an institutionalised form of social sexual control. In order to apply this to the research following questions were proposed.

1. Is heterosexism an institutional barrier to E E O for lesbians ?
2. Does the D S W policy reflect an intention and practical means to eliminate heterosexism as an institutional barrier to E E O ?
3. Are lesbian social workers significantly affected by discrimination in the workplace ?
4. Are the experiences of discrimination identified as a consequence of heterosexism ?

#### The Research Design.

The practicalities involved in this research placed limitations on applying some feminist methods. These are practicalities and problems that have been said to arise in any research. They involved time, money and the physical constraints. ( Plummer, 1981 ) The first problem was in deciding on the method of collecting the data which in turn was dependent upon a method of locating participants and defining the geographical boundaries. The preference for conducting face to face interviews would have meant limiting participants within my own locality so that they were easily and cheaply reached. As a consequence of the need to reduce the likelihood of being able to identify participants the geographical spread of lesbian social workers was widened in order to

distance them from the source ( myself ) of the research. In choosing to reach a scattered population the logistics of this restricted contact with participants to a survey strategy involving the use of self administered questionnaires which were mailed out. This was not entirely consistent with a feminist methodology.

It has been a usual practice within feminist research to utilise methods that are consistent with obtaining qualitative data. Face to face interviews with semi structured formats allow for ideas and responses to be explored in depth. It gives the researcher the opportunity to observe non verbal responses and to follow up on these. It has already been noted that as a method it allows for the opportunity to break down hierarchical barriers between interviewer and interviewee and therefore the opportunity for a greater personal involvement on the part of the interviewer. For example, Kitzinger ( 1987:66 ) has noted that such qualitative methodologies are more likely to respect the meanings of the participants.

However, there were certain advantages to using mailed questionnaires as a method. As Rubin and Babbie, (1989:313-4 ) have noted it is a popular form of observation and may be used for descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory purposes. Others, ( Moser and Kalton, 1981:257-62 ) have commented on the low cost factor and the ability to reach a scattered and rare population which advantages self administered questionnaires over some other methods. In addition, it avoids the problem of respondents being embarrassed, or hesitant to answer very personal questions and will allow them time to consider responses without being pressured by an interviewer's presence. Furthermore, it is not incongruous with a method of obtaining qualitative data. However, ambiguity,

vagueness and the use of uncommon jargon are factors in questionnaire design that can complicate answers if they are not addressed during the pilot stage. Researchers not familiar with euphemisms used within the lesbian culture might not recognise ambiguous questions, nor be able to accurately phrase a question so that it had particular meaning to lesbians rather than heterosexuals. This did not arise as a problem in this research because of my own close associations with the lesbian community, prior scrutiny of lesbian literature and publications, and the involvement of lesbians at the pilot stage.

Although there is a tendency for a lower response rate with the use of self administered questionnaires than with personal interviews, ( Moser and Kalton, 1981 ), this was not evident with this research. Over two thirds of those contacted replied. Because of the technique employed in locating participants ( discussed below ) there was no way of assessing what factors restricted participation for the third who did not respond.

One of the difficulties encountered with the use of a self administered questionnaire was that respondents in this research tended to write sparsely. Thus, one answer did not always provide an adequate description of an event and responses to a cluster of questions had to be fully scrutinised before a full picture was obtained. While this made the collation of the data more difficult it did not appear to have compromised its quality to any extent.

### Locating Respondents.

Identifying lesbians within the D S W involved a 'self definition ' rather than any selection made by imposing a definition of lesbianism. This avoided any distinction between sexual identity and sexual behaviour which has typically characterised alot of previous research. It had been presumed that self identification as a lesbian would not be taken on frivolously because of the susceptibility to negative connotations and stereotypes. There was minimal risk that non lesbians would want to falsely represent themselves in order to be associated with the research.

The other factor for inclusion in the research was confined to occupational status as a social worker within the D S W, either at the time of responding , or within the previous four years. The reason for this time frame was because it covered the period within which the D S W first conducted its research on women in the Department and implemented its E E O policy.

The problem of locating participants was approached in two ways.

1. Advertising in a widely distributed monthly women's feminist magazine, "*Broadsheet*".
2. The snow ball technique through friendship networks both inside and outside the D S W.

While the 'snow-ball' method was slow and cumbersome, it allowed for the possibility of locating a greater number of lesbians whose sexual identity status remained protected within the D S W. The advertisement was less

successful as an approach and yielded only one response. However, several lesbians outside the D S W and social work did make comment on the advertisement and gave their support for the research.

Hanna, in her study on lesbian mothers ( 1986 ) found that the 'snow ball' technique was successful in locating participants. However, she has commented on the limitations of this approach which has tended to confine selection to 'like people knowing like people'. This tends to create a somewhat 'homogeneous' group ( sic ) and place limitations on the ability to make comparisons, or generalisations. Kitzinger ( 1987:87 ) also used the same sampling technique and while she recognised its restrictions on random selection, she has pointed out that it is flexible enough to achieve the breadth and diversity of response required and that it is successful in attracting volunteers. In addition to this Plummer ( 1981:215-6 ) has claimed there is no disadvantage in using non random selection techniques because the focus itself represents a 'rapidly expanding, yet diverse gay community'. The community is now one of the major research routes whereas previously research favoured psychiatry, or institutional settings. Furthermore, Plummer has commented that agencies involved in a delivery of service focused on minority groups provides and imaginative setting for research on homosexuality.

Thirty four lesbian social workers were located through the informal network strategy covering both the North and South Island. Each were sent a covering letter explaining the focus and purpose of the research, accompanied by the questionnaire. Twenty five responses were received including twenty three completed and useful questionnaires. The other two expressed support for the study, but felt that time and energy constraints

restricted their ability to participate. Although a 'prompt' letter was sent out to encourage the return of completed questionnaires and to thank those who had been already responded, nine lesbians did not respond. The reasons for this are unclear, but fear of disclosure, mistrust, or a general lack of interest may have been contributing factors. Questionnaires were able to be returned anonymously and although many lesbians did identify themselves and made personal comments, in most instances there was no way of identifying most participants, or of tracing those who did not respond. After the completion of the questionnaire some interest in the research was generated more widely amongst lesbians in the D S W who had not previously been located. This in itself has suggested the numbers of lesbian social workers is greater than originally had been thought.

#### The Questionnaire.

The format of the questionnaire included demographic information such as age , race, class, length of service, occupational grade, salary, academic qualifications and other personal data which assisted in building a profile of the participants as a group. The questions all addressed specific problems that may have been encountered in the workplace and participants were required to acknowledge whether they had experienced these positively, or negatively. There was space for participants to describe events and this was encouraged as a key to understanding their perception of certain incidents. The questionnaire style of questioning was therefore open ended. However, the format of the questionnaire was structured so that there was some

consistency in the criteria for discrimination as it has been applied to the conditions of employment within the D S W.

The questionnaire consisted of forty one questions which covered aspects of both direct and indirect discrimination. These were broken down into sections which looked at work related rewards and benefits, promotional and job responsibilities, harassment and hostility, access to grievance and complaints procedures, the management of work place relationships, social networks and their effect on opportunities, advocacy and validation within the workplace from management, colleagues, clients, the community, the union, outside agencies, and other lesbians. The questionnaire also directed attention to supervision and the supervisory relationship as an important determinant of professional and personal development. The final section dealt with the effectiveness of E E O for lesbians and the positive benefits of lesbianism to the job.

While the questionnaire provided a wealth of information there were some aspects of it that proved a hindrance. Overall it was cumbersome and lengthy. This caused some ambiguity in the responses which might have been avoided if the number of questions had been restricted, or if face to face interviews had been conducted. For instance there were varying interpretations amongst lesbians of the different forms of discrimination. These had to be collated thematically. This indicated the need for a clearer and more succinct style of questioning. However, the responses also gave new insight into some of the patterns of discrimination within the Department that I had not been able to articulate prior to setting up the questionnaire. It therefore, became evident that while discrimination

appeared to be subtly applied to lesbians the underlying issue of control stood out clearly as similar experiences were expressed. Furthermore, the responses indicated that lesbians were able to differentiate between discriminatory behaviour that is generalised to all women and that which pertains to their sexual identity status.

Lesbian social workers were asked if they had consulted others during the process of responding to the questionnaire. Almost half of the group indicated that prior to, or during completion of the questionnaire, they had chosen to consult with either lesbian friends, or their partners. While any difference this may have made to the quality of the answers was not immediately obvious, discussion of the topic could have been expected to highlight and clarify particular incidents within the workplace as discriminatory that might not initially have been recognised by individuals. Furthermore, with the involvement of friends and partners, the questionnaire as a consciousness raising process, reached a wider group of lesbians than it was initially expected to include. It has therefore had some kind of impact beyond the parameters of this research.

#### The Data.

This research is based on three main sources of data. First and foremost is the data obtained from the questionnaires describing the experiences of lesbian social workers in the D S W. Research on the employment experiences of lesbians has been sparse. Because of this there has been little upon which to base a comprehensive understanding of discrimination and its likely economic effects on lesbians, or indeed its implications for all

women generally. However, research, conducted mainly in the U S A and Britain, has provided a secondary source of data and established some useful parameters for this research. It has given some insight into both the nature and extent of employment discrimination and the context in which it is likely to occur. The third source of information was obtained from anecdotal evidence gained largely from anthologies and autobiographical articles in feminist and lesbian publications.

Additional sources of data have related to 'in house' documentation obtained from the D S W . This included management plans, policy statements and circular memorandum. Other 'in house' articles were obtained from the office of the Human Rights Commission and from the Public Service Association. Local D S W delegates were especially helpful in providing up to date information and material on E E O and the employer / employee agreements, along with the progress on the implementation of the Employment Contracts Act., 1991. Legislation that has had relevance to the research has included the Labour Relations Act., 1987., the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977., the Equal Pay Act., 1972., and the State Sector Act., 1988 ).

#### Analysis Of The Data.

Analysis of the data has involved the use of questionnaire responses as a form of research-subject dialogues and descriptive statements of experience. These have been examined for common themes and then integrated into a final analysis. (Hall, 1986:64 ) This is a thematic approach which has allowed for a more productive and interpretive use of primary and secondary

data. At the same time participants have had the opportunity to speak for themselves. This validates personal experiences without individualising the problem of discrimination. Because the use of qualitative data in small scale research makes participants more easily identifiable, ( Finch, 1988:203 ), it was important to find a method of presenting the data in a way that would protect the confidentiality of lesbian social workers. Thus, the use of themes rather than case studies had the ability to ensure this.

Common themes within the experiences of lesbian social workers have been organised around three main areas of discussion. The first is the management and negotiation of workplace relationships and the impact on the personal and working lives of lesbians. The second is the use of informal procedures within the workplace restricting access to opportunity and workplace rewards. The third was the use of officially conferred conditions of employment as a means of discrimination. These three themes reflect two forms of discrimination. One is that conformity to heterosexuality was effectively applied as a condition of employment and opportunities. The other is that harassment and hostility was a persistent condition of employment causing detriment to lesbian social workers.

#### Ethical And Political Concerns.

The ethical and political problems in this research involved consideration of three concerns. The first was the 'extra-scientific' reasons for undertaking it. The second was the dilemmas confronted while doing it, and the third related to the way the research can impinge

upon the personal life of the researcher. Accordingly, the 'extra-scientific' reasons were discussed with the 'ethics group'. The options considered included the benefit to the researcher for advancement of career, or to gain a degree; providing a basis of knowledge for policy makers and whether this would be used as a form of control or care; and benefiting lesbian social workers as the studied group in order to assist them to achieve desired goals. ( Plummer, 1981:210-29 )

It was understood by all participants and accepted by the ethics group that the only non negotiable aspect of the research was its use to myself in gaining an academic degree. There was some dilemma as to how the research might benefit other lesbians positively. This was essentially because of the sensitive nature of the material and the radical interpretations put upon it. There was strong concern expressed about how the information would and could be used to discredit lesbians in the D S W and therefore threaten their employment position. While the intentions of this research are to promote positive change for lesbian social workers, there is always the risk that it will be used against them. As one social worker has noted, the research could cause a 'backlash'.

" More likely to be used against lesbians as  
D S W don't know how many there are yet."

However, almost all the participants believed that the information should be used to enhance and promote education amongst employees and managers to eliminate discrimination against lesbians. Furthermore, most lesbian social workers and the 'ethics group' felt that the research should be used as a justification for including lesbians as a target group within the

Department's E E O policy. The decision as to whether the research could be used more publicly was left to be negotiated at some future stage with lesbian social workers and the ethics group. It was clear that while the research has been entrusted into my hands as the researcher, the control I had over the information was conditional on the approval of other lesbians who might be affected by it.

A dilemma confronted in undertaking the research arose in relation to the extent that its true purpose should be disclosed. ( Plummer, 1981:226-9 ) All participants and those interested from the wider lesbian community were fully aware of the content and aims of the project. I also acknowledged my own sexual identity as a lesbian which made it easier to gain the confidence of participants. However, in other situations I avoided 'coming out' and therefore gave selective information, or partial honesty with some heterosexual groups. It was not always easy to risk the research being discredited by disclosing its true focus outside of the lesbian community. Thus, I often tended to broaden the topic by referring to as 'equal employment opportunities'. This proved to be a prudent approach because there were some occasions when I did give details of the research and was subjected to hostile reactions. I was also concerned that my extra-mural study grant funded by the D S W might be in jeopardy if management felt the research would criticise the Department in any way. However, this did not appear to be the case and once they were aware of the research I was approached by Head Office personnel for access to any data that may be useful in enhancing the E E O policy. Three years further along there are no indications that the Department now has any real interest in the data given that extensive restructuring has taken place over the time and that management personnel have

changed. The support and interest in the research was an individual one, rather than an expression of Departmental policy.

A final consideration in conducting this research has involved what Plummer ( 1981:226-9 ) has drawn attention to, as the impact on the researcher. He has pointed out that those who elect to carry out research in the area of lesbianism ( or generally on homosexuality ) can be subject to some kind of hostility, or attack. This is because lesbianism is still taboo in our society. Plummer names the research as ' stigmatised' since there is also always the potential for it and the researcher's public identity to be discredited. Anyone else associated with, including supervisors, markers and the university can become 'guilty by association'. Other lesbian researchers have expressed similar concerns.

" Most gay and lesbian academics carrying out research on homosexuality, myself included, are fully conscious of the risks we run and the compromises we make in pursuing our careers. While accusations of collusion with the forces of oppression may succeed in eliciting a guilty sense of our own privileged position could be had we not chosen lesbianism as our research topic, or had we not made our lesbianism known to our academic 'superiors' in the hierarchy. " ( Kitzinger, 1987:181 )

Despite that there are some obvious risks involved in undertaking controversial research, it has already been noted that it does have a role in raising the consciousness of those associated with it. As the researcher I initially under-estimated the impact on myself and my supervisors on carrying out the research

and on eventually presenting it in final written form. It has been an experience in a 'true' sense since my own personal investment as a lesbian and a social worker has meant that I have not conducted this study with any sense of detachment. The data collected from lesbian social workers had a profound effect on me. I saw the patterns and themes of discrimination unfold and it was with some sense of relief that I realised that it was a start to moving away from the problem as an individual and personal one. Albeit, that discrimination impacts on lesbians in a very personal and individual way.

### Conclusions.

This research has emphasised experimental, experiential and radically interpretive components of methodology. It has focused on the 'personal political' principle of feminist research by using the experiences of lesbian social workers as valid criteria for data. It has also implicated myself as the researcher, research supervisors, and other lesbians who have collaborated as interested friends, or in the form of an 'ethics group'. Each has had involvement at different levels of the process. This has included the development of the style and method of data collection and the collation of the material. Importantly, the collaboration has confirmed ideas and constructs as part of the radical analysis. Coming to the conclusions has not happened easily and the personal integrity of all those involved has had to be maintained as a central part of the process.

## C H A P T E R S I X.

## WORKPLACE DYNAMICS AND THE IMPACT ON LESBIANS.

" Invisibility and lack of any real understanding about daily issues for lesbians. The effects are weariness, being tired of being the one who has to keep raising the issues and educating the straights, low self esteem, anger at heterosexual privilege. It is hard to keep one's ego healthy when experiences of life are not validated."  
( Lesbian social worker, 1990 )

Introduction.

This chapter examines the ways in which lesbians managed their relationships within the workplace, negotiated the contingencies within the workplace environment, and the strategies they used for coping with the anticipation of discrimination, and actual discrimination. It documents the impact of a predominantly heterosexist work environment on their working lives. This includes the effect lesbianism has on their role as social workers and the positive benefits that are gained by it.

