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The pathfinders: women of non-English speaking background in white collar occupations in the public sector

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Abstract
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The Pathfinders:  
Women of Non-English Speaking  
Background in White Collar Occupations  
in the Public Sector.  

KATE BARNETT
The Pathfinders: Women of Non-English Speaking Background in White Collar Occupations in the Public Sector

Kate Barnett
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REFERENCES
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1. INTRODUCTION

When women of non-English speaking background (NESB) are the subject of research, they are usually selected from the 'blue collar' occupations. The public sector was selected as the work arena because existing research has focussed on NESB women in the private sector. An extensive literature review* was undertaken, of research conducted in Australia and overseas, and no studies were found of NESB women working in white collar occupations, in the public sector.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study was to contribute to current understanding of how the white collar work situation is experienced by NESB women, and to identify factors which are critical to positive and negative work experiences. The stated objectives of the research were:

To identify and analyse:

1. the aspirations, goals and sources of motivation of NESB women in white collar, public sector occupations;
2. the factors which affect the identity formation, goal setting and work-related aspirations of NESB women in these occupations;
3. the interrelationships among the factors isolated in Objective 2;
4. the factors which impede the formation and pursuance of work-related goals;
5. attitudes to work in general, and to the immediate work situation;
6. the relationship between personal and work-related identity;
7. the role models of NESB women in white collar, public sector occupations;
8. the influence of mothers as personal and work-related role models;
9. the influence of two cultures on individual attitudes to and aspirations for work;

These systems were used for the literature search:
DIALOG (Eric and PAIS databases)
OZLINE (MAIS database)
AUSINET (APAIS and worklit databases)
10. strategies which could improve access and enhance equity for NESB women in white collar, public sector occupations.
1.2 METHODOLOGY

The study employed four methods of data collection:

1. A literature search (which did not identify other studies of NESB women in white collar occupations);

2. A series of 20 case studies of NESB women;

3. An analysis of the personnel records of one State government department to compare the promotion patterns of ESB and NESB women;

4. An analysis of the occupational categories of the South Australian Public Service, based on gender and ethnicity.

The main focus of this research has been the series of case studies of 20 NESB women, drawn from different State government departments, namely —

- The Department for Community Welfare
- The Department of Local Government
- The Department of Agriculture
- The Department of Labour.

1.2.1 The Sample

The 20 women were selected for the sample by their Department's Equal Opportunity Co-ordinators, who were requested to seek out women who represented a range of —

- cultural backgrounds
- ages
- occupational levels

and who represented both first and second generation NES backgrounds.

Of the 20 women selected, 10 were classified at the lower end of the Clerical Officer range, being at the CO1 and CO2 levels. Most of these women were typist/receptionists or base grade clerks. Of the remaining 10 women, seven spanned the upper end of the Clerical Officer range and the lower ranks of the next occupational category which is known as the Administrative Officer range. Two were classified as CS 2, or Computer
Systems Officers, Grade 2. One woman was classified as a Reference Librarian, Grade 1 (LR 1).

This mixture of occupational levels was sought in order to obtain a range of attitudes to work. As the findings revealed (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2), attitudinal and aspirational differences were identified, but occupational level was not an independent factor influencing such differences.

Chart I describes the occupational levels of the sample.

![Occupational Classification Chart]

The sample spanned an age range of 21 years to 57 years, with the median age being 29 years — see Chart 2.
The sample represented 11 different cultural backgrounds, and these are tabled below.

**TABLE I: CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Identity</th>
<th>1st Generation</th>
<th>2nd Generation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslav</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern European</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study #7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese-Vietnamese</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: 7 13 20
The 20 women interviewed had all completed at least ten years of education. 7 had undertaken tertiary studies, and these were employed beyond the CO1/CO2 and equivalent occupational categories. The majority of those employed at the CO1/CO2 level had completed their secondary studies to Year 11. Table 2 provides these details.

**TABLE 2 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>CLASSIFICATION</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>AO1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>CS2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>CO5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>LR1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>CO5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>CO2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>CO1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>CO2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
<td>CO1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>AO1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>CO3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 11</td>
<td>CO1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>CO1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.2 Interview Structure

Each interview followed a structured set of questions which encompassed three main areas of enquiry

a) biographical details  
b) work experience  
c) identity  

These are reported in Section 2.
All of the women were interviewed away from their place of work, and their identity was known only to their Equal Employment Officers and the researcher. To preserve confidentiality, they have each chosen a pseudonym and the Department for which each woman works is not identified in the case study reports. Two women (Case Studies, 6 and 7) have requested that their ethnic identity not be published for reasons of anonymity.

1.3 ANALYSIS OF THE S.A. PUBLIC SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS BY GENDER AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND

The statistical information presented in this section is intended to provide a context for the Case Studies.

There is a lack of complete information about the number and characteristics of employees of NESB in the South Australian Public Service. Individual Departments are not required to keep such data, and those which are in the process of building a composite employee profile are using independently - determined methods to do so. Consequently, should all Departments begin to collect such data, there would be no basis for comparison across the Service as a whole.

There have been a few publications which have sought to address the problem of the paucity of information about the ethnic backgrounds of State Government employees. In 1982, the South Australian Public Service Board report entitled 'The Ethnic Composition of the South Australian Public Service', provided an estimate of the proportion of NESB public servants and their distribution through the occupational levels of the Service.

A sample of 1486 officers was surveyed. The distribution of these officers over six occupational categories: 'Executive Officers', 'Professional', 'Technical', 'Administrative Officers', 'Clerical Officers' and 'Operations' found them to be under-represented at management levels. The largest occupational component of NESB officers was found to be in the 'Clerical Officer' category, with these officers comprising 17.8% of all clerical officers surveyed. Within the six clerical levels (COI to CO6), women of NESB were concentrated at the base grade (COI) level.

In obtaining the sample group for the present study, no difficulties were experienced in locating NESB women at the COI and CO2 levels, but extreme difficulty was
encountered in finding NESB women at more senior occupational levels, and none were located at the Executive Officer level.

Further information was sought about the relationship between ethnic background and occupational level in order to provide a structural context for the Case Studies. An additional study was located which involved a re-analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1986 Census data pertaining to South Australian public sector employees.

The Department of Personnel and Industrial Relations (DPIR) report 'SA State Public Sector Employees from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds' (1989) summarises the age, occupation and qualification profiles of NESB employees in the State public sector. (It does not differentiate data according to gender).

The 1986 Census found that, of the 99,200 public sector employees:

- 10% were born in a NES country
- 5% were born in an English speaking country with both parents born in a NES country
- 3% were born in an English speaking country with one parent born in a NES country.