The conclusions drawn from previous research have shown that because lesbians can expect to work in an environment where the assumptions are that everybody is heterosexual the most persistent problem they face is the

management of a 'disreputable' status. ( Schneider, 1986 cited in Atmore, 1990:6 ) The experiences of lesbian social workers have confirmed that their survival in employment has resulted from a set of complicated calculations. Similarly to other studies ( Schneider, 1984, Atmore 1990 ), these have related to the degree to which the work setting allows them to be free and open about their lesbianism and the extent to which they are able to negotiate and develop support networks. The consequences of the work environment for many lesbians have been evidenced by their fear of losing their jobs, isolation from inter-personal networks, and they work under pressure to prove they are as good, or better than their co-workers. ( Schneider, 1984:213 )

#### Lesbian Visibility In the Workplace.

The control over lesbian visibility in the workplace is said to be one of the major sources of oppression for lesbians. ( Cavin, 1985:3 and Egerton et al., 1987:70 ) Essentially it enforces conformity to the appearance of heterosexuality. Even when liberal interpretations are applied to lesbians, this merely confines individuals to choices which allow them the 'right' to conduct their private lives in their own manner. It is not always acceptable for lesbianism to be publicly and openly acknowledged. In contrast heterosexuality and heterosexual images are portrayed in a public and 'officially' recognised manner. The assumption that everyone is heterosexual carries over into the workplace.

Overseas studies have indicated that lesbians do not tend to disclose their sexual identity status in the workplace. For instance, Bell and Weinberg ( 1978, Cited

in Levine & Leonard, 1984:704 ) found that two thirds concealed their sexual identity status from their bosses and almost half hid it from their co-workers. Schneider ( 1984:216 ) found that only 16 percent of the lesbians in her group felt they were able to be completely open, while 55 percent tended to be, and 29 percent were closeted. However, 25 percent estimated that all their co-workers knew, with about half estimating that at least one other person knew. Others were not sure who might know and 14 percent stated that none knew. Levine and Leonard ( 1984:706 ) found that only 23 percent informed most, or all of their co-workers. Seventy seven percent were partially or totally closeted while 29 percent had told some friends, 21 percent had told only close friends and 27 percent had told no-one. A further study by Moses ( 1978 cited in Hall, 1986 ) claimed that 88 percent concealed their lesbianism at work and Hall ( 1981, cited in Hall, 1986 ) found that only 10 percent of career-oriented lesbians were completely open.

Other research sources ( Egerton et al., 1987; Schneider, 1984 ) have found that lesbians are more likely to be open about their sexual identity when there is a predominance of women co-workers, when most of their work friends are women and when they have a women boss, or supervisor. Factors such as low pay and low status jobs, and occupations where there is close contact with client groups such as children, students and patients are more likely to restrict disclosure. However, Schneider ( 1984:22 ) found that most lesbians do take risks in trusting at least some co-workers not to react negatively to the knowledge of their sexual identity. The disclosures of lesbian social workers were consistent with those in Schneider's research. For example, while a high degree of selection occurred, two thirds had trusted

at least some of their heterosexual co-workers with the information.

" Discussed it personally with trusted colleagues."

" I acknowledge it to colleagues. However, I don't believe that I am as open about my personal life and my relationship in conversation as are my heterosexual colleagues. "

Atmore ( 1990:47-9 ) also concluded that none of the lesbians in her study were completely 'closeted' in their jobs. But neither had they acknowledged it to every individual they came into contact with in their daily working lives. The comment of a lesbian social worker in this study suggests, as Atmore did, that coming out is not a 'once-and-for-all-process', but one coping strategy amongst many.

" All colleagues know and in the past I have been out to a range of people. It depends on the degree of contact I have with groups and the focus of the job and my need to be known. "

Atmore ( 1990 ) also found that the decision to come out was to a large extent, affected by the work environment. Other factors influencing the decision were the self perceptions of lesbians themselves towards their sexual identity such as whether they self consciously accepted the 'label', their political beliefs, and the extent to which a lesbian viewed other inferiorised group identifications as important. Both time and place were suggested by Atmore as factors which might affect a lesbian's self perceptions. For example, a lesbian who lived in a rural area in the 1960's was not likely to have had access to information which would affirm her

identity, whereas in the 1980's those in the urban areas might have been positively influenced by activism of the lesbian and gay communities around the lobby for changes to the laws.

The length of time lesbian social workers had been employed on the job and therefore the degree to which they felt familiar with the work environment and safe in their jobs clearly restricted disclosure.

" I'm still new but I'm also hesitant about doing this. I don't disclose to clients, or community groups, or personnel from other agencies because I don't know how people will use this information."

Others were likely to be protective of their lesbianism when they were working with clients and groups outside the immediate work environment. Thus, the nature of the work itself clearly influenced the decision to disclose.

" I'm selective about clients, personnel from other agencies and community groups as to who I come out to. "

Other lesbians exercised caution all the time, including within the immediate workplace.

" I am reasonably protective about my private life and do not mix socially with colleagues. Never, discuss my sexuality with clients. "

Caution and control over disclosure were obviously a form of self protection.

" Acknowledge my lesbianism whenever necessary and relevant, otherwise I am protective of the information. I regard this as conserving energy."

" Protective over the years because of external battles which have taken my energy [            ] Had little energy left to deal with lesbian issues in the Department."

Fitting in with heterosexual appearances was expressed by one lesbian social worker as a strategy for survival in the workplace.

" I'm protective of the information, but will acknowledge it when I know staff and colleagues will generally respond to difference. But I find there is alot of self censorship and that I neutralise my sexuality to fit in. "

A point made by Atmore, ( 1990:47 ) and confirmed in this study by some lesbian social workers, was the implication that a woman's lesbianism was understood, or known in the work place even when she had not officially come out to everyone.

" Most people know or acknowledge it because I have been with a partner for a number of years and we have worked in the community and public eye. "

" I assume that all colleagues and community groups know, but I don't think it is necessary to tell everyone, although I don't think I am closeted. "

Overall, most lesbian social workers exercised some caution most of the time and were selective as to who they personally imparted the information to. However, it was significant that two lesbian social workers claimed they were not closeted in any situation. Both perceived their work environment as generally supportive and they were clearly guided by a sense of their own acceptance of the label. In contrast only one social worker was totally closeted and preferred to keep her sexual identity status a secret on the job. This was because she perceived her work environment and managers as hostile towards lesbians.

It was clear that self censorship was a protective strategy for survival in the workplace. Yet despite the fact that most lesbian social workers did take risks a greater number of them also perceived subtle and overt pressures on them to remain closeted. This was interpreted as an indication of a low level of acceptance of lesbians in the workplace.

" The mere assumptions that everyone is het is both a direct and indirect pressure to remain 'closeted'."

" Yes, a subtle, ever present attitude. Often unconscious and, or unacknowledged, often cloaked in liberal acceptance and friendly relations. Also the assumption that the norm is het [       ] also feels like a pressure to remain silent when listening to blatant homophobia."

" Indirect pressure, yes, it's more comfortable for some others if I am quiet about it."

Direct pressure to remain closeted related to the threat of discrimination.

" Yes, because of the rumours of harassment of other lesbians I have the feeling that some people in the office may be critical of my lesbianism so this is a pressure on me to remain silent. "

" Yes, when I first started work the policy was not to employ lesbians or gays and so I was closeted. Coming out only felt safer when I moved to another area of social work. "

In the case of one social worker, merely the fact that she was outspoken on other issues made her lesbianism problematic.

" I have been told that I don't need to make an issue out of my lesbianism even when I haven't referred to it. When I spoke up on a matter in a meeting I was later approached by a P S A delegate and told that I didn't have to wave the lesbian banner every time something came up. I've also heard negative references about myself and another lesbian social worker as 'professional lesbians ' because we are out. "

#### Compliance Or Compensation In The Workplace.

Lesbian social workers displayed two forms of over compensatory strategies in the workplace. One was manifest in the way they modified their attitudes and appearances and the other was to become 'super competent'. The former was closely linked to a conformity

to heterosexual appearances and 'fitting in' in order to not draw negative attention to oneself. Indications were that it was just as likely to occur when co-workers and managers knew a social worker was lesbian and it therefore suggested it was a form of compensation rather than denial. 'Blending' into the environment so that lesbianism is less visible has been described as a means to avoiding competition and thus advancing someone else's career. According to Kanter and Stein ( 1980 ) the more 'minority status' individuals adopt this strategy the more comfortable the dominant group feel since it legitimates dominant values and reinforces the sanctions against difference.

The circumstances under which lesbian social workers were more likely to be cautious and to modify their views and appearances were clearly linked to a need to avoid hostility, or isolation from the group when they were involved in women's issues and E E O .

" I have been cautious to present a conservative front on issues when I have worked as Women's Liaison Officer and on E E O ."

" With E E O and Women's Liaison projects I have felt that my suggestions would not be accepted and that I would be labelled as a lesbian man hater."

Not stepping out of line, or drawing attention to oneself was also a strategy used to protect employment.

" I have never felt that my job was in jeopardy. This is because I am 'well behaved'. "

Becoming 'superstars' and over-achievers were responses Schneider ( 1984 ) has referred to and described by Kanter and Stein ( 1980 ) as one of the choices 'minority' individuals commonly make in order to overcome the stereotyped and negative associations assigned to their status. The adage that women have to work twice as hard as men to succeed is perhaps more true for lesbians who feel they have to over emphasise more acceptable personal characteristics and abilities in a situation where sexual identity status is potentially discrediting to their professional reputation. Many lesbian social workers emphasised that they worked hard and achieved high levels of competence.

" Am conscious of proving myself and being competent and believe that I work harder than most do so that I will be an 'acceptable' person. "

" Believe that management only tolerate me and I feel that I am exceptional at my job because I work twice as hard as a straight so they will overlook lesbianism as a factor. "

It was significant that competency and work performance were used as a counter measure in order to reduce the likelihood of discrimination, or negative perceptions directed towards social workers because of their lesbianism.

" Having to watch my back and work to very high standards so that being lesbian becomes a secondary issue for others. "

" Always taking extra care to be extra efficient."

In some situations competency was evident as a 'pay-off' for the freedom to be out in the workplace.

" I do a good job and this over-rides hostility, but I feel that I have to be twice as good as straights because I don't fit into the corporate management image and never will. Because I am good at my job they appear to make allowances about my dress and uncloseted lifestyle. "

Another lesbian social worker also implied that maintaining high levels of competence had become a balancing act to avoid negative perceptions and possibly harassment while at the same it enabled her to be 'out'.

" I feel that I have been caught in a trap of trying to prove I am as good if not more competent than my colleagues so that my lesbianism will be overlooked."

#### Workplace Stresses.

Lesbian social workers identified several sources of stress as a result of either the potential for discrimination, or actual discrimination. The fear of discovery, protection of their professional reputation, protection of their employment position, and protection of their personal integrity were the predominant concerns. In some cases lesbian social workers described clients and the public as two sources of stress.

" Distress caused by client hostility and discrimination. For example, aggressive clients, ( or apparently co-operative ones ) who put me

down to other professionals, " Shes a dirty lesbian, what can she know". "

" Concern about acceptability by clients and colleagues is a constant stress. "

To some lesbians, the threat of public exposure seemed high and was a source of underlying anxiety and stress.

" Always apprehensive about clients finding out and attracting media attention. One client always threatened to do this over foster parents who were caring for her child. Had she been aware of my sexuality I'm sure she would have done this to me. "

The fear of attracting media attention and the personal consequences of it are based on previous experiences amongst lesbians more generally. For example Atmore, ( 1989:76 ) has commented that the attention usually given to lesbianism by the press has tended to focus on the sensational, or bizarre. The Department itself is also likely to disassociate itself from any publicly controversial issues and negative criticisms given that it needs to present a neutral front on what can be claimed, is essentially a private affair between individuals. However, it has always been a possibility, that in acting to protect itself from media attack, the Department can refer to a clause within the Employee Code of Conduct relating to any behaviour, or conduct that brings the Department into disrepute. This can be readily interpreted against lesbians and used as grounds for censure, including dismissal.

Research studies have shown that high stress levels have also been associated with maintaining secrecy of one's lesbianism in the workplace. In correlation with this the higher the disclosure rate the lower the stress scores for lesbians. ( Brooks, 1981 ) It was therefore not surprising to find that many lesbian social workers identified stress as the result of constantly having to weigh up each new situation and the potential risk involved in 'coming out'.

" Daily stress I lived with assessing situations and making decisions as to whether it would be safe / useful / positive, or negative to come out. Weighing up everyday and the eventual decision depended on my assessment of the potential for hostility and discrimination to occur. "

" Constantly having to monitor how acceptable I am and what I am saying. Always testing people to see their reactions."

Other sources of stress were closely associated with the need to reconcile the dissonance between personal and working lives. The work role has been the most cited source of what Shachar and Gilbert, ( 1983, cited in Atmore, 1990:11 ) have termed intra role conflict for lesbians. One of the coping strategies resulting from this has included a distancing of one's real self from the work role. It was evident that some lesbian social workers consciously, separated their personal and working lives.

" Out of long time habit I still monitor my actions and comments very closely. I don't draw attention to my personal life. That's a stress I impose on myself, but it's a survival technique. "

" Working with community groups who were almost all discriminatory towards homosexuals and not wanting to share some personal everyday stuff with some other colleagues. "

For many lesbians the cause of stress was related to working in a predominantly heterosexual environment. This was often interpreted as the enforced invisibility of lesbian lifestyles, rather than a reaction against individual heterosexuals. These stresses are a real consequence of institutionalised heterosexuality because they also represent a group of people who are well mobilised and well organised and therefore in a position to defend their social space. In contrast lesbians are treated marginally and are less likely to be able to mobilise numbers and financial resources to defend their lifestyles. <sup>12</sup> Several lesbian social workers felt 'assaulted' by the heterosexual environment and were aware of the isolation this caused for them within the workplace. The lack of recognition of them as lesbians and the invisibility of their own lifestyles within the work environment were further concerns.

" Being in a heterosexual environment constantly being assaulted by the most basic gossipy comments, for example, " Do you remember the man he was a real hunk ? ", to being made invisible and denied, or having to challenge prejudiced assumptions of those around you who make you feel isolated, put down. Or, having to come out to people who forget , or assume you are het. "

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12. This concept is derived from Young's ( 1989:167., ) analysis on the redeployment of ideas in social policy.

" Everyone is so blatantly heterosexual everywhere. I try to do my work, live my life these days and get on with it. "

" Environment is incredibly heterosexual. Everyone assumes it and why should they ? "

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual is an effective form of exclusion for lesbians. For example, it suppresses the possibility of lesbianism as an alternative sexuality and lifestyle for women and ensures that heterosexuality remains the dominant form of sexuality both numerically and ideologically. ( Egerton et al., 1987 ) Lesbian social workers were keenly aware of their difference in the workplace and the impact on them of the heterosexual assumption was stressful.

" The heterosexual assumption is tedious and I have to point out time and again that I'm not. "

" Overt discriminations are the leave provisions and the illegality of partners. The most covert is the day to day heterosexist assumption that you are the same as them, or want to be that way. "

The lack of support and feelings of alienation and estrangement within the workplace environment were common themes amongst lesbian social workers. These emphasised feelings of stress.

" Isolation and feelings of difference. Feeling of having no allies. Having none of my own kind at work. "

" No other out dykes. "

The lack of validation as a lesbian also rated as a high source of stress.

" The stress of being discounted if they are homophobic and not wanting to acknowledge you, or get to know you and not considering you have a valid opinion."

" Lack of sensitivity towards my needs whereas the needs of heterosexuals are automatically taken into account at work."

" Not being given validity of sexuality and lifestyle."

" Not being able to be completely free and be out. Het celebrations such as marriages announced, but not my and partner's anniversary. "

The stress of anticipating discrimination was a common factor in the working lives of lesbian social workers. Sometimes the basis for this anxiety was their own experiences, or examples of discrimination against other lesbians. The Levine and Leonard, ( 1984 ) study noted that serious problems were more likely to be anticipated from superiors than from co-workers and that the expected consequences ranged from being fired, or being harassed. However, there was also the expectation that co-workers would harass, taunt and ostracise. These concerns were reflected in the perceptions of some lesbian social workers.

" Stress builds up because of having to constantly be on guard and alert in case something undefined happens where I will be discredited because of prejudice. "

" Being lesbian in a bureaucracy will always be stressful simply because of the range and number of people and co-workers you are brought into contact with. There will always be the possibility / probability that conflict will arise at some point of your career path. It is a daily reality even though life is okay today you could still be up against it tomorrow. You are always mindful of your lifestyle and choice and the potential for discrimination. That burden is detrimental."

For two social workers, stress was confined to specific incidents of discrimination, rather than as a result of everyday survival.

" Considerable stress over the prevention of my appointment because of my lesbianism. I even considered leaving."

" Very stressful when my transfer was blocked because of hostility. Although no explanation was given and this was refused when requested, the particular man involved had negative attitudes that seemed double barreled. I as a lesbian had a planned pregnancy. [                    ] His attitudes affected my promotional prospects for some time. "

For Maori lesbians the stresses of the workplace were more likely to be linked to their cultural needs rather than those as lesbians. Their concerns perhaps typified the lack of any real changes within the D S W towards bi-culturalism.

" It was previously discrimination I noticed being Maori rather than as a lesbian now this focus has

shifted since the move towards bi-culturalism. Although the depth of change is questionable."

" Discrimination as a Maori by Pakeha and Maori. Degrading at times but I get through."

### The Lesbian Network.

The presence of another lesbian within the same office, or locality can often minimise the isolation and in some cases building alliances can establish a basis upon which to challenge some of the heterosexist attitudes and practices within the workplace. The development of a lesbian network can also assist in developing professional strategies to achieve effective results on some tasks. For example, lesbians have been observed making contacts with those in other related professions. The arrangements they make are all part of negotiating the use of resources and access to information for the mutual benefit of both parties. This form of networking has in the past, had the potential to provide the opportunity for collaboration in the area of policy development.

Over two thirds of the lesbian social workers had contact with other lesbians within the D S W. Some of these contacts were friendship based while others were confined to working relationships. Furthermore, over half stated that they had worked with at least one other lesbian at some stage in their immediate office. Those working in the larger cities were more likely to have had the opportunity to formalise their contacts around issues such as anti racism ( Women Against Racism Action Group, W A R A G ), E E O activities, and the employment of

lesbians in the Public Service, ( Lesbians In Departments, L I D's ). Organising around political concerns also appeared to have its consequences for some lesbians who felt that there was a certain amount of antagonism experienced from management levels.

" One director tried to block my involvement in a group when he became aware that most of the group were lesbians."

For others there was obviously an interesting 'spin off' from the consciousness raising function these groups served.

" After I came out I was involved in a feminist action group and most of the women in it subsequently became lesbians. Several were already."

The extent to which contact between lesbians was maintained depended upon the personal and political views that were shared and the kinds of meanings and interpretations they placed on their own lesbianism. Atmore ( 1990:39-40 ) found that lesbians could not always rely on the support of others in the workplace. This was due to the lack of solidarity amongst lesbians as a result of personality conflicts, or racial and class differences. In some situations closeted lesbians who occupied more powerful positions within the occupational hierarchy were clearly perceived as unsupportive and overtly discriminating against other lesbians.

Lesbian social workers identified similar problems.

" Hostility to do with differing political perspective and the opposing ways we view

the world, sexuality wasn't enough of a bond. "

Those who were open about their sexual identity status were suspicious and cautious of lesbians who were inclined to be discrete. Similarly, closeted lesbians were cautious of their contact with those more 'out'. This has been a factor that has commonly divided lesbians. Research conducted by Hall, ( 1986:70 ) found that some lesbians make a point of staying away from co-workers who are openly lesbian. While those who are open have resented the risks they take on behalf of others.

Some lesbian social expressed similar views.

" Some who are closeted are critical of me being too out, [they ] feel we will all be jeopardised. Another lesbian joined in harassment of me at one stage without care , or understanding of the implications this would have for my job security, or me personally. "

" I know of situations where out dykes are not supported and even opposed by closeted dykes who are under threat."

" Indirect hostility, mostly relating to the old, " I'm more politically correct than you " and its not easy resolving these issues at work, but I have tried. Its more hurtful than other negative responses from straights. "

Divisions between lesbians are often effectively created by the lack of formalised support and recognition more generally within the workplace. As a workplace dynamic it is also commonly known as the 'divide and

rule' strategy which weakens the ability of any marginalised group within an organisation from strengthening its position and building alliances. ( Kanter & Stein, 1980:164 ) While it is perfectly normal for a group of heterosexuals to be seen meeting together, it can be seen as sinister and perceived as some kind of conspiracy when lesbians do it.

" People's attitudes seem to express the feeling of a collusion when lesbians meet for support etc. I was informed once that two directors commented on myself and another lesbian as being difficult to work with and having a powerful set of friends. This seemed to pose a threat. "

Although there was evidence of the lack of support amongst lesbian social workers this did not limit the contact they had with 'like minded' lesbians. Furthermore, just under half the group claimed their contacts and relationships with others had been positive. These contacts provided an important basis for survival within the work place.

" I have always used other like-minded lesbians for support. At times they have been my only link with sanity in the workplace. "

" My contact with supportive lesbians has been essential to my survival in the workplace. "

Lesbianism As A Positive Aspect Of Work.

Only a small number of lesbians felt that their lesbianism did not positively relate to their work. Over half the group believed that it gave them a much wider appreciation for the type of work they were involved in and a sensitivity towards clients needs. Thus, for a number of lesbians, the understandings they derived from their sexual identity reflected a process that was both personal and political.

" Being part of a minority group enables me to have a better understanding of other minorities. "

" Understanding women's position in society, especially from a lesbian perspective enables me to be more empathetic, also gives the potential for support for women. I do not look for approval from men and this frees me up from time wasting behaviours of het women."

" The different perspective it gives. Giving a different value base from one being a disadvantaged class. It gives a bigger picture on life and a larger dimension and capacity to reframe, identify with a wider range of peoples problems. Gives rise to different ways of problem solving and relating to people."

It was also evident that most lesbians had an acute sense of their marginalised social position. This enabled them to recognise the way in which the needs of lesbian co-workers and clients were not being addressed by the Department.

" My understanding of what it is like to be 'other' and to be discriminated against. Ability to deal with lesbians who may be closeted and give them the opportunity to open up and be themselves without fear of reprisal. My commitment to equity."

" Also feel that it should be policy for dykes to work with lesbians clients. I get heaps of calls all the time. Lesbianism needs to be validated as a view representative of a client group."

#### The Advantages Of Being Pakeha And Able-bodied.

In terms of any analysis of power it is argued that groups who control access to decision making and resources do so in favour of their own interests and thus organise the work place to accommodate their needs rather than those of others. As a group, the majority of lesbian social workers were Pakeha and able-bodied. It was therefore expected that the arrangements within the D S W would also reflect some aspects of their own position as a 'privileged' group. It was also expected that their own heightened sense of discrimination would allow them to parallel this with the disadvantage and discrimination of other minority groups within the D S W.

" Being Pakeha and able bodied and also articulate gives me the ability to talk to the ADSS and directors and I can get what I want because they are middle class and Pakeha I know how to lobby them."

" Monocultural D S W gives me an advantage as Pakeha."

" [ The ] system is Pakeha and therefore designed to promote my interests. I have an understanding of how it works and can get around the obstacles."

" If I was Maori, Pacific Island etc., there would be another whole range of discriminations to deal with. Obviously I am advantaged by them."

" Being Pakeha has involved me in a privileged position in respect of access to money, power, education and jobs and promotion. Also I have easy access to buildings and acceptability to clients who hold the same prejudices as the population as a whole."

The monocultural nature of the justice system, as a work related area for social workers, was also seen as to advantage Pakeha lesbians. Given that lesbianism is not an easily recognisable, or visible indicator of social status in the same way that race and some disabilities are it may not be uncommon for Pakeha women to be accorded more credibility in the courts over Maori, or Pacific Island women.

" Racist attitudes give preference to me in courts."

#### Conclusions.

The workplace environment for lesbian social workers is one within which they must constantly negotiate their relationships with co-workers, supervisors, clients and

others they come into contact with in the course of their daily working lives. They also must anticipate and negotiate the obstacles that at any given point in time are a potential for, or become a real threat to their personal integrity and employment position. As Egerton et al., ( 1987:41 ) have noted, employers will sometimes tolerate lesbian employees as long as they do not campaign against heterosexuality, or promote lesbian lifestyles. The consequences for lesbian social workers of self censorship and self monitoring were indicated by the stresses experienced, the anxieties around disclosure, and the over compensatory strategies employed for survival. Despite the fact that the workplace was not always a comfortable and easy place for lesbians to be, they showed some resilience to conformity under most circumstances. Most also perceived their lesbianism as a positive attribute to their work.

## C H A P T E R   S E V E N .

**DISCRIMINATION: A PERSISTENT CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT.**Introduction.

This chapter describes the way in which non-institutional policies permit harassment, hostility and other unofficial actions taken by supervisors, or co-workers. This form of discrimination relates to the manner in which lesbians are subject to conditions of employment that are persistent and detrimental to them. Its manifestations are often less clear than indirect forms of discrimination where workplace policies exclude lesbians. Nevertheless, as a form of discrimination it is pervasive and simply makes the work place hard to bear. ( Levine & Leonard, 1984:706 )

The Public / Private Split.

Despite the continuing view that there is a distinction between the public and private spheres of life it has been apparent that lesbians believe it is desirable to integrate their work and social lives in some way. The conditions that are more likely to determine lesbians' attitudes towards social contacts with co-workers are said to include their degree of familiarity with a particular work setting and age. For example, older

lesbians who have been employed in their profession for some length of time and who are open about their sexual identity status have been more likely to socialise and maintain contact with co-workers. ( Schneider, 1984:216-225 ) In contrast, there has also been some suggestion that professionally employed, highly educated and feminist identified lesbians are cautious in their behaviour and tend to have limited contact with their co-workers outside the work place. ( Schneider, 1986 cited in Atmore, 1990:10 ) Following from this, those who are closeted are more likely to feel that their lesbianism reinforces the separation between work and leisure and that they stand out, not only for being women, but also for not fitting into an image of a work culture that extends beyond nine to five. ( Hall, 1986:63-6 )

For the purposes of this research the attitudes and responses of co-workers towards lesbians have been described as a reflection of an environment within which work based social occasions will be conducted. In turn social occasions themselves are often informally tied into the work 'culture'. and therefore will in some way impact on the extent to which lesbians ~~are~~ experience the workplace and are able to utilise social events to advantage their opportunities.

While most lesbian social workers tended to maintain some degree of social contact outside work hours with at least one other co-worker, many were reticent about attending work based socially organised functions. The reasons for this indicated that they experienced a lack of acceptance within a predominantly heterosexual environment.

The range of social contacts varied from infrequent socialising after work, attending special functions such

as xmas parties, to developed friendship networks conducted outside of work. The conditions under which these were more likely maintained depended upon the atmosphere of a particular social environment, the type of occasion, involvement around a particular interest, or the depth to which like minded attitudes were shared. For those who identified problems associated with maintaining social contacts it was evident that the atmosphere within which most occasions were conducted was uncomfortable and alienating.

" Sometimes, ie., infrequently stay for a social drink after work. Do not attend social functions, dinner etc., stay away from them. Can't bear the thought of having to put up with some of the het women's partners and don't want to put myself in the position of taking shit. I am not anxious to visit colleagues at home, or get friendly with them out of work and I don't want to encourage them to my home. "

" For the most part I avoided social gatherings that included men, particularly from work. "

In the case of one social worker, the anti-lesbian attitudes of her co-workers also reflected anti-feminist views, thus making her unacceptable to the social group.

" I had a good relationship with one colleague and have several good friends. In my previous position there were lots of parties I attended until I started being harassed over my involvement with E E O and then I was told to 'fuck off' from these events. "

While heterosexual women are not usually faced with the dilemmas of whether their male partners, including their modern de facto ones, will be accepted within the social group, lesbians are likely to feel hesitant about taking their female partners. This is because even in the most liberal work environments, heterosexuals tend to react to overt and public displays of such relationships. It is seen as violating heterosexual space. Liberal interpretations of lesbianism treat it as a personal and therefore private affair. This view is challenged when lesbians bring their personal lives into the workplace.

Some lesbian social workers were reluctant to attend social functions with a partner because of the expectation that co-workers would be uncomfortable, or hostile.

" Rarely take part in these events, but when I do I take my girlfriend. People are polite, but embarrassed. "

" Attend no functions and would not take a partner. Wouldn't want to subject her to the shit and wouldn't want to bore her with work things. "

Other social workers did enjoy socialising and felt comfortable taking their partner. However, they tended to congregate with co-workers they were already sure were accepting of them as lesbians.

" Yes and I take my lover when I go to the social club after work. I find that I stick with social workers who are fond of joking and support lesbian comments. "

Attending social functions alone did not always create a sense of isolation, or vulnerability, if there was a presence of established support networks available.

" Occasionally [ I attend ] and usually alone. Don't notice any effect on interaction because I am alone as there are usually other women colleagues on there own. "

" Very infrequently do I attend social functions. When I do I go alone. I can't say that I have much in common socially with colleagues. However, I usually stick with a group of women that I can relate more easily to. "

Previous research conducted within the D S W, ( Burns et al., 1987 ) has indicated that both male and female employees have been conscious of the effect that socialising with co-workers and bosses can have on workplace opportunities and relationships. For example, men have expressed faith in the 'old boys ' system of socialising to advantage their employment opportunities. Similar views have been shared women, especially women social workers. However, they have been more likely to perceive socialising as part of a process where men, rather than women have been groomed for promotion.

Lesbian social workers who did not attend social functions perceived themselves as 'outside' the group and believed that there were implications because of this in terms of their workplace relationships and employment opportunities. For example, their absence from social functions isolated them from the communication networks in the workplace.

" It must have an impact on the development of any informal networking. "

One social worker perceived her chances of promotion would have been severely restricted because of her absence from social functions.

" No didn't attend, but I could see it affecting chances of promotion if I had a vested interest in applying for another position in another occupational grade somewhere. "

Many lesbian social workers acknowledged the importance of socialising as a function of maintaining work relationships and opportunities. Lesbians who crossed the private barrier and tended to socialise found that it created a feeling of more positive acceptance and strengthened the working relationship between themselves and their co-workers.

" I am fully accepted and very much included in any informal networking. "

" My experience is that my attendance at social functions with my partner is good for my career. People enjoy and respond well to my openness and honesty. "

" Yes I attend and believe that it helps my working relationships, opportunities for promotion, knowledge of the workplace and social networking. "

Both social occasions and the workplace generally provide an opportunity for the potential for lesbians to develop a close friendship, or intimate relationship with

a woman co-worker. Despite the fact that a predominantly female work environment is also a potentially comfortable milieu, ( Schneider, 1984:212 ), it can be dangerous territory for lesbians. They have often been forced to leave their jobs for fear their relationships will be found out. If they remain in the job, they face the dilemma of being exposed and treated with suspicion, or hostility. Furthermore, when their relationships become known management are likely to enforce the separation of one partner from the same work area, or location. Management are seen to take advantage of the vulnerability lesbians experience in the workplace and count on the less likely chance that they will formally complain. Heterosexuals in similar circumstances would have grounds for a personal grievance against their employer if they are disadvantaged by such actions.

The contrast is that heterosexual women usually have the expectation that their relationships with men can be freely discussed and will be acknowledged by their co-workers. This is evidenced by the daily comments and discussions about their date the night before, or the merits, ( or lack of them ) in their husbands, or partners. There are also the rituals celebrating engagements and weddings like the after work 'shout' at the local hotel which reinforce the legitimacy of these relationships and are not extended to lesbians. Hall ( 1986:70 ) noted in her study that lesbians tended to maintain a sense of privacy and protection around their private lives and in doing so kept a low profile by avoiding conversations that highlight their lesbianism. Even when their lesbianism was known they did not want to be treated as a curiosity, or to cause social discomfort by bringing their relationships out into the open.

The public acknowledgement of work based relationships was clearly an area that was problematic for lesbian social workers. As one lesbian social worker found out, this damaged her working relationship with co-workers who saw it as 'breaking' ranks' with them.