This gave a total of 18% of all employees who were classified as being of NESB.

The ABS identified 8 major occupational groups —

- Managers and Administrators
- Professionals
- Para-professionals
- Tradespersons
- Clerks
- Personal service and sales
- Plant and Machine Operators
- Labourers and Related Workers

The most common occupations for NESB employees were 'Professionals' — 30% of all NESB employees; 'Labourers' — 17% of all NESB employees; and 'Clerks' — 17% of all NESB employees.

When compared with all State public sector employees, NESB employees were over-represented in the 'Labourers' and 'tradespersons' occupational groups and under-
represented in the ‘Managers and Administrators’, ‘Paraprofessionals’ and ‘Personal Service and Sales’ groups. Table 3 gives these details and is reproduced from Table 4a of the DPIR report.

**TABLE 3: OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN THE SA PUBLIC SECTOR, BY NESB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL GROUP</th>
<th>Total employees (% in Occup. Group)</th>
<th>NESB Employees (% in Occup. Group)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers and administrators</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal service and sales</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant &amp; Machine operators</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 4A: OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN THE SA PUBLIC SERVICE BY GENDER AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL GROUP</th>
<th>NESB Employees (% of Total Female and Male Employees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers &amp; Administrators</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Service &amp; Sales</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers &amp; Related Workers</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant &amp; Machine Operators</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 4B: OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN THE SA PUBLIC SERVICE BY GENDER AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL GROUP</th>
<th>NESB Female &amp; Male employees (%) of all NESB Employees</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female &amp; Male employees (%) of all employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers &amp; Administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
<td></td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradespersons</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td></td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Service &amp; Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers &amp; Related Workers</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant &amp; Machine Operators</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 4a indicates, female and male clerks of NESB each represent some 18% of the total clerical occupational group, but as a group, clerks of NESB are much more likely to be female (72% of all NESB clerks are female) than male (see Table 4b). As a total group, 71.5% of clerks are women.

At the Executive level, NESB women represent 12.8% of all Managers and Administrators, while NESB men represent 10.1% of this occupational group. However, as Table 4b indicates, only 27.9% of all NESB employees at the level of Managers and Administrators are women, while 72.1% of NESB people classified at this level are men. Women constitute 23.4% of Managers and Administrators, regardless of ethnicity.

1.4 ANALYSIS OF THE PROMOTION PATTERNS OF NESB AND ESB WOMEN EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY WELFARE

As a further context for the Case Studies, an analysis was made of the Department for Community Welfare's personnel files to compare the promotion patterns of NESB and ESB women employees.

This analysis faced a number of methodological difficulties. The Department's personnel files (like those of other Government Departments) do not identify employees by ethnic background, nor are these files computerised. Consequently, the identification of NESB women employees relied on the Department's Register of Staff of NESB (which involves individual employees' identification and registration of
themselves as being of NESB) and the Equal Opportunity Officer's knowledge of individual employees and their cultural backgrounds.

Having identified the NESB group, these were matched with a group of ESB women employees who had begun working for the Department at the same time and at the same classification level.

The sample was then divided so that half was drawn from the Clerical Officer (CO) range and half from either the Administrative Officer (AO) or the Social Welfare Officer (SWO) range. (The latter represents those officers providing direct services to the community). When this identification process was completed, work histories were mapped, noting rates of mobility in both acting and substantive positions.

Due to the time-consuming nature of the processes of sample selection and work history analysis, only a small sample was drawn, but according to the Equal Opportunity Officer, the NESB group sampled for this part of the study represents approximately 70% of the Department's estimated NESB women employees (i.e. prior to its recent successful NESB targeted recruitment drive).

The sample consisted of 30 women, involving seven 'pairs' from the CO range and eight 'pairs' from the SWO and AO ranges. Analysis of work patterns revealed that while there were individual variations in promotion rates within some NESB/ESB pairs, when these were taken in total, there were no significant differences in promotion patterns between NESB and ESB employees and this was applicable to those from the CO range and those from the AO and SWO ranges. This is an interesting find, and one which is likely to reflect DCW's affirmative action policy. It would be useful to replicate this particular analysis across all State government Departments.

The only differences to emerge were based on classification, with employees from the AO and SWO ranges showing more upward mobility than those from the CO range. The work patterns of those classified as Clerical Officers highlights the difficulties involved in progressing beyond the CO1 level in the South Australian Public Service.

The South Australian Public Service classification system for Clerical Officers structures this range from CO1 to CO6. However, at the CO1 level there exists a work level barrier known as the 'clerical barrier' which cannot be overcome unless specified work duties are undertaken. As part of a Service-wide re-structuring process involving
a more flexible assignation of work duties to encourage diversified skill development and vertical as well as horizontal work experience, the activities which a COI employee may undertake have been broadened. Hence, there now exists more scope for COIs to progress beyond the 'clerical barrier', but its impact will not be immediately evident.

Consequently, for the employees whose work patterns form the analytical focus of the present study and for those who are part of the Case Study sample, the 'clerical barrier' has emerged as a most significant obstacle to promotion and career development.
2. TRENDS EMERGING FROM THE 20 CASE STUDIES

In focussing on attitudes to work and on work experiences, it is necessary to highlight the major sources of influence which can affect attitudes to and, therefore, individuals' experiences of work. Consequently, the 20 women interviewed were asked to discuss:

a) their families
b) their work
c) the factors which had influenced their identity development.

A number of trends emerged in overviewing the case studies, and these are reported in this section of the report. However, it is recognised that each of the case studies is based on individual experience, and the identification of trends carries the danger of generalisation. This is not the intention of this section; rather, it is designed to unify the case studies within an analytical framework.

2.1 FAMILY INFLUENCE

A profile of the 20 women interviewed was obtained and is depicted in Section 1.2.1. Details were also obtained about families, in relation to:

- mother’s place of birth
- father’s place of birth
- language(s) spoken at home
- mother’s occupation
- mother’s educational level
- father’s occupation
- father’s educational level

Each of the women was also asked to describe herself, in terms of her ethnicity. Information was then sought about educational level and experiences at school, about home life and involvement with their non-Anglo Australian culture. ‘First generation’ women were also asked to describe their migration and settlement processes.
2.1.1 Family Background
For most of the sample, both parents had been born in the same country, and this was always a country where English was not the primary language.
Every one of the 20 women studied had learned to speak their parent's original language as well as English, and most remained bilingual.

For 10 of the women, English was not spoken at home, and for 6, English was the second language used within the family. There were only 4 women for whom English was the primary language of the home.