" The environment was very unsupportive. My lover and I were working at the same office and colleagues became positively hostile to me. Assuming that I had access to information about them and also assuming I was handing information onto her. They questioned my loyalty to them quite publicly and incorrectly. "

While the D S W does have a policy restricting the employment of relatives and spouses ( Personnel Management Provisions ), observation and anecdotal evidence suggests this is more than flouted. Engaged and married couples have often worked in the same office, or division and extra-marital affairs between heterosexuals within the workplace have been tolerated. This double standard was epitomised by the threat to fire a lesbian employee for her relationship with a well known woman community worker, while at the same time the local male director was involved in an affair with a junior staff member. ( Private Communication, 1986 ) As Schneider ( 1984:218-20 ) has commented, workplace involvements between lesbians are even less tolerated than those that occur outside it. This is because the workplace is confronted with the reality of lesbianism when it is being 'practised' within their own domains. Furthermore, it is likely to call into question the conditions under which their own relationships with men are conducted. Given their highly vocal criticisms there are strong indications that, for some women, their relationships

with men are less than satisfying. ( Egerton et al., 1987:13 )

Workplace Support And Advocacy From Co-workers.

Lesbian social workers were ambivalent about the kinds of relationships they had with their co-workers. Only two were able to an unqualified 'yes' to the view that their co-workers were supportive of them in the workplace. Some (9) were able to claim that support was restricted to individuals and then it was only some of the time. While others indicated that they would only expect heterosexuals to have a minimal understanding of the issues that confronted lesbians in the workplace and therefore they did not have an expectation they would be supported.

" Some are. Most colleagues mix in 100% het social groups so they don't know what sensitivity means. Although my colleagues like me and have been personally supportive, I think their attitudes are 'red neck '."

" Support and sensitivity are limited to liberal acceptance, usually ignorance shows through in the end. No one has ever taken up an issue on my behalf, or on behalf of another lesbian. I feel the work environment is basically alienating. That I am more of an embarrassment. "

One social worker indicated that her support within the workplace was only able to maintained as long as co-workers were able to assume she was heterosexual. Her ambivalence towards openly identifying in the workplace

was also expressed as an ambivalence about the support she would receive from either lesbian, or heterosexual co-workers.

" If I was out at work the general environment would be unsupportive, most colleagues would be, but some [ might not ]. Lesbians and heterosexuals can be unsupportive."

For some, the extent to which they felt their relationships with co-workers were supportive, reflected the energy they had put into developing the rapport on their terms.

" I've trained them ! They weren't brilliant to start with but we have a pretty good understanding and now they watch their P's and Q's. "

Other lesbians felt the lack of support when they were unable to share personal problems. They perceived the predominantly heterosexual environment as<sup>a</sup> limit and restriction on the extent to which sensitivity and understanding would be available from co-workers. In turn this affected the trust lesbians had in their co-workers. However, in two cases this was ameliorated by the presence of other lesbians in the office.

" Support mostly from lesbians. Hets, generally not. Although when my relationship ended two het colleagues gave lots of support. The freedom to be open about relationships was due to my senior being lesbian and we gave each other alot of support. "

" I felt that I couldn't seek support from het colleagues when my relationship broke up

because I was worried they would trivialise my distress. This was borne out when I later told a woman colleague and she told me that she couldn't see what I was worried about because she thought lesbians were promiscuous and wanted lots of relationships. My only support came from another lesbian."

#### Advocacy And Support From Supervisors And Managers.

It is widely acknowledged that those in structurally powerful positions within an organisation also hold the power to influence the implementation of policies and work place practices. Thus, the attitudes and actions of supervisors and managers are a reflection of the Department's intentions and commitment to a discrimination free environment for all employees. For the purposes of this research it was reasonable to expect supervisors and managers should be actively involved in setting an example in the workplace. The manner in which they might conduct themselves and their individual responses to lesbian social workers was regarded as an important workplace influence on the eradication of discriminatory conduct.

Lesbian social workers generally perceived their Assistant Directors ( ADSS ) as being indifferent to them, while senior social workers ( SSW ) who occupied a closer structural relationship to basic grade social workers, were more likely to be seen as supportive and willing to advocate on their behalf. Overall, about one third claimed that their senior managers were no more and no less supportive of them than their peers. This included those who felt their seniors and managers were

as supportive as their co-workers. A small number ( 3 ) perceived senior managers to be actively hostile towards them. Only one response indicated that the higher levels of management and seniors were more supportive than co-workers. The presence of a lesbian co-worker, or a lesbian senior social worker, also indicated there was more chance of being supported within the organisation.

The comments made by lesbian social workers indicated that individual attitudes, rather than the position a person held within the occupational hierarchy were important influences over the support they expected within the workplace.

" From ADSS I experience indifference, from senior some support, most at peer level from another lesbian, and to a lesser extent colleagues. "

" Mostly indifference. It is never mentioned. "

" Support from senior, same from peers, but more consistent from senior who is a lesbian and blazed the way making acceptance easier for me. "

In one case the supervisor's attitude was more overt.

" Experience direct hostility from male ADSS. His lack of support is noticed in comparison with that of colleagues. "

Another example indicated that Seniors and managers could not be counted on as advocates.

" I would hesitate to approach either my senior or the ADSS for any support. I have had no

indications that they are sympathetic to lesbians in the workplace. They show mostly indifference towards me and I have never heard them mention E E O for lesbians."

While the support, or lack of it, from co-workers can have a more immediate effect on working relationships, supervisors and managers occupy positions of power and can therefore affect performance and competency ratings. In turn this can determine pay rates and even job security. There was a noted absence of any recognition from lesbian social workers that their supervisors, or managers actively promoted anti discrimination policy against lesbians in the workplace. However, it appeared there was no guarantee their peers were actively involved either. In conclusion, lesbians expected advocacy and support from individuals who were selectively sought out for their tolerance, or acceptance towards lesbianism.

#### Myths, Stereotypes And Professional Reputation.

Social workers have never enjoyed professional parity with other professional groups such as lawyers, doctors and the police. Yet, a considerable amount of their work in the area of child protection and youth justice has brought them into contact with these groups. They are groups which have been accorded considerable social status and are highly paid as occupations that are male dominated and influential in terms of the types of decisions they can make controlling women's lives. Thus, women as social workers occupy a position in relation to these institutions that undermines their status as 'experts'.

As lesbians the potential for their personal and professional credibility to be discredited was clearly evidenced by the fact that three quarters of the lesbian social workers had worked in situations where their professional reputation was challenged by other professionals, clients, co-workers, or seniors and managers. Their involvement in the sexual abuse of children was the most common situation where this was likely to occur.

" Doing a sexual abuse case a senior manager approached a police woman involved in the case and stated that the two social workers involved were radical lesbians. I presumed this was to discredit us. "

" A lawyer involved in a sexual abuse case found out that a woman claiming custody of her child was a lesbian. He threatened to use this against her and confided this in me. I had to tell him I was one too and he then wanted me removed from the case."

" Mainly on sexual abuse cases where clients and lawyers get upset if they find out I am lesbian and say that I am jeopardising evidence. "

" Complaint from a client over a custody and sexual abuse case. The father was told by an ex D S W social worker that I was lesbian. The mother got upset when it was raised in court. She thought it was untrue and therefore, malicious as an attempt to discredit my report. I didn't know whether to tell her the truth in case she got worried about my evidence also."

To a lesser extent, lesbians also experienced challenges to their professional credibility when they were involved in custody disputes between separated heterosexual parents. In the two cases cited both involved men who reacted to the knowledge that the social worker was lesbian by claiming bias.

" There was a ministerial from the father of a child over a custody report saying I was biased. The man was related to D S W foster parents and I believe they told him about me being lesbian. "

" A father wanted me removed from case because he found out I was lesbian. He said I was biased and that he wouldn't get custody of his child if my report was accepted. He used to ring up and abuse me. "

In one situation the fear that she would be accused of sexual misconduct by her co-workers, caused one lesbian social worker some considerable anxiety..

" On one case where I worked with a young female who was needy and gave affection easily, I began to feel uncomfortable with other staff and knew the perverted interpretations they would place on this sort of interaction if they knew I was a dyke. "

Lesbians were also susceptible to public criticism.

" I was challenged publicly at a meeting about representing D S W and being a lesbian and a social worker. "

Most lesbians were aware of the potential to be professionally discredited and as a consequence were cautious about disclosures of their sexual identity status to those outside the immediate work place in order to avoid this.

" I believe that the reality for me and many dykes is that I was selective as to who I came out to. This decision was based on whether, or not the person was likely to discredit my personal professional reputation. I am sure that if I hadn't passed in some situations, or if I'd built up a relationship with some of them I would have experienced this. "

#### Discovery.

Being 'discovered' as a lesbian can suddenly have a detrimental affect on workplace relationships and a supervisors attitude towards work performance. One study has shown that it can also lead to being fired, the removal of job responsibilities and forms of harassment. ( Levine and Leonard, 1984:706 ) Although the majority of lesbian social workers assumed that their co-workers were aware of their lesbianism, in many circumstances both in the immediate work place and beyond it, this information was not given first hand. It was therefore, information of 'interest' that was passed on by others. Whether this was done in a deliberate attempt to discredit is not known. Yet, it is information that is likely to be given to heterosexuals to serve as a 'warning'', or to create disfavour in some form that can be used at a later date.

Over one quarter of the lesbian social workers stated they had been subject to some form of negative reaction after their sexual identity had become known by others. However, in most situations they were never directly confronted about their lesbianism and it therefore, remained a suspicion.

" Possibly a change in some people's attitudes whom I'd told, but I wasn't interested in following up on whether we continued to get on, or not. "

" Subtle changes and difficult to pin down exactly anything specific. "

" I have always felt suspicious that some people's sudden change in attitude towards me is because they have been told by others that I am lesbian. Although I can never be sure even when there is no other possible explanation. "

In one situation coming out in the workplace did lead to criticism on work performance from a supervisor.

" Several complaints by the S S W ( male ) about my work performance when I came out. This was not upheld by other co-workers."

Some lesbians who were open about their sexual identity were less concerned and tense about their relationships with others and therefore, felt that 'discovery' was not a problem for them.

" I identified as lesbian from the start as I was staying with another D S W dyke who was out, so people knew by association. Also I was 'caught' once by a straight woman from work when I was

going hand in hand with my lover down the street and she just smiled at me and if anything became friendlier towards me after this. "

" I am out in the work place, also I am clear about my politics and how I live my life. These are just not up for discussion, or for the workplace."

For one lesbian, disclosure prior to her appointment as a social worker, reduced the likelihood that the information could be used later to discredit her in some way.

" Occasionally, [ there have been changes towards me ] but I've never been 'discovered' because of the controversy surrounding my appointment and being lesbian everyone knew. All the issues were raised prior to my appointment so everything was out in the open. This was a definite advantage as I had already fought the right to be employed as a lesbian and had a lot of support. "

#### Hostility And Harassment.

Negative attitudes and behaviour have been regarded as a obvious form of discrimination against lesbians in the workplace. These have varied from anti-lesbian jokes to demeaning comments made directly about a lesbian's sexuality. Other forms are less overt such as the exclusion from conversations about family life and the exclusion from social events. ( Egerton et al., 1987:74-5 ) The Levine and Leonard ( 1984 ) research established that harassment on the job was a pervasive

condition of employment. For example, verbal harassment took the forms of taunts, gossip and ridicule and non-verbal harassment was shown as hard states, ostracism, and damage to property. In extreme cases lesbians had been subject to physical harassment and violence and sexual harassment.

In this research lesbian social workers were subject to similar forms of harassment. In one form this was exemplified in the complaints about their clothing.

" The Director complained about my style of clothing as being too casual. She would have preferred me to dress more feminine, but I continued to wear the same style and she never said anything more. "

" Constant complaints about my clothing style. For example, I wear trousers all the time. "

Comments about clothing style appear to have been indirect references to the lack of femininity in lesbians.

" Constant references by co-workers and seniors, male and female, to the fact that I don't show my legs because I always wear trousers."

" Suggestions made to me that I should wear a skirt when I go to court because judges and lawyers like to be able to tell the difference between men and women."

In another example, a complaint related to the social workers apparent personal detachment when she was not willing to share details of her personal life.

" Foster parents complained that I didn't share much of myself personally and that it was difficult to relate to me because of this. I felt that not being able to relax and be out caused this. If I had been out then it would not have been a problem to share things. "

Complaints by co-workers about lesbian contact with young clients were viewed as a form of harassment and were seen as a hostile response to their sexual identity status.

" Complaints that my feminist views were detrimental to young female clients. "

" A male social worker complained about me working with a young female client and told her that I shouldn't be allowed to work with her because I was a lesbian. His S S W confirmed this viewpoint and told me that female clients shouldn't know that I was lesbian because it was a statement of my intention to sexually pursue them. She argued it was different for hets. "

Hostile reactions from clients were also perceived as a form of harassment.

" A client questioned me about my marital status and relationships with men and was hostile to me but wouldn't state verbally why. "

In two situations liaison with community organisations was threatened by the hostility of some community workers towards lesbian social workers. This had the potential to restrict access to client resources and therefore portray the social worker as inadequate, or incompetent at her job.

" A community worker was exceedingly hostile towards me and I asked to be removed from direct work with her. I found out later that it was because I was a lesbian that she had treated me so badly."

" Hostile and prejudiced comments made by community workers against lesbians in my presence when I presumed they didn't know I was lesbian."

For some social workers the hostility was part of the work 'culture' rather than specific behaviours and attitudes.

" Not directly but I am aware of homophobic attitudes around me and if people are given the opportunity it would show and so I am wary around them. "

The vulnerability to hostility and attacks through work related matters and performance was another direct form of harassment.

" Hostile attitudes and actions from male S S W since it was acknowledged that I was lesbian. There was a deliberate attempt to discredit my work and a series of reprimands over issues common to all staff, but I was the one selected out. "

One lesbian social worker found that her role in E E O was seen as threatening by heterosexual co-workers. It appeared as if the harassment in this case was also a strategy to undermine any association E E O policy itself would have with lesbians.

" In the role of Women's Liaison Officer I endured verbal harassment, gossip and the anti-sexist language programme was sabotaged as were other E E O issues. It was rumoured that I was a lesbian separatist as a way of discrediting E E O. "

Hostility was also more likely to be overt where a lesbian was open about her sexual identity. Expressions of intimidation were manifest in name calling and negative labelling. As Egerton et al., ( 1987:18 ) have commented the myth of lesbians as 'man haters' effectively intimidates all woman who want to speak up assertively.

" Co-workers made an assumption that I hate all men. Management seem wary of me because I am open about my lesbianism. Subjected to hostility when I took up a new position and people told that I was an out spoken lesbian. "

" Referred to as a man hating lesbian by a male ADSS on several occasions. "

Negative labels against lesbianism are an effective deterrent against lesbian visibility. They also ensure that lesbians do not campaign against heterosexuality, or promote lesbian lifestyles. Accordingly it is an effective means of dividing women because they provide an 'example' of the consequences that can be expected when women step out of line and fail to seek male approval, or identify with male defined values. ( Ehrlich, 1981:122 ) The main purpose of name calling and negative labels is to discredit lesbians, to invalidate their ideas and their lifestyle. As one social worker found out when she spoke up on the need for men to receive training in the

area of working with sexually abused children, this type of dedication to professional social work is malicious when it comes from a lesbian.

" Subject to three years negative comments during a period when I was being sued for defamation by two male social workers. "

#### Sexual Harassment.

Previous studies on lesbians in the workplace indicate that sexual harassment is a major threat to the security and conditions of employment. For example, Schneider ( 1984:223-224 ) found that over a twelve month period 82 percent had experienced this form of harassment. Of these 33 percent had been sexually propositioned, 34 percent were pinched and grabbed in a sexual manner, 54 percent had been asked for a date and 67 percent had been subject to jokes and jibes about their body appearance. However, Schneider also found that lesbians who were less closeted were not likely to experience harassment to the same extent as those who kept their sexual identity status secret. Furthermore, Schneider claims that it is difficult to infer any meaning from this data when sexual approaches can be seen as either harassment that explicitly targets lesbians because of that status, or it can be harassment directed towards all women. However, she has pointed out that lesbians have been more sensitive to unwanted sexual approaches and more willing to label the behaviours as sexual harassment.

Harassment perceived as sexual by lesbian social workers in this study was often displayed in the form of anti-gay and lesbian jokes in their presence.

" "Poofter" Jokes in my presence. "

" Anti-gay jokes and put downs about what lesbians do in bed."

However, sexual harassment can be much more direct and personally threatening. For example, male supervisors who question lesbians about their sexuality in a voyeuristic way with sexual overtones and innuendoes, leave no doubt as to their motives.

" Harassment by two male supervisors who questioned me about my lesbianism in what I consider an inappropriate way like they were getting their jollies thinking / talking about it. "

Despite the fact that it is difficult to discern whether sexual approaches constitutes harassment that is directed at lesbians, or whether it can be harassment experienced by most working women ( Schneider, 1984:223-4 ), there is often little doubt that in some harasser's minds lesbianism is a justification for such behaviour. For example, when lesbians are subject to direct requests and sexual touching by male supervisors, or co-workers who claim to want to 'convert' them to heterosexuality with their 'magic twinkie', it would seem they have been specifically targeted.

" One male co-worker suggested all I need was a good f.... and he was the one who could fix me."

Lesbians also experience forms of sexual harassment by heterosexual women. The example, of the lesbian who had her bottom pinched by female co-workers ever time she wore a skirt, or situations where heterosexual women display affectionate and demonstrative gestures towards

lesbians, are liberties lesbians are not free to exchange with heterosexual women for fear they will be misinterpreted.

" When I wear a skirt female social workers pinch my bottom. I am told I am too pretty to be a lesbian. "

" Female boss ( straight ) was inappropriately affectionate towards me after she had shut the door to the room and told me she wanted to address a complaint with me. She knew I was lesbian. "

The myth and assumption that lesbians are primarily interested in 'sex' has often led to heterosexual women misinterpreting affectionate gestures by 'out' lesbian women as sexual passes. ( Egerton et al., 1987:18 ) Thus, lesbians often modify their behaviour so that it cannot be misconstrued. As one lesbian social worker has commented this is a double standard imposed on lesbians who might have to tolerate unwelcome demonstrative behaviour from straight women while those same gestures are 'forbidden' for lesbians.

" A straight female staff member used to touch me affectionately on the hands and shoulders all the time. I was offended by this because my working relationship with her was quite distanced. I felt she was trying to use placatory gestures towards me. However, I didn't see her do it to anyone else and then when another dyke started work at the office the same thing happened to her. I see straight women being affectionate towards each other but always keep my hands to myself in case the gesture is misinterpreted so I don't see why

straight women can just assume they can touch you when and how they like and that we as lesbians just have to accept that it is not sexual because they're doing it. "

Although most lesbian social workers asserted that sexual harassment had not been a major problem for them in the workplace many incidents would indicate that it does occur even when a woman is known to be lesbian by her co-workers.

" Self and partner harassed by a male social worker at a social function for staff, we were both known as out lesbians. "

#### Conclusions.

Harassment and hostility towards lesbian social workers was manifest in several ways. Either, by the threat of it, or through actual incidents, it essentially had the effect of controlling the visibility of lesbians within the workplace. Harassment was effectively portrayed in complaints about unfeminine clothing appearances, discrediting of professional performance, the threat of allegations of sexual misconduct against clients, concerns about biased and 'unprofessional' judgement, and sexual harassment. Advocacy and support from managers, supervisors and co-workers were undermined by the individualised and personalised interpretations placed on lesbianism and the failure to incorporate a formalised policy and anti-discrimination code towards lesbians.

## CHAPTER EIGHT.

**DISCRIMINATION AND THE USE OF FORMALISED PROCEDURES..**

" In asserting the centrality, if not the primacy of a working life to lesbians, we assume that work provides both a means of economic survival and a source of personal integrity. " ( Schneider, 1984:211 )

The contents of this chapters refer to the use of 'formalised procedures' to restrict officially conferred work related rewards and benefits to lesbians. Opportunities such as promotions, salary increases, increased job responsibilities, hiring and firing are all part of the formal processes. ( Levine & Leonard, 1984:706 ) Formalised procedures also refer to the application of workplace benefits and rewards obtained within the Department's conditions of employment. For example, it is assumed that all of the provisions have been negotiated for the benefit of all employees. This chapter examines the provisions which rely upon the criteria of heterosexuality and hetero-relations.

The use of formalised procedures as a method of discrimination against lesbians allows both direct and indirect forms of discrimination to operate. For example, the application of direct forms of discrimination relates to the use of stereotypes and attitudes about lesbians as morally and sexually dangerous women who fail to conform

to the image of a 'real' woman, or the feminine role model. They are defined as acts, or treatment which in the case of lesbians, are less favourable than those accorded to heterosexual women in a similar, or substantially similar circumstances. An indirect form of discrimination is indicated by unequal out-comes. It relies on showing that lesbians, or the greater number of them are unable to comply with a particular requirement, or condition, which in the formal sense appears equal, but in effect disadvantages them.

Previous research ( Levine and Leonard, 1984:706 ) has indicated there is also some basis for accepting that the use of formalised procedures has been an effective method of discrimination against lesbians. These conclusions relate to significant numbers of lesbians researched throughout a variety of workplaces and occupations in the U S A. Twenty nine percent were not hired for a job, were fired, or forced to resign. Almost one tenth were not promoted, or were demoted, and four percent were denied salary increases, or had their duties restricted There have also been indications ( Hall, 1986:66 ) that lesbians have regarded it 'unfair treatment' when they have not been able to tap into corporate benefits such as family health insurances and family relocation allowances.

#### Recruitment.

Obtaining employment may not be an obstacle for lesbians if they do not reveal their sexual identity status. ( Egerton et al., 1987:70-2 ) However, by limiting the risk of disclosure there are indirect ways in which opportunities can be affected. At the point of applying

for jobs lesbians have to weigh up whether, or not they will risk information which will cause suspicion about them. In choosing to not draw attention to their lesbianism they may have to decide to omit any reference to their experiences and skills gained through voluntary, or paid work with lesbian based organisations and services. In contrast heterosexual women are not faced with the same dilemma. Their sexuality is not seen as threatening because it is viewed as a sign of 'normal' psycho-social development. Even women who identify strongly as feminist do not have to interpret their years experience in a conservative organisation such as 'marriage guidance' as problematic, or an indication of some form of labelled deviancy. In fact their previous involvement in this type of work legitimates their heterosexuality.

Under the E E O policy experience is both counted as a basis for merit for the job and in the assessment of starting salaries. Lesbians who feel safer in withholding information on some of their skills and work experiences may not be appointed to positions because they have had to compete against heterosexual women whose experience is seen to be greater. Even where lesbians are appointed their starting salaries may not reflect their real experiences and skills.

The interview stage is an opportunity for applicants to convey a favourable impression to a panel. Lesbians have to consider whether or not the impression they give will lead interviewers to conclude she is lesbian. Because of this they will often modify their clothing, demeanour and appearance so that they conform to heterosexual standards of femininity. They also avoid biographical details and disclosures about their personal lives that heterosexual women will feel safe in giving.

Egerton et al., ( 1987:44 ) have commented that difficulties can be encountered at the interview stage where the 'oddness' of lesbians becomes evident as they get older. For example, women over thirty five who have never been married, or had children are a small minority and employers can become suspicious of women who cannot give some sort of history of heterosexuality. Egerton et al., also confirm that at the interview stage applicants might also be perceived of as 'different' because of their dress and behaviour, both of which are usually closely scrutinised. Those who cross the boundaries of acceptable gender norms may lead employers to see them as 'odd', or suspect them of being lesbian.

In one case a lesbian was refused employment with the D S W as a social worker because her sexual identity status was known at the time of the interview. Her complaint to the union eventually resolved the situation.

" I was originally turned down as a social worker because of my lifestyle and in fact I was told I would not get a job in any government department. This was taken up by the P S A and D S W Head Office and I won the right to apply."

### Resignations.

Lesbian social workers did not claim they had been forced to resign from their jobs, or 'constructively

dismissed',<sup>13</sup> because of harassment and hostility. However, the reasons why they resigned their positions as social workers may be different than those of heterosexual women. For example, they perceived their work and themselves to be undermined within a predominantly heterosexist environment. The affect was that they were no longer willing, or able to tolerate the alienation, the lack of recognition for their skills and lack of support from managers and supervisors and lesbian co-workers, the wearing down of morale and a loss of self confidence. The final result was a loss of commitment to the job.

" I was affected by the lack of support from other lesbians in the District office and an unsupportive Assistant Director. "

" I resigned because management were unsupportive and my skills and competence were abused. D S W no longer had anything to offer me so I changed careers. "

" In part my resignation was about being lesbian and not wanting to continue to put personal energy into a male defined system both in and out of the

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13. Constructive dismissal is defined by Hughes ( 1990 ) as a resignation that is forced in the face of a direct or clearly implied threat to dismiss an employee. However, it can also be construed where the conduct of the employer is in breach of the employment contract and therefore leaves the employee with no alternative but to resign because of detrimental working conditions. Sexual harassment is one such example where the conduct of an employer might force a resignation.

Department."

The reason given by one lesbian for transferring to a different location, was similar to those given by lesbians who had resigned.

" I transferred because I found the culture of the D S W increasingly difficult. Although I wasn't harassed I found the environment unacceptable."

In another example, the reason for transfer was a direct result of harassment.

" I transferred because of harassment in relation to my position with E E O and Women's Liaison. "

#### Job Security.

Half of the lesbian social workers had not felt that their jobs were jeopardised because of their sexual identity status. However, several others felt conscious of the way their lesbianism could be used against them to remove them from their jobs, or to discredit their professional credibility. Some lesbians described operating in a general climate of distrust because they expected discriminatory behaviour towards them at any time. This wore down their self confidence which might have eventually led to their resignation.

" Yes, I am paranoid at times. Feel like there is a big sign around my neck. "

" Yes, constantly watching my back in case something is used against me. Felt that the ADSS was trying

to wear me down so that I would either leave, or toe the heterosexual line. She would constantly pass on the negative comments others were saying about me and used my assessments to alert others to my reputation as 'stropky'.

" Continual put downs and a discounting of me that makes it difficult to continue. "

#### Promotion And Prejudice On Interview Panels.

Part of E E O provisions are to ensure that interview panels include a least one woman in the short-listing and selection for appointment to positions. However, this has not shown to advantage lesbians. There has been no requirement under E E O for panelists to be non-heterosexist in the same way that they are supposed to ensure that sexist attitudes do not enter into the process. Anti-lesbian attitudes of panel members were shown to be one of the causes of discrimination at the level of promotion for lesbians.

" I believe so. In one case when I applied for promotion a person who was a known homophobic was included on the interview panel. ( It was well known that I am a lesbian ) If not for the inclusion of this person the job would have been mine. I was told this later. "

" I have not got positions I have applied for and have been suspicious as to the reasons why because panel members have been openly scathing about my lesbianism at other times. I withdrew my application for one position because of the

attitude of one of the panel who was anti-lesbian. However, I have also got promotions I have applied for and it has been known that I am lesbian. "

Hostile and anti-lesbian comments made by interview panel members were passed on by heterosexual co-workers, or supervisors. This was an effective deterrent to promotion for lesbians. Under this sort of pressure lesbians were likely to withdraw their applications rather than endure a tense interview where the outcome was perhaps already been decided.

" I withdrew my application for promotion after being told by another staff member that an interview panel member had described me as a " short haired " lesbian and that I would offend a Pacific Island panel member who would be interviewing me. "

" Possibly in one case it affected my chances. I was advised after an interview that one panelist had been against lesbians. But, I have had two promotions since I have been out."

In some cases, the extent to which promotional opportunities were affected may have been subtle rather than overt. For example, one lesbian social worker was reluctant to expend her energies and commitment to supporting the organisation at higher levels. She also recognised her chances of promotion were restricted because of her lesbianism.

" Never bothered going for promotion, don't support the system. I was out when I got transferred from one position to another. No, but I have thought that my chances might be affected if I pursued transfer, or promotion. "

Some managers also made sure that their views towards a particular lesbian were known in order to discourage them from applying for a position under their control.

" Every time I applied for a position at one particular office the gossip would reach me that the Assistant Director would make sure I didn't get the job because I was too forth right as a lesbian. I would then withdraw my application because I couldn't bear to have the embarrassment of being seen as not good enough for the position and then having to fight it to show it was prejudice. I have not applied for positions because I think the same problems will occur each time. "

In some cases sexual identity was raised as part of an interview, or within the appointment procedures. This served as an implied 'warning' that it could affect the future stability of their job.

" I was questioned about my lesbianism at the interview. But I got the job. "

" I was informally told that my appointment for promotion may not be approved because I was seen to have upset the Director-General on an occasion when I was part of a meeting and challenged him

on his attitudes in a situation involving another lesbian. However, the appointment was signed and I got the job. "

According to one lesbian it was only because of her secrecy about her sexual identity status that she was able to obtain promotion.

" I am closeted and I have heard that the present director is anti-lesbian, So I am sure I would not have been appointed [ if she had known ]."

#### Loss Of Job Responsibilities.

The majority of lesbian social workers felt that their job responsibilities were unaffected by their sexual identity status. However, where difficulties were experienced lesbianism was clearly seen as contaminating, or threatening and sexually dangerous to co-workers and clients because of this the negative attitudes of colleagues and supervisors placed some lesbians under considerable duress.

" In my student days while I was on placement with the D S W I was working with a young dyke and everyone got really uptight about it. However, they didn't remove her from my case load. "

" A male senior social worker suggested it was inappropriate for me to work with young females because of my lesbianism and the possibility that I might sexually harass them. It remained a suggestion and was not acted on. "

" I was re-allocated a task on a committee for organising policy on sexual harassment procedures so that I would no longer have involvement in this area. Staff found my comments inappropriate and embarrassing because I vocalised the problem. I felt this came from their need to trivialise and minimise the issue and protect men's abusive actions and attitudes."

" I was told that a het women would be more acceptable in the role of Women's Liaison Officer than I was as a lesbian. "

One example, also showed that because lesbians are presumed to be free of family responsibilities this justified the allocation of additional tasks.

" Believe the contrary is true. I am given more responsibility because it is assumed that I don't have family responsibilities. I am expected to be totally competent while others are excused for absences, poor work performance because of children and marriage problems and family ill health. "

#### Access To Complaints Procedures.

Because lesbians do not have protection against discrimination under the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977., they do not have the same option heterosexual woman do to choose which route would best serve their right to redress over a complaint. Lesbians are therefore confined to using the personal grievance procedures where they have been subject to discrimination on the grounds

of 'sexual preference'. Essentially this means that complaints are handled by the union, or bargaining agent. While discrimination against lesbians is not included under the Employment Contracts Act 1991, it is part of the collective agreement between employees and D S W employers and therefore individuals can take complaints to the Employment Tribunal.

When lesbian social workers have made complaints, supervisors and managers have been clearly unsupportive and represent one of the stumbling blocks to the procedure. In some cases they have perpetuated the harassment by trivialising it and adding offensive remarks of their own. In other examples, managers have ignored the complaints and failed to take any action or investigation. Lesbians have tended to see the union as more responsive and supportive. However, union delegates can not always be expected to be familiar with complaints procedures and in some instances individual delegates were regarded as lacking in understanding on issues relevant to lesbians and employment.

" The P S A delegate is very homophobic. I wouldn't make a complaint to the union. "

Just over half of the lesbian social workers claimed they had no reluctance in making a complaint to the P S A., or their managers. Because many did not qualify this the reasons were unclear. On the face of it this suggests that some lesbians did not feel they had serious cause to complain. This seemed inconsistent with the levels of concern lesbian social workers expressed relating to harassment and hostility towards them.

Of those who stated they had not been reluctant, seven lesbians claimed they had actually taken a

complaint. These were complaints of discrimination made to either managers, or the P S A. In one case this involved an unsuccessful approach to a District Solicitor for advice and assistance in dealing with the threat of public disclosure and the discrediting of court evidence by clients. Another complaint involved both Head Office personnel and the P S A where the department had refused to employ the woman when they found out she was a lesbian. Although the process was a difficult and exhausting one, the complaint was successfully resolved.

All complaints handled by the P S A were considered to have been dealt with in a supportive and constructive manner. This was not always the case where managers and controlling officers were involved and in one situation a senior manager was considered to have supported a male sexual harasser, while in another the complaint was treated dismissively with the manager retaliating with a counter complaint. There was also the example, where ignorance and reluctance on the part of a manager caused the matter to be treated as trivial.

" A male staff member put a sign on my door saying 'dyke free' zone when I was on leave. The ADSS claimed he didn't understand why this was a problem even when I pointed out that he wouldn't have tolerated such behaviour if the sign had referred to another minority group. "

Four lesbians stated they would be reluctant to make a complaint because of repercussions. Of these it was clear that for Maori lesbians, the lack of support, racist attitudes and practices, combined with anti-lesbian ones, were restrictive factors.