2.1.2 Parents' Educational Level
Only 4 women had a parent who had been educated to the tertiary level, and these were of Northern European, Indian, Latvian and Ukrainian background. Women from Greek and Italian backgrounds were most likely to have parents whose education finished during the primary school years. The parents of 9 women had completed their education to this level and 2 of these had parents who were born in Greece, 5 had parents who were born in Italy, 1 had parents who were born in Poland and the parents of one had been born in Yugoslavia. The remaining 7 women had at least one parent who had been educated to the secondary level.

There was no relationship between parents' educational level and their daughter's occupational level, which is not surprising because most of these parents had encouraged their daughters to complete at least secondary school. For many parents, the opportunity for their children to obtain a sound education and a 'better' education than their own, had been a prime source of motivation for immigration (see Section 4).

2.1.3 Parents' Occupation
Most of the parents of the 20 women have worked in 'blue collar' occupations. 14 of the women (70%) have parents whose work has been centred in such occupations, with 5 of these eventually establishing their own small businesses. The remaining 6 women have parents whose work is located in 'white collar' occupations.

All of the women interviewed recalled that their parents had always encouraged them to obtain 'white collar' work. For most of the parents this was regarded as most suitable when located within government because of the job security involved. Clerical or typist work was presented by a number of parents as the most appropriate occupational choice for their daughters because it combined the advantages of white
collar work with security and the absence of a career structure which would impede their future roles as wives and mothers. Such gender-restrictive work roles were often reinforced in the school setting, and—as has been the case for women generally—by societal expectations of women’s roles. The effect of these influences on attitudes to work and career has been profound and is discussed in Section 2.2. A number of parents also encouraged their daughters to obtain educational qualifications which would lead to a profession especially in high status areas like law and medicine. The higher the parents’ educational level, the more likely they were to encourage their daughters to obtain tertiary qualifications. Such parentally influenced expectations are not culture-specific. They apply to ESB women as much as to NESB women.

2.1.4 The Home Environment
Most of these women have grown up in homes which they described as ‘happy’ and ‘loving’. The ‘typical’ home regardless of cultural background, was also notable for its financial hardship, and hard-working parents who were strict in behavioural standard-setting. Social activities, in most families, were shared exclusively with people from the same cultural background, and most of the 20 women studied grew up with a deep involvement in their parents’ cultural heritage. Most of these women believe that while being proud of this heritage, they had been given little or no choice about their adherence to culturally-based behavioural norms, and when asked how they would raise their own daughters, stressed the importance of conveying the NESB culture while allowing their children to choose their degree of involvement in that culture.

It was the lack of choice combined with a rigidity in enforcing cultural and behavioural norms which had caused considerable distress and conflict for many of the 20 women, particularly when they formed friendships outside of their family culture in the school setting, and particularly during the adolescent years. Again, such inter-generational conflict is widespread across cultures, be they ESB or NESB. The difference lies in ESB adolescents not having to also deal with two cultural influences on behavioural and social norms.

2.1.5 School
Most of these women remember school in a positive way and while there exists some variation with individual experiences of peer networks, one common experience was
the separation of NESB student friendship groups from Anglo-Australian student friendship groups.

There were some women who mixed freely with both groups of students. Others had friendships with both cultural groups, but regarded those formed with girls from their own cultural background, as more cohesive and intimate, mainly because they believed they had more in common with them.

Many women had felt excluded from the mainstream student population, often in an un-stated manner. These women spoke of ‘gravitating’ to students of their own cultural background, and where these were few in number, to other NESB students. Some experienced specific discrimination and persecution by Anglo-Australian students, but the most common experience was that of separation from the majority and a constant awareness of being culturally ‘different’ from them.

The adolescent period brought this separation most clearly into focus, and for most of these women, represented the period when cross-cultural conflict became evident to them. This conflict was intertwined with parental standards of behaviour and usually centred on the young woman’s wish to dress like most other teenagers and to participate in the social activities pursued by the majority of teenagers.

It was at this point of their lives, that most of the 20 women had become aware of the influence of more than one cultural influence on their behaviour. Some reconciled the conflict which this caused by adhering to parental standards, some pursued their own wishes by deception (which itself produced a measure of conflict), and most spent their adolescence in constant negotiation with their parents.

Parental influence waned for most of these women when they left school and increasing age and independence reduced their parents’ sphere of influence. Several women now observe, in hindsight, that their parents’ enforcement of culturally-based behavioural norms was part of a role which they seemed duty-bound to fulfil, while perhaps wishing to allow their children more of the social freedom associated with Anglo-Australian standards.

These women have found that by withholding a certain amount of information about their social activities, they have freed their parents of the responsibility to circumscribe their children’s behaviour, and in doing so, have removed a source of
tension and conflict for both parties. By reducing parent-child conflict, they have found that a major source of cross-cultural conflict has also dissipated.

Academically, there was a noticeable difference between women from the CO1/CO2 occupational groups and those working at more senior levels.

Most of the former group had undertaken courses oriented to office work, while those in the latter group had pursued subjects leading to tertiary studies. While many of the 20 women had been raised with definite gender-based expectations of future child-rearing, those who had undertaken Commercial Studies had been influenced by their parents and their teachers to view work only in terms of office duties. Those who had chosen a more academically-oriented study path, were usually encouraged to obtain a tertiary education and to seek work of a professional nature.

2.2 WORK

For the majority of these women, the experience of work has clarified for them their expectations about their own abilities and how they wish to use these abilities. For many, the experience has distanced them from their parents' expectations of them, and this is particularly evident among those at the CO2 occupational level. Most of this group are also in the 25-30 age group.

The typical pattern of this section of the Case Study sample, has been a pursuit of Commercial Studies in secondary school, followed by office work as a base grade clerk or typist/receptionist. This period of work is recalled by some as being unsatisfying and often profoundly tedious. Initially, this was not interpreted as signifying work which was inappropriate for individual needs, because of the effect of years of parental and societal influence.

However, the opportunity to move into work involving a wider range of skills and presenting a challenge (usually through acting rather than substantive positions) had enabled some of these women to pass the 'clerical barrier' and undertake different types of work, at the CO2 level. The personnel field has offered several women the scope for work which is more suited to their abilities and to look at work in career terms (as opposed to economic survival).
For this group of women, changes in attitudes to work have been accompanied by a significant amount of anger about the gender-based restrictions which affected their initial occupational choice. Some of these women regret the loss of academic opportunity which this entailed and feel the need to redress this gap in their learning and qualifications. Only 6 of the total sample are content to work without definite career plans, and 3 of these women are aged between 46 and 55.

2.2.1 Parental Influence
Parental influence on occupational choice had been extremely powerful for all of the 20 women studied. It has also had a significant effect on subject choice in secondary school which has determined occupational destiny. However, the experience of work has, in most cases, been accompanied by a progressive deterioration of parental influence.

The 20 women interviewed were asked to describe their parents' criteria for a 'good job' and then to describe their own criteria. Parental criteria were overwhelmingly similar with all parents seeking 'white collar' occupations for their daughters and most valuing job security and a steady income. Most parents regarded the Public Service as the ideal work situation; the only exceptions were those parents who placed a high value on professional work, and most of this group of parents were keen for their children to pursue careers in law and medicine, because of their social status and perceived economic security. The daughters of these parents have achieved success in their careers, but feel that the significance of this has escaped their parents. There was considerable difference in the criteria articulated by these women and their parents. The only common link was the choice of a 'white collar' occupation, and the greatest degree of similarity in work expectations occurred between parents and daughters who expressed little or no interest in career development. These 6 women were more likely to seek these factors from their work:

- enjoyment
- supportive colleagues
- security

The women who have reached relatively senior occupational rank tended to list these criteria:

- autonomy
- intellectual stimulation
The remaining group of women, those who have passed the 'clerical barrier' and are keen to think of work in career terms, tended to value work which provides:

- challenge
- intellectual stimulation
- a sense of achievement

While most parents placed a high value on salary (which is not surprising given that economic security has been a key reason for migration), the women from the last two groups regarded salary as a recognition for their input, and on this basis, believe they are entitled to a 'good salary'.

2.2.2 Attitudes to Work

For most of the women interviewed, the experience of work has brought a change in expectations, bringing a gradual awareness of the need to extend their knowledge and skills, to use abilities of which they have only become aware through work, and to do this within the framework of a career.

This change in attitudes to work has been most marked for those women who had been influenced by their parents to think of themselves as temporary work participants whose abilities were directed to the domestic sphere.

One young woman summarised the feeling expressed by many of those interviewed—

Being Greek, I thought I would only have to work for a bit, and then get married. But it doesn't happen like that...times have changed.... you should think of a work future. (Tracy, 23).

Most of the women who have developed a career pattern, believe that this had evolved through their work experiences rather than in a planned way. They have developed careers through each job experienced, and have operated through 'instinct' in seeking jobs which have expanded their knowledge and skill base.

2.2.3 Work Goals

Interestingly, these women are now able to be clear about short term work goals (with the exception of some who have reached a turning point and must make decisions involving a possible change of career). In the short-term, most of the women who have...
reached relatively senior levels are keen to develop management-relevant skills, such as negotiation and budgeting.

However, a common pattern among those at senior occupational level was a significant degree of ambivalence regarding promotion to the managerial level.

Those women believe they have the ability and necessary commitment for this level of responsibility, but are cynical about the machinations which inevitable occur as individual power increases over the decision-making process. This is seen as undesirable but unavoidable if one is to survive at the management level of an organisation.

This reaction is most likely to be based on gender issues, rather than on cultural factors, and is likely to represent a rejection of organisational process operating on 'male' paradigms.

The women at lower occupational levels who are keen to establish careers share a different set of goals, involving the obtaining of tertiary qualifications and work experience which can expand their skills and knowledge. Many of these women express the desire to improve their confidence levels, and believe that their lack of formal qualifications is a major factor contributing to their low levels of self confidence.

However, lack of confidence emerged as a consistent feature of most of the 20 women, regardless of occupational level and educational qualifications (see Section 4).

2.2.4 Barriers to Promotion and Career Development

For all of the 14 women who expressed an interest in promotion, there were two major kinds of barriers identified to achieving this goal —

1) Structural barriers, namely a lack of opportunities to act in more senior positions, lack of promotional opportunities (especially for those in the Clerical Officer range) and a lack of opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes, such as, key policy committees (reflecting an exclusion from influential decision-making 'networks').

2) Lack of confidence in their own ability, and an accompanying fear of seeking more senior positions.
A small number of women (all employed in two of the four Departments involved in the sample) also described attitudinal barriers. The source of these were supervisory staff (all male) who had expressed the belief that women of NESB were not career-oriented because their cultural backgrounds promoted marriage and motherhood as their key priority. Therefore, NESB women were not given the opportunity to develop their knowledge or skills through in-service training or acting in more senior positions. (These women noted that the same group of supervisors also displayed gender-based discrimination).

2.2.5 Factors Facilitating Promotion and Career Development

The women seeking to develop their careers share similar beliefs about the types of support which they need to achieve their work-related goals. Four types of support were described, two of which involve in-service training.

First, training is sought which is designed to develop specific work-based skills.

Second, the opportunity to act in more senior positions is regarded by these women as a means of skill development and direct access to promotion.

Third, the encouragement and direct support of management is sought as a means of guidance to career development and to compensate for low levels of confidence.

Fourth, many of these women believe that in-service training which focuses on personal development, can be a valuable tool in increasing self-confidence. However, it was also stressed by several women with experience of such courses, that they need to be directly related to the participant's work settings in order to be applicable. There was also a belief shared by several women that such personal development courses should be targeted to women of NESB in order to focus on the ways in which cultural background can affect career expectations. (see Section 4, page 86).

2.3 IDENTITY

Two major sources of influence on identity development are work and cultural background, and among the 20 women studied, discernible trends were apparent regarding each source of influence.
2.3.1 The Influence of Work

For most of those women who view work in career terms, work is regarded as making a major contribution to their self-picture. The more senior the occupational level attained, the more influential work is likely to have been on identity development.

A lot of who I feel I am is tied up with work (Melina, 32).

I must be able to identify strongly with my work in order to do it (Anna, 57).

Conversely, those women who attach no career significance to their work regard work as a minor influence on identity formation. These women have no difficulty separating their personal and work roles, while those women who have attained more senior occupational status are more likely to have difficulty in keeping boundaries between their work and personal spheres. Not surprisingly, for those women whose work yields high levels of satisfaction and reinforcement for input, work is an integral part of identity and of central significance to their lives. And when work is not regarded as an important, valued part of life, it is most likely to be undertaken for social and economic survival.

2.3.2 The Influence of Cultural Background

For almost all of these 20 women, cultural background is regarded as a critical source of influence on identity. Most of them also believe that their NESB cultural background has been of greater significance in identity formation than the Anglo-Australian culture, possibly because much of their formative years involved experiences which reinforced their separation from the mainstream culture.