" I wouldn't make a complaint. Too much energy

involved for little return. Now I would get support from others including Maori men. "

For the others, their reluctance related to the belief that they would be subject to further discrimination. Although once the complaint had been made this was not always the case.

" Yes. I believe that the consequences would be far greater for me. For example, I'd be labelled the 'trouble maker'. I also believe that it is thought that I deserved it because I am open about my lesbianism. "

" I was initially reluctant because I thought that I would be subject to further discrimination. It would be like bringing my lesbian attitudes to the direct attention of the director. However, I did follow through in the end and it was dealt with in a supportive way. "

#### The Supervisory Relationship.

For the purposes of this research it was assumed that a positive relationship between lesbian social workers and their supervisors would be essential to survival in the workplace and professional development. It was also assumed that because supervision is seen as an integral part of social work practice and professional development, it therefore represented a formalised requirement of the job and could be used to officially confer, or deny support and professional guidance as a condition, or benefit of employment.

One of the functions of supervision serves to fulfil the purposes of accountability within a hierarchical organisation and in doing so establishes a basis upon which the agency is able to carry out its purposes as effectively as possible. ( Chernesky, 1986:129 ) On a more personal level it can provide an essential part of support within the job where high levels of stress result from working with crisis and human distress. Although there have been various criticisms of traditional models of supervision because they reflect the position of the supervisor to direct and inspect practice. To some extent this discourages innovation and experimentation. However, there is the potential for supervision to be conducted within a relationship which is responsive to the needs of individual social workers and capable of encouraging self direction. ( Chernesky, 1986 ) The extent to which sexual identity status impinges on practice issues must therefore, also be able to be explored within supervision.

Because heterosexism operates at all levels of the organisation, lesbians cannot always be guaranteed the same support and direction as their heterosexual co-workers. Supervisors occupy a structural position which allows them to determine the extent to which organisational policies will be enforced. Unless they are aware of how latent and manifest heterosexism operates they will continue to support discrimination against lesbians. Anti-lesbian attitudes on the part of the supervisor not only creates an adversarial situation, it reinforces the inferior status of lesbians in the workplace. Furthermore, when supervisors adhere too strictly to the managerial role they are not in a position to listen to worker's concerns, advocate in worker's interests, or attempt to bring about beneficial change. The supervisory relationship then becomes a part

of the system that continues to perpetuate the inequitable distribution of resources and services to lesbians. ( Swanson and Brown 1984:59-65 )

Six social workers felt positive about the relationship they had with their supervisor. They were able to discuss their lesbianism and believed their supervisors were sensitive to the difficulties they encountered in the workplace. Some of them had lesbian supervisors, while others emphasised the 'astuteness' of their heterosexual supervisors.' In particular, they referred to their supervisors as 'good practitioners'.

The social workers who were dissatisfied with the supervisory relationship expressed a lack on two levels. One was the heterosexist attitudes of supervisors. The other was the lack of confidence they had in their supervisors competence and an inability to give appropriate professional support. Several Pakeha lesbians would have preferred a supervisor who reflected both their feminist and lesbian concerns. Maori lesbians expressed a high level of satisfaction with their supervisor. This was because they felt that some of their needs as Maori women were already being met within the Department. There is some considerable difference between the workplace priorities of Pakeha and Maori lesbians. The latter tended to emphasise cultural networks rather than lesbian ones. For Maori lesbians it was clear that their cultural needs as Maori were more important in the supervisory relationship than sexual identity status. Thus, there was a clear preference for a supervisor who shared the same racial identity. In some cases this requirement was being met and therefore Maori lesbians included those who were already satisfied with their supervisory relationship.

It was apparent that for many lesbian social workers their personal and professional needs were not being met within supervision. Within this the qualities of the supervisor were essentially found to be lacking in terms of their professional competencies and skills, and their awareness and sensitivity to the dynamics of both sexism and heterosexism. In some cases supervision was treated merely as a perfunctory requirement of the job. Thus, several social workers felt they were denied the opportunity for personal and professional growth. Some of those who claimed there were no positive benefits from supervision it was clear that the relationship was impeded by the potential for anti-lesbian attitudes.

" I would never raise personal issues in anything but the vaguest way. Something I learned long before I was out. "

" Would never discuss these. Some male supervisors have been dreadful and homophobic. "

" My supervisor is anti-women and therefore, anti-lesbian. I endure supervision because I don't want to risk being seen as causing trouble. "

While almost two thirds of the group had never requested supervision with another lesbian, the few who had were not denied access to this. However, over half the Pakeha lesbians expressed a preference for a lesbian supervisor.

" Yes, heterosexual supervisors do not have the understanding of the issues that arise regarding being lesbian and could have bias and prejudices themselves without realising it. I do not

want to spend my time educating and challenging a supervisor. "

" Yes, I would prefer this. Don't like het biases that get in the way and distort situations. "

It appeared that most of those who expressed a preference for a lesbian supervisor, either did not have access to one, or they had felt it was not within their powers of persuasion to obtain access to one. Yet, their supervisory relationship obviously caused discomfort and operated as a form of intimidation, wherein they believed they risked certain consequences if they complained.

" Would definitely prefer a lesbian supervisor. I find it difficult with a het, particularly a male who is sexist as well as heterosexist. But I feel that I have to watch myself and wouldn't challenge him because I would end up being labelled a man hater which is what happens when women especially lesbians are critical of sexism etc., or complain of discrimination. "

Professional skills and competency were more important qualifications for supervision for almost half of the group, rather than sexual identity status.

" Not necessarily it depends on whether they have good qualities as a supervisor. "

" No, I would just like to be coached by someone competent and skilled, someone that has something to give. It has never happened. "

Two lesbians claimed they were satisfied with a heterosexual supervisor who was competent as long as they were free to seek the advice, opinions and support of lesbian colleagues. Others preferred a lesbian supervisor only if she was 'out' and in one case the preference was for a feminist supervisor regardless of sexual identity status.

#### Job Share And Part-time Work.

Job sharing and part time work is not always a viable option for lesbians. This is because anything less than full time work may mean that a lesbian household cannot financially survive.

" The vast majority of lesbians know that they have to work to survive: no husband is going to take care of them. Because women's salaries are typically two-thirds those of men, and because women are often shunted into low-paying jobs and kept there, it is usually a financial necessity for both partners in a lesbians couple to work. In addition, the majority of lesbians believe that both women in a couple should work. " ( Clunis & Green, 1988:55 )

Heterosexual women in marriages, or de facto relationships have some advantage over their lesbian counterparts. They are more likely to chose job share and part time positions if they are able to rely upon a male, and therefore a 'family' wage to support them.

However, one of the compensations lesbians with dependent children have over their heterosexual

counterparts is their eligibility for the Domestic Purposes Benefit when their partner is in full time paid employment. Since lesbian relationships or domestic arrangements are not deemed to be in the 'nature of marriage', lesbians benefit by being treated as economically independent. This ironically, may balance out the disparity between the lower incomes earned by women in paid work compared with the male as 'family provider'. However, it also serves as an example of the anomaly created by continuing to treat heterosexual women as dependents within the family, while at the same time reinforcing hetero-relations to the point of excluding lesbians from access to other resources and services.

#### Leave Provisions.

The entitlement for some leave provisions has been far from clearly established in favour of lesbians. Thus, they have not always been guaranteed access to these work related benefits on the same terms and conditions their heterosexual counterparts. Both the ambiguity of the term 'partner' and the discretionary authority supervisors and managers have to either grant, or deny workplace benefits, causes lesbians difficulty in obtaining access to leave for domestic and bereavement purposes. The term 'partner' in its most common interpretation has been applied to the opposite sex. Lesbians have no socially, or legally accepted status as next-of-kin, or as 'carers'. For example, there is no equivalent in lesbian terms to the heterosexual 'step mother'. Because of this they have been denied domestic leave that can be taken against their sick leave provisions to care for a sick

partner, or partner's child. This occurred in the case of one lesbian social worker.

" Because lesbian partner did not come under the Public Service definition of 'partner'. "

Bereavement leave has also been a potential problem because the criteria for entitlement has been based on the 'closeness of the association' of the deceased to the employee. It has been likely that such a loose interpretation was introduced to include de facto relationships and the family associations that extend from these. It has also allowed a more flexible interpretation of 'family' to include whanau, hapu and iwi links for Maori staff. Notwithstanding this, traditional interpretations of 'family' have caused less ambiguity when blood and legal ties are recognised.

Another provision affected by the ambiguity of the definition of 'partner' and the discretionary interpretation was the payment of costs for a partner's relocation expenses when a lesbian employee was transferred on promotion to another part of the country. In the case of one lesbian social worker, she had felt forced into dishonesty in order to claim these expenses.

" I applied for it and got it, but didn't reveal the real reasons. For example, I just shifted my partners things with mine. "

Others did not apply for them because they understood that their entitlement to the costs would not be legitimate. In two cases lesbian social workers were refused relocation allowances for their partners on the grounds that the relationship did not comply with the heterosexual criteria. However, in one situation this was

re-negotiated at a later date when the P S A applied a more flexible interpretation to the definition of 'partner'.

Lesbian employees who have paid into the Public Service Welfare Society have been likely to have difficulty claiming for medical and other related expenses for their partner's, or partner's children. This was because the entitlement to costs was extended to the 'spouse' and one's own dependent children. It has not been clear whether the definition of a 'spouse' in this case includes same sex relationships.

Although the criteria for study leave has not relied upon an interpretation of the term 'partner' it has been associated with 'good performance', length of service and indications that an employee has a reasonable chance of succeeding in the area of study. Study leave grants are also tied in with the implied expectation that the Public Service will benefit by enhanced performance after the successful completion of a diploma, or degree. This has required a commitment on the part of employees to continued service after the study leave expires. The commitment has usually been in the form of a compulsory 'bond' whereby employees have a legally binding contract with the D S W to 'repay' study leave by the equivalent in service.

The aspect of 'good performance' was one area which might have been problematic for lesbians. For example, anti-lesbian supervisors and managers are in a position to influence performance ratings and the allocation of study grants. Although many lesbian social workers adopted the strategy of 'fitting in' to avoid being labelled 'troublesome', others risked negative

associations with their behaviour when they were outspoken on women's issues and workplace policies.

The majority of lesbian social workers had not applied for study leave. Although the reasons for this were unstated, a few had not been in the job long enough to qualify for the grant. The majority of lesbians already had tertiary qualifications. However, it was not stated whether these had been acquired prior to joining the Department. On the positive side, some lesbians had been successful in obtaining study grants either full time, or part time even when their sexual identity status was known by their supervisors and managers.

#### Child Care And Parental leave.

Heterosexual women have some socially confirmed status in a parental, or caring role in relation to children not biologically their own. This is obvious where they have some legal status, but included in this, as 'step mothers', they are expected to provide primary care of their partner's children. In these situations the use of work based, or subsidised child care for the children of their male partner's, has been seen as entirely appropriate. Because the role and status of lesbians as carers of children not biologically their own is less clear, and not socially affirmed there is the potential for these facilities to be unavailable to them.

The Parental Leave And Employment Protection Act.,

1987., confirms and reinforces the heterosexual criteria for parental status. For example, it grants protection over employment to women on the basis of their maternity and to spouses either legally married, or living in a relationship in the nature of marriage. The definition of the term 'spouse' includes either male or female partners. However, the law is quite definite in confining parental status to the opposite sex on the grounds of their biological role, or legal status in the case of adoptions. Parental leave is only granted to lesbians when they have a biological role. Since paternity is a biological impossibility for lesbians they have no legally defined role as parents other than biological motherhood.

#### Equal Employment Opportunities Policy.

Lesbian social workers were clearly disenchanted by the lack of attention given to their needs within the D S W. Because the policy formalised certain provisions for women it was expected that lesbians would have had the opportunity to raise the issues relevant for them. A factor restricting this was identified as a failure on the part of E E O officers and Women's Liaison officers to locate lesbians within the D S W.

" She has never made herself available despite the request. In fact she avoided it and said she didn't know of any lesbians. The WLO stick to very domestic issues such as whether the toilet facilities are up to scratch for women ! When I was involved in WLO I also avoided raising

controversial matters and felt frustrated at the lack of support amongst women in the office for lesbian issues."

A further problem was identified in the Department's general lack of commitment to the practical application of the policy.

" It may be in theory, but in practice it is neglected."

" No, otherwise there would be more out dykes. It looks good on paper that's all."

" It may be in theory, but I've never seen anything positive in practice."

The most significant factor clearly established prejudice on the part of the male policy makers.

" In my experience in E E O the big block is the Executive Management Group. In the 1989 draft we got lesbians and gays included as a target group and it got dismissed in the most bigoted and prejudiced and arrogant way, led by the Director-General himself. Although the individuals involved in E E O are great and support addressing the disadvantage faced by lesbians it's the prejudice of managers and the structure that have to be addressed. "

It was noted that when attention was given to lesbian concerns this was as a direct result of the initiatives of lesbians themselves. However, these were activities that were confined to offices in one of the larger cities where there was the opportunity for support.

" As part of E E O in my office we met when we wanted to and we were involved with other lesbians outside the district on E E O and lesbian concerns."

Over half of the lesbian social workers expressed a concern over the lack of education, training and publicity on E E O and discrimination against lesbians. This research itself was seen to provide a vehicle for highlighting the need for change.

" Publication and training to create a better awareness and to disabuse the myths of lesbians. To promote policy and practice that is non-discriminatory."

" Lever to management, to W L O to challenge attitudes. A basis for a lesbian cell group to make recommendations to these people. "

### Conclusions.

Anti-lesbian attitudes and the application of negative stereotypes, while constituting forms of direct discrimination, have effectively been used within formal workplace procedures to restrict lesbian's access to opportunities in the areas of recruitment, promotion and job responsibilities. Officially conferred rewards and benefits such as leave provisions and financial reimbursements for transfers have been denied to lesbians. This has been recognised as indirect discrimination on the basis that lesbians cannot meet the criteria for heterosexuality.

The E E O policy itself has represented a formal barrier to opportunities in that it promotes the hetero-relational family model as a criteria for positive treatment.

## C H A P T E R   N I N E .

**GETTING IT STRAIGHT ? LESBIANS AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**

" Lesbian is no longer just a sexual term. Many feminists, myself included, now consider it to be a highly charged political word, used to describe a woman who choses to live independently of men. "  
( Gould, 1978:281 )

Introduction.

This chapter makes the final comments on the research and the conclusions that are able to be drawn from it. The tasks have involved an examination of the assumptions underlying the Department's E E O policy for women and a descriptive account of the experiences of discrimination against lesbian social workers in the D S W. It has been argued that the assumptions underlying the state's E E O programme have reflected an institutionalised policy of heterosexism. As a consequence women who adhere to heterosexuality and a model of hetero-relations have been favoured. This has effectively restricted the access lesbians have to equal employment opportunities.

In conclusion it is argued here that although Equal Employment Opportunities policies have generally been assumed to cater, at least potentially for all women,

lesbians, have not shared equally in its benefits. The validity of such claims is based on the subjective meanings and interpretations lesbian social workers have given to their workplace experiences. Previous research as secondary sources of data has indicated that the experiences of lesbian social workers are reflective of some predictable patterns and themes.

This analysis has involved a radical feminist critique linking the control over women's sexuality in the form of compulsory heterosexuality, with access to employment opportunities and rewards. By researching the experiences of lesbians in employment it is possible to discover and propose more far reaching priorities for social change for all women.

#### Research As Consciousness Raising.

The majority of lesbian social workers were aware of their marginalised and inferiorised status within the workplace. In part, the questionnaire itself had some impact on the development of a consciousness towards discrimination. For example, during the process of responding to the questionnaire they were expected to identify the experiences relevant to them as lesbians. From this it was clear that most lesbian social workers had learnt to adjust and modify their working lives in a manner which undermined the personal significance of their sexual identity status. In doing so they managed their 'unacceptability' in a variety of ways in order to fit in with the requirements of the workplace. Yet, the tone conveyed throughout the research was one that would have contradicted the notion that lesbian social workers perceived themselves entirely as victims. On the

contrary, lesbian social workers tended to show a strong sense of personal integrity, self dignity and self worth and therefore viewed their lesbianism as a form of personal empowerment that was denied to them in the workplace. Some responses indicated that lesbians had a sense of 'healthy' anger towards discrimination.

It was significant that most of the lesbian social workers felt that their participation in the research had highlighted the psychological consequences of discrimination. This was a clear reminder that the impact of a heterosexist ideology, which reinforces the belief that men are superior to women and therefore have the right to control the life circumstances of women, also has the potential to reinforce the view of oneself as inferior. Ehrlich's, ( 1981:123-3 ) claim is that the acceptance of oneself as inferior also includes feelings of self depreciation, lack of worth, and isolation.

" ...The consequences of this are more than psychological: they affect the material conditions of one's life by destroying the will to rebel, or never allowing the possibility of rebellion to arise in the first place... For women who are treated materially and psychologically as the property of men, it is not sufficient to gain access to economically productive resources ( though it is of course necessary ): nor is it enough to gain control over one's sexuality ( though that too is necessary ). Women need to gain a consciousness that they are oppressed as *women*, that they are not inferior, and that [ male power ] need not be inevitable. " ( Ehrlich, 1981:123-4 ) ( Ellipses mine to indicate portions have been deleted for the sake of brevity. )

The responses of lesbian social worker's indicated that at times feelings of self depreciation and isolation were relevant to their experiences in the workplace. Their consciousness of this was raised by the research and as some put it, this had highlighted the affects of wearing down a commitment to change.

" Made me realise how little energy I had for fighting not only dyke issues, but women's issues as well."

" Raised awareness for me again that it is bloody hard to be a woman and secondly a lesbian within the D S W."

Another lesbian social worker commented on how her survival in the workplace had depended on denying the psychological affects of discrimination. Having completed the questionnaire this was brought into her consciousness.

" Made me realise that some awful things have happened to me and how much I have suppressed them in order to survive at work. "

For other lesbians, the research had made them aware of the psychological impact of discrimination, but that the research itself was instructive.

" The documentation of situations made me realise the extent of discrimination towards me more clearly and realising the importance of E E O, and made me more aware of the stresses involved for me. "

" It has made me more alert to discrimination from my colleagues because of my lesbianism."

One comment indicated that the research provided a sense of alliance with other lesbians.

" Yes, its a reminder that I'm not alone. I'm also reminded that I need to do a lot of work to tease out the issues for myself as a lesbian social worker. Thank you."

Other comments raised the issue of vulnerability and invisibility and in several cases responding to the questionnaire was an emotionally difficult process.

" It has brought up how vulnerable we are as dykes. Also how quite invisible. In lots of ways I didn't want to do [ the questionnaire ] it was quite painful. Brought up things I hadn't thought about for ages. "

" It brought up a lot of reaction in relation to events of about 13 years ago which had a large effect upon my early days in the D S W. "

The majority of lesbian social workers were interested in the research being used to promote education, training and publicity on E E O and discrimination against lesbians in the workplace.

" Publication and training to create a better awareness and to disabuse the myths of lesbians. To promote policy and practice that is non-discriminatory."

One social worker suggested that as an appropriate tool for facilitating change, the research would be useful to a lesbian group in the D S W .

" Lever to management, to W L O to challenge attitudes. A basis for lesbian cell group to make recommendations to these people."

One lesbian social worker claimed that being visible and positive about one's lesbianism was the only sure catalyst for change in the workplace.

" Just make sure everybody is out from day one ! "

#### Does The Experience Fit The Analysis ?

Lesbian social workers, as a group, were middle class, feminist, racially mixed, ( although predominantly Pakeha ), highly educated, well paid, and mature in terms of age and the length of time they had identified as lesbians, and the length of time they had been employed. They worked within a range of workplace settings and predominantly female work environments. While they were a mature group in the sense that their ages gave them some considerable life experience, they still had several years employment ahead of them before 'retirement' age. Job security may have had some bearing on the strategies for survival in the workplace. For example, because few lesbians will ever have the economic support of another person they must be financially self sufficient and are therefore conscious of the need to protect their job security. Accordingly they can expect to give a significant portion of their time and energies to working in paid employment. ( Schneider, 1984:211 )

As a group lesbian social workers were, on the average, highly qualified compared to their non-lesbian counterparts. They also had long periods of service. Neither of these factors have appeared to positively affect occupational gradings. In fact lesbian social workers were no better off than their non-lesbian counterparts. They occupied positions within the occupational hierarchy that were reflective of a heterosexual gender status rather than their independent social, sexual and economic status.

It has been argued in this study that heterosexist employment policies and workplace conditions have been a significant determinant of employment opportunities. Thus, it was expected that the workplace experiences might be discriminatory for lesbians who were likely to be denied access to workplace rewards and benefits when they could not comply with the hetero-relational criteria that had been established as a basis for most conditions of employment and within the Equal Employment Opportunities policy for women. ( Egerton et al., 1987 ) It has also been argued that lesbians are likely to be subject to harassment and hostility and therefore to detrimental conditions of employment which make the workplace hard to bear. To avoid discrimination in the workplace lesbians were also expected to display various adaptative strategies. The following sections summarise the experiences of lesbian social workers and have been formulated to show that the propositions set out in chapter one are valid and therefore justify the recommendations within this research.

Indirect Discrimination.

This form of discrimination was built into workplace policies. Examples of how these effectively excluded lesbians, or had the potential to, were manifest in several ways. Within the Department of Social Welfare lesbian social workers were denied some leave provisions and financial benefits for relocation expenses. The control over these provisions operated in two ways which combined to make it difficult for lesbian social workers to gain access to them. One was the ambiguity of the definition of the term 'partner' and the other lay in the apparent discretionary authority delegated to supervisors, or controlling officers. In particular the provision for employees to take 'domestic leave' against their entitlement for 'sick leave' in order to care for a partner's children was problematic for lesbian social workers. Similarly, there were difficulties in obtaining reimbursement for relocation expenses to include a partner because of being unable to comply with the hetero-relational criteria. A potential area of difficulty for lesbians has also related to the provision for employees to take bereavement leave. This is because the criteria for entitlement has been based on the 'closeness' of the association of the deceased person'.

The interpretations of the term 'partner' and the 'closeness' of an association, or relationship are unclear and do not necessarily apply to lesbians. This lack of clarity could be used by supervisors and controlling officers at whose discretion it is left to comply only with the minimal requirement as set out under the Department's terms and conditions of employment. This requirement is obvious within the context of heterosexual relationships, blood and legal associations. However, it

is not so obvious when on social and legal terms lesbians do not have legitimate status as 'partners', or as next-of-kin.

Although the aspect of parental leave was not directly referred to in the research questionnaire, the indications were that lesbian social workers had not assumed they could, or should have access to these provisions. For example, there has not been any suggestion that it could be extended to lesbians who may want to take leave at the time of the expected birth of a partner's child, or to care for a partner's child. The legislation controlling access to parental leave and employment protection is clear that 'maternity' and 'paternity' and the definition of the term 'spouse' are sex specific statuses. ( The Parental Leave And Employment Protection Act., 1987 ) The Department's collective agreement out-lining the conditions of employment has not given any indication that the provision allows for lesbians to<sup>be</sup> considered as 'carers' and therefore parents in the psychological and social, rather than biological sense of the term.

The provision under E E O within the Department for work based, or subsidised child care has also potentially presented difficulty for lesbian employees who might want to use these facilities for their partner's children. Their role as 'carers' and parents is not as clear as it is for heterosexuals and does not have any formally accepted status more generally within society. Lesbians are therefore not recognised for the contribution they make to children in their households, or to those that are part of their lesbian relationships. Often this contribution is financial and in other material forms; it is usually psychological and emotional ( Saphira, 1984; Hanna, 1986 ) In contrast the parental and non-biological

role of heterosexual women is reinforced by laws relating to adoption and guardianship. The custodial role of step mothers has been recognised by the courts. On a broader social level there are expectations that they will fulfil the duties of step mother as their gender defined role. They therefore are not potentially denied access to provisions for leave and child care within the workplace merely because they are not the natural mother of the child.

The lower average ranking of women generally within the Department has had the effect of confining them to lower status and lower paid positions in comparison with men. Lesbians are affected by this in terms of their opportunities to job share, or to take part time positions when they want to spend time caring for either their own child, or that of their partner's. The reduction in income when full time work is not available, means that some lesbian households may well live below the survival, or poverty level. Heterosexual women in marriages, or de facto relationships have some advantage over their lesbian counterparts. They are more likely to chose job share and part time positions when they are able to rely upon a male, and therefore a 'family' wage to support them.

However, it is important to note that some lesbians may receive indirect compensation for their lower incomes because of their eligibility for the Domestic Purposes Benefit when their partner is in full time paid employment. Lesbian relationships and domestic arrangements are not deemed to be in the 'nature of a marriage' and therefore they gain by being treated as economically independent. While their exclusion from access to other resources and opportunities reinforces the hetero-relational criteria, as a short term benefit

it may serve to counter the male female wage disparity. Furthermore, it is an example of the anomaly created by continuing to treat heterosexual women as dependents within the nuclear family

Direct Discrimination.

This form of discrimination relates to anti-lesbian attitudes and bias which restrict access to employment opportunities. At the level of recruitment and in the assessment of starting salaries lesbians are potentially denied opportunities when they have not been able to include previous experience outside the paid workforce as a criteria for merit. The anti-lesbian attitudes of interview panel members also had the very definite effect of excluding lesbians from access to employment and to promotion. As the experience of lesbian social workers has shown, hostile gossip was an effective deterrent to promotion. It caused lesbians to withdraw their applications, or made them reluctant to apply for promotions in order to avoid hostility and rejection.

Anti-lesbian attitudes and the expectation of harassment also affected the supervisory relationship. Supervision is a workplace requirement formally incorporated into the role of social work. It is closely linked to performance appraisals and the assessment of salary increments. However, it is ostensibly conducted to assist the professional development of social workers and has always been seen to involve a component of personal support. As a workplace procedure it is also conducted with the expectation that the supervisor has the skills to give professional guidance and to deal with personal issues which may impede, or enhance effective

performance. In most instances lesbian social workers identified their sexual identity as positively contributing to their role as social workers. Yet, in most cases this was not able to be incorporated into supervision. On the other hand there were clear examples where lesbians had been subject to harassment from clients, community groups and other professionals outside the Department. The role of supervision has suggested that incidents of this nature are relevant to the discussion between the social workers and the supervisor. Because most lesbian social workers did not have confidence that their supervisors were able to give the appropriate guidance or support they avoided making reference to concerns where their lesbianism might affect case management, or their working relationships. They tended to seek this from other lesbians when they were accessible.

There was a noted differences in the attitudes of Pakeha and Maori lesbians towards supervision. Maori lesbians expressed a high level of satisfaction with supervision when it was conducted by a Maori supervisor. They emphasised cultural needs over those of sexual identity status and it was clear that those needs were being met. Some of the positive gains made through E E O policy for Maori employees in the Department may well have been portrayed in the provision of culturally appropriate supervision. In contrast, the majority of Pakeha lesbians identified the lack of professional and personal support as the most important supervision issues. Some emphasised the lack of professional competence of their supervisors while for others it was evident that both sexist and anti-lesbian attitudes on the part of the supervisor impeded the supervisory relationship. While several Pakeha lesbians would have preferred a lesbian supervisor this was often contingent

upon the availability of someone who also shared a feminist perspective. Overall, Pakeha lesbians expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with supervision and there was an obvious need to address the problem of professional competence perceived as lacking in Pakeha supervisors.

There were indications that lesbian social workers were likely to be subject to detriment in the workplace. Harassment as a persistent condition of employment was manifest in anti-lesbian comments, ostracism and hostility. Sometimes this was expressed by comments and complaints referring to the appearances and clothing styles of lesbians which, in many cases did not conform to female 'norms'. For example, references to the fact that they always wore trousers, or that they never make their legs visible are suggestive of the concern that lesbians are not feminine.

Hostility was also expressed through the use of complaints about work performance by supervisors. Some lesbians were singled out for reprimands over issues common to all workers. Or, there were attempts to discredit previously satisfactory work once a lesbian's sexual identity became known. Gossip and negative comments passed on by heterosexual co-workers and supervisors formed a pattern of harassment and intimidation. This undermined the self confidence of lesbian social workers and in some cases enforced conformity and passivity. Gossip therefore, became an effective method of control over lesbian visibility.

Harassment perceived as sexual by lesbian social workers was often displayed in the form of anti-gay and lesbian jokes in their presence. In some instances it was more direct and personally threatening. For example, male

supervisors who questioned lesbians about their sexuality in a voyeuristic way with sexual overtones and innuendoes left no doubt as to their motives. There were also forms of sexual harassment by heterosexual women. The example, of the lesbian who had her bottom pinched by female co-workers every time she wore a skirt, or when heterosexual women displayed affectionate and demonstrative gestures towards lesbians, were liberties lesbians did not feel free to exchange with heterosexual women for fear they would be misinterpreted.

Lesbian social workers were also likely to be subjected to hostility and harassment when working with adolescent female clients, sexually abused children, custody disputes, and women's issues in the workplace. The belief that lesbians are 'morally and sexually contaminating' was applied as a negative and damaging stereotype in order to discredit their professional reputation and judgement.

Further difficulties were evident in the use of complaints procedures. Because lesbians were not legally protected from employment discrimination under the Human Rights Commission Act., 1977., they did not have the same option heterosexual woman do to choose which route would best serve their right to redress over a complaint. They were therefore restricted to using the personal grievance procedures formalised under the E E O policy as part of the Department's collective employment agreement. Access to procedures through P S A indicated that some provision was available for lesbians to address issues, but this usually took energy, effort and risk.

Often lesbians were reluctant to use complaints procedures because they did not expect to have their complaint taken seriously, or they feared that they would

be subject to further harassment by being labelled as 'trouble makers'. In some cases lesbians had been subjected to dismissive treatment by their managers, or supervisors as a result of making complaints. The perceptions some lesbians had of their managers and supervisors indicated that those higher up in the occupational hierarchy might not always be relied upon to provide advocacy and support.

Lesbian social workers provided clear examples of how discrimination had impacted on their working lives. The most obvious effect was in the way they typically monitored their attitudes and demeanour in the workplace. The extent to which they censored disclosure indicated that they were likely to perceive their work environment as potentially unaccepting and intolerant of their lesbianism. This was also evidenced by the restrictions on socialising with co-workers and the enforced split between their personal and working lives. In addition, the causes of stress were possible indicators of the levels of heterosexism which operated within the D S W and out-side it. Harassment and hostility were just as likely to come from other professional personnel, the public, clients, community workers etc., as they were from co-workers, managers and supervisors.

While being closeted was one strategy lesbian social workers used to avoid discrimination, there were others which indicated that 'fitting' into the workplace meant not promoting lesbian lifestyles, or campaigning against heterosexuality. This was described as being 'well behaved'. Other strategies included withdrawing from competition for opportunities such as promotion, or high achievement and 'super' competence. Many lesbians described being under constant pressure because of the anticipation of discrimination and the need to be 'alert'

to the potential for something 'undefined' to happen. This reflected on their self confidence and morale. It also meant lesbians were likely to operate in a climate of mistrust towards supervisors and co-workers.

#### Feminism And Social Change.

The implementation of measures to protect lesbians from discrimination in the workplace and to redress the problem of their unequal access to workplace benefits and rewards would be a simple matter. The question is whether the state is willing to incorporate those changes. The experiences of lesbian employees have indicated that both the potential for and actual discrimination effectively controls the visibility of lesbians in the workplace. It is therefore difficult for individual lesbians themselves to take on the task of challenging the inadequacies of the E E O policy without jeopardising their employment position. The research undertaken within the D S W has been an important step towards highlighting the need for enhancement of the policy. However, any answer given to the question of whether the state is willing to make the necessary adjustments is likely to be informed by our own theoretical viewpoint and the interpretations given to the experiences of lesbians.

Although there are various strands of feminism which offer explanations of sex inequality, ( see Walby, 1986 ) they have not allowed for radical interpretations of women's sexuality at a level which adequately incorporates lesbianism. For example, while the socialist feminist viewpoint has emphasised the link between unpaid and paid work it has often ignored the role of the state and control over women's sexuality. It is also likely

that there would be some scepticism about persuading the state to intervene to protect 'special' groups at a time when employers have been given increasing freedom under the free market economic policies. The political priorities of the left wing are more likely to emphasise the election of a government more compatible with their viewpoint. In the meantime E E O for all women would be regarded as generally ineffective under right wing policies.

The liberal feminist viewpoint which underlies the justification for E E O also has limitations in its ability to interpret lesbianism within the context of male power. Discrimination is regarded as an irrational and arbitrary bias rather than being fundamentally connected to women's oppression and the social, sexual and economic relations that bind it. However, there is strong support for this viewpoint within the feminist movement in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Because a liberal interpretation would assume that sexual preference is a private and individual matter it would also be argued that it should not interfere with access to opportunities. This view is compatible with the argument that E E O policy itself represents a formal barrier to opportunities.