It was common for these women to have experienced a feeling of being 'torn' between both cultural influences (see Section 2.1.4) and those who did so appear to have experienced a dissipation of this conflict with age.

Apart from the intertwining factors of time and maturity, cross-cultural conflict was reduced for women working in a racially and culturally tolerant work environment. Those women who work in racist environments (and within this sample they were confined to two of the four Departments involved) are more likely to have felt a pressure to 'blend in' with the Anglo-Australian culture because their NESB culture is regarded as unacceptable by some colleagues.

Most of these women believe that they neither 'blend' with the mainstream nor actively promote their NESB culture, but span this continuum.
I'm just me. I don't deliberately blend in... I haven't felt the pressure to do so... I’m just me. (Mary, 40)

We need to let people be who they are and not try to ‘fit’ somewhere... I’m me... I fit into the whole spectrum. (Orlanda, 36)

For some women, clarification of their cultural identity has emerged after visiting their family’s country of origin. Many have experienced a strong identification with the Anglo-Australian culture, in its absence, partly because the people in the country visited have treated them as ‘Australian’. Others have obtained a deeper understanding of their NESB culture by experiencing it at its source, and some have found it to be quite different out its Australian context.

2.3.3 Discrimination
When questioned about experiences of discrimination at work, women from one Department had all been subjected to derogatory comments and abusive behaviour which involved gender-based and race-based discrimination of an extreme nature. One (dark-skinned) woman has endured taunts such as ‘black bitch’ and ‘picaninny’ from male colleagues, together with ongoing blockage of promotional opportunities.

Discrimination emerges as being experienced in a number of ways — the overt, malice-based kind, which has not been the experience of most of these women, or the covert type, which may or may not be underpinned by malice, but which involves exclusion from activities which can increase promotion and exclusion from social activities connected with work. The third type of discrimination identified by these women—and the most common—is seen not to be based on malice, but on ignorance, and usually involves expression of cultural stereotypes.

These women differ in their perception of discriminatory behaviour. Some seem to have ‘tuned out’ from it, while others are sensitive to its most covert forms of expression.

I think differently.... and there is no recognition of different cultures in the Public Service. I feel that I’m not part of the mainstream ...and am seen as ‘interesting’ ...To fit in, we have to learn to behave like the mainstream. (Orlanda, 36).
Discrimination is something that is there. If you look for it, you’ll find it. You have to keep an open mind. (Mary, 40).

2.3.4 Role Models and Mentors
The 20 women interviewed were asked to describe the essential characteristics of women who have been role models for them. Interestingly, only one of the 6 women who are not career-oriented, could identify such role models. Conversely, only one of the remaining 18 women has not been influenced by female role models.

The most typical role model emerged as a woman who has been successful in her career, a high achiever who is strong but caring and compassionate.

A number of women lamented the absence of NESB female role models, realising that they represent the ‘first wave’ of such models, and as such, are themselves becoming role models for younger NESB women. They are the ‘pathfinders’ who must operate without precedents, and who must establish routes for other NESB women to follow. Many role models have also acted as mentors in the work situation, guiding and supporting these women in developing their careers. Most of the women who have developed or wish to develop their careers have been guided by mentors, and this is significant (see Section 4).

2.3.5 Mothers as Role Models
For most of these women, mothers have not constituted role models, particularly in relation to work. Most mothers have held low aspirations, in career terms, for their daughters, and most of those in the sample who are career-oriented, express a desire to be different from their mothers. Some describe their mothers as ‘victims’, who are trapped in gender-based role restrictions, and believe that their own low levels of confidence regarding work are related to the models presented by their mothers. Several women express the belief that the immigration process had meant a loss of opportunity for mothers, and therefore, contributed to their ‘victim’ status (see Section 4).

Nevertheless, mothers have provided personal role models, with most of the women interviewed describing ‘personal strength’ and ‘organisational ability’ as qualities which they have sought to emulate in their mothers. Many feel that, given the opportunity to study and be free of traditional gender-based roles, their mothers would have flourished in the paid work role.
However, in relation to their development of work-based expertise, most of these women have relied on adults outside of their families for guidance and leadership, and in several instances, have relied on their own instincts and abilities to establish and develop their careers. Such experiences are common to most women in the workforce, and are based on gender-restrictions rather than on cultural influences per se. While women of ESB must challenge gender-based stereotypes about their attitudes to and abilities regarding careers, women of NESB must add to this another layer of disadvantage by also challenging cultural stereotypes.
## 3. THE CASE STUDIES

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### 1. ORLANDA

Orlanda is 36 and was born in Adelaide. Her parents were both born in the Ukraine and she describes herself as ‘Australian-Ukrainian’.

Orlanda approaches work with a high level of commitment and the career which she has developed is as much directed to meeting her own personal goals as it is to influencing the policy process to respond to the special needs of women of non-English speaking background. Without role models of NESB Orlanda has become such a role model for young NESB women.

**MAJOR INFLUENCES**

Orlanda grew up in a home which was deeply imbued with the Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian was the language used by the family and she and her older brother attended the Ukrainian school and were allowed to socialise only with other Ukrainian children. As a child, Orlanda regarded herself as Ukrainian only. As an adult, she has no Ukrainian friends, mainly because her childhood friends cannot accept her adoption of Anglo-Australian standards.

Orlanda's father worked in various odd jobs and subsequently established his own business, while her mother worked as a cleaner until her husband's business became established.
School was an unhappy experience for Orlanda, not due to any lack of intellectual ability but because it marked the beginning of years of conflict, between two cultural influences and between Orlanda’s strong individuality and the behavioural expectations of the school system. She changed schools several times and remembers that the contrast between the values of her Ukrainian home and those of her Anglo-Australian peers produced an existence which she describes as ‘schizophrenic’. She recalls that she felt ‘like two different people’, behaving differently in each cultural setting, and never confiding with anyone about the pull being exerted by each culture. She eventually came to terms with her dual existence by regarding life as being lived in a variety of ways, according to a variety of standards. This, perhaps, accounts for the strong individualism that came to characterise her thinking and behaviour.

Adolescence was extremely difficult because the different behavioural expectations of each culture were magnified over disagreements about dress and social activities. Orlanda recalls that she was forced ‘to deal with the pressures of growing up twice’. Her friendships suffered because they were limited—to being able to spend time with her Ukrainian peers, with whom she was feeling increasingly that she had little in common and to her Anglo-Australian peers with whom she had more in common but was not permitted to spend time outside of school.