The alternative radical feminist viewpoint has tended to focus on raising the consciousness of women as a method of social change. In doing so it has regarded the state as the enemy of women in that it institutionalises male power. There is a pessimism about the ability, or willingness of the state to make any genuine changes for lesbians. Discrimination against lesbians is seen as a way to maintain male power over all women. According to radical feminists male policy makers wish to protect the control all men have over women and

would be unwilling to accept that discrimination of lesbians should become the subject of E E O policy. However, in itself, the radical feminist analysis offers new insights to the problem of women's inequality which can be incorporated into both short and long term goals for change.

Although the recommendations outlined in this chapter are reformist they do contain a 'radical potential' for social change. For example, on one level they will make working life for lesbians less constrained and less vulnerable to discrimination. In addition they have the potential to open up a range of options for all women. The possibility that lesbians might be able to benefit from their social, sexual and economic dependence on a man calls into question the conditions under which heterosexual women conduct their working lives. The removal of 'heterosexual privilege' would not disadvantage heterosexual women. Arguably, this is because it can be used merely to give women a stake in maintaining their own oppression. As long as Equal Employment opportunities addresses the position of women according to a hetero-relational standard it remains essentially a 'privilege', or short term bribe that is exchanged in return for denying the self discovery and collective power of women. ( Bunch, 1979:26 )

#### Recommendations.

If the problem of discrimination against lesbians in the state sector is to be taken seriously there are several areas which need to be addressed. The first is that lesbians need to be recognised as a target group under E E O. This includes the provision for formalised lesbian networks and E E O representation, with lesbian

representation on all workplace and policy matters. There is a demonstrated need<sup>for</sup> educational programmes for all employees, including workshops for managers, supervisors, union delegates and interview panel members. Other material, such as posters and videos need to be distributed throughout work locations. All workplace benefits and leave provisions need to be adjusted to clearly state that they are available 'regardless' of sexual preference. This means extending the definition of next-of-kin and caregivers, or parents to include partners of lesbians.

Two priorities should be addressed in consultation with lesbian employees. One is the development of a statistical data base in order to monitor the position of lesbians within the workplace. The collation of data on lesbians remains sensitive and capable of abuse in terms of breach of confidentiality. Measures to protect the dissemination of information would need to be put in place until such time as the workplace has established a formalised and clear policy on lesbians and an effective means of redress against discriminatory practices. The second priority is the formalisation of a clear definition of discrimination on the grounds of 'sexual preference'. This may involve further research, but could well be effective if it followed the format similar to a definition of sexual harassment in the Employment Contracts Act., 1991..

Lesbians themselves need to build alliances within social work and across other professional groups. They need to strengthen resources and skills across a wide range of occupations and in particular they need to target the legal profession, the Human Rights Commission and the unions who have an integral role in industrial relations and in the development of anti-discrimination

law in the workplace. The long term goal is to have legal recognition of lesbians ( and gay men ). In the short term it can be argued that there is a requirement for women to comply with a heterosexual model to obtain access to workplace benefits and rewards and that such a requirement is an example of sex discrimination under the present law. Such an argument might usefully form the basis of a test case to show that lesbians, because of their gender status and their marital status, or non-marital status have been victims of discrimination.

### Conclusion.

Obviously, as with all research, there are limits to the generalisations that can be made on the basis of the findings of this study. The diversity of lesbian experience can not be captured within one workplace. The findings must necessarily be confined to describing the nature and patterns of discrimination against lesbians employed as social workers in the D S W. Nevertheless the documentation of these experiences is important and may provide some direction for future research on lesbians in employment.

Insofar as this research has been important for lesbians in the state sector and particularly within the D S W, it demonstrates the need to include lesbians as a special group under the state sector E E O policy. The denial of access to the policy is in itself a form of unfair treatment. This research also shows that the long term possibilities of equal opportunity policy reside in its potential to address employment opportunities for all women on terms which can account for their economic independence from men.

## APPENDIX ONE.

21 June 1990

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AUCKLAND.

( address not to be published )

Dear Broadsheet Magazine,

I am about to undertake a research project as part of my final year of study at Massey University for the Master ( sic ) of Social Work degree.

As a pakeha lesbian employed as a social worker in the Department of Social Welfare I am interested in the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by other lesbians employed in social work in the D S W.

I would be interested in hearing from other lesbians either currently employed as social workers in the D S W , or having been in the past four years, who would be interested in participating in this study.

Given that the D S W has an Equal Employment Opportunities policy which includes 'sexual preference' I have expected that there would be more positive discussion and action on the issue. My observations and the anecdotal information I have obtained suggests this is not so. Also for Maori lesbians and lesbians with disabilities discrimination is considerably compounded and more often involves having to choose a particular target group as a priority.

To date I have covered areas such as the historical development of E E O, the impact of sexual identity status on lesbians in social work, theories of social work practice from a feminist perspective, and the development of legal interpretations of discrimination from the point of view of Human Rights legislation. I would now like to develop this into a focus on lesbians, discrimination and the implications for E E O policy in the D S W.

I have a small lesbian 'ethics' committee' ( 2 ) I am consulting with on issues such as confidentiality of the material gathered, future uses of the research when it is completed, and the personal implications for me in carrying out research on such a topic. I appreciate the need for confidentiality and therefore will not be presenting the

material in any way that respondents can be identified. All raw data will be destroyed after I have written it up.

I can send a questionnaire which I hope can be completed and returned as soon as possible. I would also appreciate comments, or feedback on areas of discrimination not included in the questionnaire, or on the research itself.

I have a copy of the research proposal available if respondents want to peruse this and I can provide a copy of the final research when it is completed.

Regards,

Anthea Raven.

Contact phone number.....

## APPENDIX TWO

July 1990.

.....  
 .....  
 AUCKLAND.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am about to undertake a research project as part of my final year of study at Massey University for the Master ( sic ) of Social Work degree.

As a pakeha lesbian employed as a senior social worker in the Department of Social Welfare I am intersted in the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by other lesbians employed in social work in the D S W.

Your name has been given to me as someone who would be interested in participating in this study.

Given that the D S W has an Equal Employment Opportunities policy which includes 'sexual preference' I have expected that there would be more positive discussion and action on the issue. My observations and the anecdotal information I have obtained suggests this is not so. Also for Maori lesbians and lesbians with disabilities discrimination is considerably compnounded and more often involves having to choose a particular target group as a priority.

To date I have covered such areas as the historical development of E E O, the impact of sexual identity status on lesbians in social work, theories of social work practice from a feminist perpsective, and the legal interpretations of discrimination from the point of view of Human Rights legislation. I would now like to develop these into a focus on lesbians, discrimination , and the implications for E E O policy in the D S W.

I have a samll lesbian 'ethics committee' (2) I am consulting with on such issues as confidentiality of the material gathered, future uses of the research when it is completed, and the personal implications for me in carrying out research on such a topic. I appreciate the need for confidentiality and therefore will not be presenting the

material in any way that respondents can be identified. All raw data will be destroyed after I have written it up.

I have enclosed a questionnaire which I hope you will complete and return as soon as possible. I would also appreciate any further comments or feedback you want to make either on discrimination or on the research itself.

I have a copy of the research proposal if you want to peruse this and I would also like to know if you want a copy of the final research when it is completed.

My supervisor, Celia Briar, at Massey University is supportive of the study and can be contacted at the Social Work and Social Policy Department if you want to clarify anything with her.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries. I would also like to know of other lesbians either currently employed as social workers in the D S W, or having been in the past four years, who would be prepared to participate in the study.

Regards,

Anthea Raven.

## APPENDIX THREE

9 September 1990

.....  
 .....  
 AUCKLAND.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Several weeks ago I made contact with you as one of a number of lesbians who are either currently employed in the social work field within the Department of Social Welfare, or have been within the past four to five years.

I sent out a questionnaire relating to a study I am currently undertaking for my Master ( sic ) of Social Work degree at Massey University.

I would now like to start collating the information from those questionnaires.

This letter is a prompt to you if you intend to participate in the study in the hope that you will send the questionnaire by return mail as soon as possible.

Thank you to those of you who have returned your questionnaire with your interesting responses. I can only hope that the study will provide wider gain for lesbians in the Department and that it will establish a beginning for all lesbians addressing issues of discrimination and validating changes to the Human Rights legislation. As a beginning it should also give impetus to further study into lesbian lives in Aotearoa and I am grateful to the support from the university in giving credit to the work and of course to all those wonderful lesbians who are 'getting on with their lives'.

Please send your questionnaire now ! I am waiting ! Once again thank you for your contribution, time and energy!

Regards,

Anthea Raven.

P.S. Accept this as a thank you note if you have already returned your questionnaire.

P.P.S. If you do not wish to participate please return your blank form in the stamped envelope provided.

## APPENDIX FOUR.

## DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

The following questions relate to the experiences of lesbians as social workers in the Department of Social Welfare. Discriminatory practices include those that are both direct and indirect. For example, direct discrimination involves overt and explicit behaviour and indirect discrimination refers to the institutionalisation of heterosexual norms and values which in effect disadvantage lesbians.

The information you give should pertain only to your employment experiences within the occupation of social work grading ( including SSW and ADSS ) in the Department of Social Welfare. However, any comments you want to make by way of comparison to your past, or present employment circumstances can be added.

If you are able to discuss this questionnaire with other lesbian social workers in the D S W, ( or other lesbians ) it is likely you will come up with several examples of discrimination that you had not considered before, or that you had forgotten about. Please do this if you would find it helpful before answering the questions.

If you need more than the space allowed for some answers please add further pages with question number at the top.

Your contributions to this study are valued along with the recognition that your energy and time have been given.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE TREATED IN CONFIDENCE.

## SECTION ONE: STATISTICS &amp; PROFILE.

Age :

Racial / Cultural Identity:

Length Of Time Employed in DSW:

Current Position:  
(or position last held)

Length Of Time In Current Position:  
(or in position last held in DSW)  
Length Of Time Since Resigning From DSW:  
(if applicable)

Period Employed As A Social Worker In DSW:

Current Yearly ( Gross ) Salary:  
(or yearly salary when employed in  
last position in DSW)

Highest Educational Qualifications:

Number Of Social Workers Employed  
In Your DSW Office:

Number Of Women Social Workers  
In Your DSW Office:

Rural/Large City/Small City  
Urban Office:

1. For what period of time have you identified as a lesbian ?
2. Would you describe yourself as being interested in feminism and promoting the interests of women ?
3. How would you describe your socio-economic background. ( state what you would consider to apply more appropriately to the lifestyle and circumstances you were raised in your family of origin.)
4. How would you describe your socio-economic status now.

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## SECTION TWO.

As Maori, Pacific Islander, other ethnic origin, Pakeha, or disabled, these aspects of your identity and experiences as a lesbian need to be included in your answers if you consider it appropriate and / or necessary.

1. Have you ( were you ) ever ( been ) denied the following work related provisions because the

circumstances have not met with official and / or heterosexual criteria.?

- (a) Sick leave to care for a partner / partner's children.
- (b) Bereavement leave.
- (c) Transfer costs and reimbursement allowances.
- (d) Meal, incidental and travel allowances.
- (e) Other discretionary benefits, or provisions.

If so which provisions have you been denied. If not, is this because you have not advised the approving officer of the real reasons for the request ? Please give as much detail as you consider necessary to fully explain the situation.

2. Have you ( were you ) ever unsuccessful in obtaining a promotion or transfer because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
3. Have you (were you ) ever been denied study leave because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
4. Have you ( did you ) ever had ( have ) job responsibilities removed from you because of your lesbianism? Describe the situation/s.
5. Have you been ( were you ) subjected to sexual harassment because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
6. Have you ever been ( were you ) subjected to harassment, hostility, or other demeaning behaviour and attitudes because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
7. Have you ever had ( were there ) complaints about your work performance, behaviour and attitudes, clothing etc., that you perceived to be directed at you because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
8. Have you ever been ( were you ) subjected to unfair or, unjust procedures, or unfounded and unjust complaints because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
9. Have you ever been subject to harassment or complaint about your lesbianism from clients and / or community groups and / or personnel from other agencies ? Describe the situation/s.
10. Do / did your colleagues, controlling officer, or management protect you from this kind of complaint and act as your advocate ? Describe the situation/s.

11. Have you ever felt ( did you ever feel ) that your job has been ( was ) in jeopardy because of your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
12. If you are no longer employed as a social worker in the D S W were your reasons for transfer, or resigning as a result of a work environment detrimental and / or hostile to you as a lesbian ? Describe the situation.
13. If you are no longer employed in the D S W did you feel you had to resign, or were you fired because of an incident concerning your lesbianism ? Describe the situation.
14. Have you ever made a complaint to P S A, your controlling officer, or management about discriminatory behaviour you have experienced ? If so was this successfully dealt with ? Describe the situation/s.
15. Have you ever been reluctant to make a complaint about discriminatory behaviour towards you ? If so why and how have you dealt with it ? Describe the situation/s.
16. Are you 'closeted' and / or protective about your lesbianism at work, or do you acknowledge this to (a) trusted colleagues, (b) all colleagues, (c) clients, (d) personnel from other agencies, (e) community groups, etc. Describe the situation/s.
17. Have you experienced ( did you experience ) indirect and / or direct pressure, or influence within the workplace to remain 'closeted' ?
18. Do / did you consider your work environment and colleagues to be supportive and sensitive to you as a lesbian?
19. Do / did you have social contacts outside work with other colleagues ? Describe the situation/s.
20. Do / did you participate in social activities related to the work place. For example, christmas dinners etc., where partners are usually invited. Do you take a female partner / lover / friend ? Or, if you went alone how did this affect interaction between you and your colleagues and their partners ? Describe the situation/s.
21. If you do / did not attend social functions how do / did you think this affects ( affected ) your working relationships with colleagues, seniors etc., and your opportunities in the workplace and the social networking that goes on informally?

22. Do / did you experience hostility, support, or indifference from your senior managers ? How did / does this compare with the hostility, support, or indifference you experience/d from your other colleagues ?
23. Have you experienced ( did you experience ) hostility and / or a change in attitudes towards you after an incident of being 'discovered' as a lesbian ? Describe the situation/s.
24. Do you have contact with other lesbians in your office and the D S W ? Describe the situation/s.
25. Have you ( did you ) ever experience/d hostility, or lack of support from other lesbians in your office and / or the D S W ? Describe the situation/s.
26. Do you consider other lesbians supportive, or not supportive of you at work ? Describe the situation/s.
27. Have you ( did you ) ever experience/d any negative reactions from your colleagues when you seek ( sought ) work support and contact with other lesbians ? Describe the situation/s.
28. Has ( was ) your professional and / or personal reputation ever ( been ) discredited because of negative attitudes and reactions about your lesbianism ? Describe the situation/s.
29. What kinds of stresses do / did you experience at work as a result of the potential for discrimination, or actual discrimination and hostility ? Describe the situation/s.
30. What form of discrimination is most noticeable to you in your work environment and what affect does this have on you? Describe the situation/s.
31. Do you perceive your work environment as detrimental to your welfare and well being as a lesbian in ways that you have not yet mentioned ? Describe the situation/s.
32. In supervision / coaching sessions are ( were ) you able to freely discuss difficulties that arise ( arose ) as a result of your lesbianism and your work ? Describe the situation/s.
33. Have you ( did you ) request/ed supervision with another lesbian and been denied this ? Describe the situation/s.
34. Would you prefer to be supervised / coached by another lesbian ? Why ?

35. Does / did your Women's Liaison and / or E E O representative / officer meet with lesbians to discuss matters of concern and do / did they give some priority to such issues in meetings ? Describe the situation/s.
36. Do you think the current E E O policy of the D S W adequately addresses the needs of lesbians ? Describe its shortcomings, or its positive aspects.
37. In what way does / did your lesbianism positively affect your work, your relationships with clients / colleagues, and their relationship with you ? Describe the situation/s.
38. If you are pakeha and / or able bodied how do you think this affects your privilege in the work place, or your disadvantage ?
39. How do you think the information gained from this study could be utilized in order to address discrimination and disadvantage for lesbians generally, or within the D S W ?
40. Were you able to discuss these questions with other lesbians ( social workers in the D S W / lesbian friends, partners ) before you undertook to answer them ?
41. Has undertaking this questionnaire changed, or affected your views, or concerns about yourself as a lesbian and / or your relationships in the workplace ? Describe these.

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