WORK

Orlanda matriculated and began an Arts/Economics degree. Her parents had always stressed the importance of tertiary education, but to them, true success was associated with ‘high status’ professions, like law and medicine, and it was further apparent that such success was seen as applicable to males (her brother became a doctor) while Orlanda was expected to be well-educated, well-travelled and ultimately married.

Marriage to another Ukrainian provided an acceptable exit from the confining expectations of her home, and Orlanda lived overseas with her husband, without having completed her university studies. She began her working life as a journalist and English teacher, and returned to Australia after a two year absence, to resume her studies.

At that time, Orlanda began working in a Women’s Studies Resource Centre, and this provided the stimulus to analyse her life, from the perspective of being a woman, and a woman of NESB. She began working in a number of private sector and then community-based settings, discovering a growing interest in multicultural affairs and her own advocacy abilities. Five years ago she became the manager of a
community-based centre for migrants and after two years in this role, took an Equal Employment Opportunity position (at the CO5 level) with the South Australian government, with a view to developing her policy development skills and influencing the policy process. After three years she had reached the AO1 level with her present position.

At this stage, Orlanda believes that she has reached a turning point in her career. She can pursue senior management roles but perceives these as also involving activities of which she wants no part. Therefore, she is unsure of where her work will lead her. She remains committed to changing structures which deny access and equity to people (women especially) of NESB, and would like to ensure an improvement in career opportunities for the third generation of NESB women.

Orlanda regards her greatest career impediments as structural in kind, in not being (like most NESB women, and like many women) part of a 'mainstream network of influence'.

IDENTITY

Work is perceived as a major influence on her identity, and for Orlanda, work is inseparable from her personal life. Cultural background is regarded by her as the other major influence, and although she identifies herself as 'Australian-Ukrainian', the two are inseparable for her.

Orlanda does not see herself as promoting one background at the expense of the other.

I'm all along the continuum. I'm trying to change the spectrum. We need to let people be who they are and not try to fit somewhere. I don't see that I have to 'fit' anywhere...I'm me...I fit into the whole spectrum.

Orlanda believes that she experiences constant discrimination in the work setting, because of a pressure to 'fit in' with the mainstream culture and her refusal to do so. She perceives a widespread lack of understanding about cultural background which forces NESB people to play (outwardly) one of two roles, which she describes as 'Anglo' or 'Ethnic'.

I think differently... and there is no recognition of different cultures in the Public Service. I feel that I'm not part of the mainstream... and am seen as 'interesting'.... to fit in, we have to learn to behave like the mainstream.
There have been a number of women who have been role models for Orlanda. They share the qualities of strength, intelligence and an ability to cause change. None has been of NESB. She has also had the support of two mentors whom she sees as having taught her how to be effective in government bureaucracies. Her mother has not been a role model for work, but Orlanda acknowledges her influence in supporting her career plans even though they are far removed from her own expectations for women.

If Orlanda has a daughter she will teach her about the Ukrainian culture and how to be selective towards this culture. She will encourage her to develop a career which gives her financial independence and a sense of achievement for herself and for society as a whole.

2. DIANE

Diane is 28 years old and was born in Adelaide while her parents were born in Italy. Her father is a self-employed mechanic and her mother has not been in the paid workforce. She identifies herself as 'Italian'.

Diane has been working in the State Government for 10 years and has had a series of challenging jobs in that period, including Typist/Receptionist to a Government Minister (her first job) and Secretary to the Director of a State Government Commission. She has reached the CO2 level and is now keen to expand her skills and develop a career. These goals are far removed from her original work-related expectations and she is still coming to terms with the change in her work values.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Diane remembers her home life as a constant financial struggle and although her parents were very loving, they led a quiet and isolated life (which seemed to originate with the birth of her brain-damaged sister). Her extended family lived in Italy and Diane's involvement with the Italian culture was very much home-centred.

She remembers school as a reasonably happy experience, although inhibited by her shyness. There was a clear separation between Anglo-Australian and Italian students, and while she wanted to have friends from the former group, she found that she was confined to the Italian friendship network. She recalls that she did not share many of their values and as a result, did not feel as if she 'belonged' to any peer group.

WORK
Diane completed Year 12 and undertook a secretarial course at Business College. Her father had encouraged her to pursue tertiary studies but her mother persuaded her to be mindful of their economic circumstances and to seek work.

Consequently, Diane began her working life without any expectations of a career, and after 10 years of rewarding experience and a developing sense of her skills and potential, would like to pursue a tertiary education and to develop a career.

She now regards a 'good job' as one involving a level of responsibility and self-sufficiency, whereas her parents had promoted secure, 'white collar' work as the ideal (although her father added a tertiary education to this view of 'good' work).

The change in Diane's expectations has left her with a sense of confusion and a conviction that she must obtain tertiary qualifications in order to maximise her career choices. Her lack of formal qualifications contributes to a lack of confidence which she perceives to be a barrier to fulfilling her career goals. She also identifies as a barrier the lack of opportunities for employees at the (COI/CO2) level to obtain promotion and develop career paths.

IDENTITY

Diane regards work as contributing significantly to her identity but does not attach the same importance to the role played by her cultural background.

Nevertheless, she regards herself as Italian and wants to be accepted for being Italian and accepted by the mainstream culture. She finds that this means that she sometimes 'blends' with the Anglo-Australian culture at work. Diane had encountered discrimination prior to working in her current work setting when she observed clear differences in her boss's treatment of herself and another female (Anglo-Australian) employee.

Diane does not believe that she must choose between the Anglo-Australian and Italian cultures, or that they present a source of conflict for her, as she regards them as having merged — for her.

There have been several women who have acted as role models for Diane and all have been successful in their careers. It is only recently that she has had mentors in her work situation (one male, one female and interestingly, the male is of NESB). It is
perhaps significant that the emergence of these mentors has occurred during the period denoting a change in Diane's expectations of a career. Diane's mother influenced her original choice of occupation, but that influence has waned and she regards her as a role model only in relation to her ability to combine strength and supportiveness with a passive, subtle behavioural style.

If Diane has a daughter (and her parents do not express expectations of marriage and children for her), she would like her to retain her Italian heritage and would encourage her to set and pursue her own goals. She would also encourage her to plan her life on the basis of her own interests and abilities rather than in terms of gender-based stereotypes about life and career options.

3. MELISSA

Melissa is 28 and was born in Adelaide while her parents were both born in Italy. She has worked in a variety of clerical jobs but has become increasingly aware of other areas of work interest and believes that she is at a 'career crossroads'.

Melissa's life has also reached a turning point in her relationship with her family, with whom she has been in conflict for many years because of her refusal to accept their traditional, and in her view, antiquarian views on the role of women generally, and daughters in particular. Having been placed in the position of choosing her family's norms and values or her own, Melissa has ceased contact with her family and is living independently. Her rejection of her family's value system has been accompanied by a rejection of her Italian background which, at this stage, she associates with repressive and outdated behaviour.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Melissa has one younger sister and two older brothers and she remembers her formative years only for their unhappiness and her father's violence. She and her sister were treated differently from her brothers, who continued the father's authoritarian behaviour and his perpetuation of what Melissa describes as 'village' standards of behaviour. She and her sister left home one year ago when Melissa refused to attend a dinner where her parents were arranging for her to meet friends of theirs whose son they wanted her to marry.

Melissa's school years were marred by the exclusions imposed on non-Anglo Australians. She remembers that Anglo-Australian students did not mix with non-
Anglo Australians and her friends were all Europeans (who were known as 'wogs'). By upper secondary school she remembers that such attitudes had softened, but her family's exclusive association with other Italians prevented her from socialising with Anglo-Australians.

Academically, Melissa found school very manageable, despite her parents' total lack of encouragement to study anything other than secretarial subjects (which she loathed). Melissa had wanted to study at university (in Accountancy) but this aspiration was discounted.

Both of her parents were employed in various 'blue collar' jobs (factory work, cleaning, bus driving) and regarded secretarial employment as highly acceptable because it was 'white collar' work, and appropriate for girls (who were, according to Melissa, classified as 'dummies').

WORK

Consequently, Melissa completed Year 12 in a Secretarial Course, which failed to enthuse her, and which led to two years of secretarial work. She regards her years of working in jobs which weren't of her choosing with enormous anger and resentment which, not surprisingly, is directed at her family (with the exception of her sister).

After two years of working in secretarial positions in the private sector, Melissa began working in the State Government as a CO1 doing clerical work, with increasing experience being gained in the accounts area. Five years after joining the Public Service, Melissa has been promoted to CO2 level.

Although her recent experience has been in the accounts area, Melissa has also been obtaining experience in personnel work and finds that this has brought her first real enjoyment of work. Unlike her parents' notion of a 'good' job, she places a high value on being happy and working with people while doing challenging tasks. She also values a degree of autonomy in her work.

Melissa is now planning a career in personnel, but believes that her own lack of confidence is her greatest obstacle to achieving her goals. She recognises that she will need a great deal of support and encouragement from her work superiors, as well as appropriate in-service training. She believes that her confidence will increase with her rejection of her family's influence. (Until recently, she was too afraid to participate in in-service personal development courses.)
IDENTITY

Melissa regards her work as an important influence on the development of her identity but is unclear about the contribution made by her cultural background because she has rejected this. She now identifies herself as ‘Australian’ mainly because she ‘could not cope with living two lives’. For Melissa, perhaps because of the huge gap between both cultures there was no possible reconciliation, and a choice had to be made between the two.

Apart from her early school years, Melissa has not experienced obvious discrimination and believes that in the work-setting, any discrimination encountered has been gender-based not culture-based.

She has had only one role model, who was a woman in her mid-thirties who was both successful in career terms and personally supportive and likeable. This woman has also played the role of a mentor in her work situation. A man of a similar age has also fulfilled a mentor’s role, providing personal guidance and advising Melissa on her work and supporting her in seeking a career.

Not surprisingly, Melissa’s mother does not emerge as a role model, in relation to work or personal development. Her expectations of her daughter do not include work of any kind let alone a career, and Melissa describes her expectations of her as ‘having children and naming them after her parents’.

If Melissa ever has a daughter of her own she is adamant that she will be raised with the freedom to pursue her interests and goals, with her Italian heritage playing a background role in her development. Her child-rearing, in comparison to that of Melissa’s parents would be —

Quite the opposite... she would be her own person.

4. MELINA

Melina is 32 years old and was born in Adelaide. Her parents were born in Greece and she identifies herself as ‘Australian-Greek’. Melina’s upbringing was centred on Greek traditions and standards, but her parents set no gender-based restrictions. She and her brother were given equal encouragement to undertake tertiary studies and develop careers and at 32, Melina has fulfilled these expectations. She has already reached management level after ten years in the workforce.
MAJOR INFLUENCES

Melina remembers her home life as essentially happy but marred by some tension which arose from her father's ill-health. He had worked in factories and then for the Australian National Railways, while her mother worked as a dress-maker. In retrospect, Melina perceives that economic hardship, arduous work and the adjustments involved in settling in a new country, combined to produce enormous stress levels, for which he received inadequate support and medical treatment.

Both parents were extremely strict in enforcing behavioural standards and her mother was very religious. The church played a significant role in the family's life and became Melina's main social outlet. She recalls her confrontations with them during her adolescent years, mainly because she was constantly refused permission to accept the many social invitations she received from school friends. However, Melina also recalls and is grateful for the support and closeness that came from being part of an extended family.

School was a rewarding experience for Melina, both academically and socially, and her friends, then and now, represented a mixture of cultural backgrounds.

WORK

Melina matriculated and then completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Applied Psychology. During her final year of tertiary studies, she worked as a Research Assistant, but after graduation, because of a lack of jobs requiring a degree in Psychology, she worked as a Sales Assistant for one year. After some years of counselling and community development work, Melina began working for the State Government 5 years ago and has worked in various project officer positions, before attaining her present management level position which she obtained two years ago.

When she left school, Melina had always intended to develop a career utilising her tertiary qualifications in Psychology. When this was not possible, she began developing her present career without being conscious of doing so, but by 'just moving into jobs I could do well'. The development of a structured career path has been a relatively recent occurrence but she acknowledges that she must have had some 'instinct' about appropriate work directions prior to this.
Melina's parents held expectations of high level white collar work for their daughter, involving status, seniority and a commensurate salary. She regards work as needing to be challenging, goal-directed, with a degree of autonomy, a salary which reflects her input, and 'stimulating... keeping the adrenalin going, extending and testing me'.

As for her short and long-term work goals, Melina believes that she has specialised sufficiently in her existing work and now needs to switch into another sphere where she can contribute her specialist knowledge and skills and extend herself. In the longer term she aims to move further up the executive hierarchy where she can exert a stronger influence on the policy process.

In order to achieve these goals, Melina believes that she needs training in specific management skills (such as, negotiation and budgeting) and to increase her confidence in her own ability. (The latter seems surprising given her success to date, but it recurs as a common theme among most of the women interviewed, regardless of their career patterns).

IDENTITY

Melina believes that work is an 'enormous' influence on her identity and this is reinforced by the amount of time she devotes to work-related activities. 'A lot of who I feel I am is tied up with it'. However, she can draw a clear distinction between her personal development and her work-based identity mainly, she feels, because her work is unable to fulfil the artistic side of her personality.

Melina also regards her cultural background as a significant influence on the development of her identity, with her 'Greek' identity being 'balanced' against her 'Anglo Australian' identity. She believes that both cultures contribute to her identity and does not promote one at the expense of the other.

In the work setting, Melina has not experienced any overt race-based discrimination, but has encountered a great deal of discrimination based on gender and age (mainly arising from resentment among management systems dominated by people who are male and not as young as she is).
Melina describes adolescence as the period when the influence of dual cultures was most stressful, and which was reinforced by conflicting standards of behaviour. She describes the process of reconciling these dual sources of influence as —

having to come to terms with who you are and what you are.

Melina believes that this eases with time, and that for a 30 year old, this becomes much more manageable than for a 20 year old. She has also found that having a supportive partner who is also Greek and who also has had to reach a similar stage of reconciliation and acceptance, has been very helpful.

Melina’s role models have all been ‘strong and talented’ women, from the Arts. She regrets the lack of women to emulate in her field and further regrets the lack of NESB women role models. She has not had the support of any mentors in her work situation—'I have muddled through'. Her mother has not been a role model for her because ‘we think very differently... Mum feels so much like a victim and, of course, in many ways she has been’.

If Melina has a daughter she will —

introduce her to the positive aspects of the Greek culture but I would let her choose what she wanted.

As for career expectations she will tell her to —

...go for broke...there is nothing you can’t do as a woman.

5. JENNY

Jenny is 28 years old and was born in Adelaide while both of her parents were born in Greece. Her current work, which she enjoys, involves laboratory testing within a State government department and follows a number of years of ‘drifting’ through a series of jobs, none of which was found to be rewarding.

Jenny perceives that her parents placed significant pressure on their children to enter high status professions and it is possible that her own ambivalence about work and the possibility of developing a career stems from the lack of opportunity to become aware of her own interests and abilities. Her ambivalence extends to her cultural identity; she identifies herself as ‘Australian-Greek’ but is confused about the significance which each culture holds for her.
MAJOR INFLUENCES

Jenny is the eldest of three children (she has two brothers) and remembers her home life as content. Her parents worked hard — her mother as a cleaner and her father as a process worker. Their life was centred on the Greek culture with the children attending Greek school and learning Greek poetry and dancing. Her parents had many Greek friends but her mother had some Anglo-Australian friends and Jenny was not restricted to having only Greek friends.

Primary school is remembered as an enjoyable period of her life when she had a wide range of friends. Jenny's secondary school had a high population of European students and her friendships were confined to Greek students. By Year 10, Jenny seemed to have reached a stage of some confusion about the cultural aspect of her identity. She remembers feeling different from the other Greek girls and wanting to explore the Anglo-Australian part of her background but not being accepted by the Anglo-Australian students. Having been part of the Greek friendship group for most of her secondary school years, she was trapped within it while feeling apart from it.

WORK

Academically, Jenny was bored with her studies. She had chosen a commercial course in Year 10 and achieved well, but changed her mind and completed the Year 12 Higher School Certificate.

She then returned to the commercial career path by undertaking Business Studies at TAFE — even though she was not interested in office work. Not knowing what she wanted to do, she spent the first seven or so years of her working life travelling overseas and working in various jobs until she became a clerk in the State Public Service.

Jenny did not enjoy this type of work and found being a base grade clerk — '...demeaning... you get treated like a slave, especially by males'. It was only the move last year from a CO1 position into laboratory assistance (at the Technical Assistant Grade 1 level) which has brought Jenny some sense of enjoyment and job satisfaction. She remains unsure of her future work direction but is clear about what she wants from work, which must fulfil the criteria of being personally fulfilling, interesting and enjoyable. Unlike her parents who had high expectations of their children becoming lawyers or doctors, Jenny is not interested in high paying, high
status work. Her parents have accepted her choice of occupation however, because ‘they have always wanted us to be happy’.

Jenny believes that she could only achieve more in her work through more study and better qualifications. She also perceives that her own lack of confidence and low self-esteem constitutes a major barrier, and while she has found in-service personal development courses of some benefit, believes that only she can remove this barrier.

IDENTITY

Despite her uncertainties regarding work and what it holds for her, Jenny believes that work constitutes a significant part of her identity, and she has difficulty separating the personal and work spheres.

Interestingly, she resists the notion that her Greek background has significantly influenced her picture of herself. She remains ambivalent about the relative importance of the Greek and Anglo-Australian cultures and finds herself defending and being loyal to both, and this she says — ‘makes me feel torn between them’.

While being loyal to both, she is also critical of aspects of each culture and reconciles this duality by preferring to see herself ‘as an individual’. This position has been reached after a period in adolescence of rejecting her Greek background, which was followed by a period of feeling angry and defensive about the stereotyping assumptions made by Anglo-Australians about the Greek culture. She now finds that she can be less hostile about such attitudes.

Jenny has experienced some culturally-based discrimination in the work setting, usually in the form of patronising comments (from male colleagues). However, she regards most of her colleagues as culturally sensitive and, therefore, feels that she does not have to be defensive by choosing to actively promote her Greek background or to deny it.

There have been no role models whom Jenny can identify as having influenced her development, nor have there been any mentors in her work situation. Perhaps if there had been, she may have been less ambivalent about her work and where she wants it to go. But in a general sense, she does admire women who are successful high achievers who are also approachable and caring.

Jenny’s mother has not been a role model for her and her expectations of Jenny may have contributed to her confusion about her career, for apart from expecting Jenny to
become a well-paid and respectable professional, her mother also pressures her to marry and have children. Jenny feels unable to fulfil these expectations.

As to any children which she may have, especially daughters, Jenny is most unambivalent about their upbringing. The Greek culture would be taught, but with the option of adopting or overlooking it, and she would want her daughter — ‘...to be an individual, and to achieve as much as she wanted, and feel that nothing was impossible’.

6. ANNA

Anna is 57 and was born in Northern Europe, as were her parents. She believes that her cultural identity has a variety of sources. Prior to working in Canada, Anna left the Netherlands when she was 25 and worked throughout Europe with people from many other countries, and this experience has provided a plurality of influence.

Her work in Canada (at age 26 and four years after graduating as a Social Worker) required her to emigrate in order to be employed, but she did not regard this as involving any commitment to Canada, it was seen only as a bureaucratic obligation. Anna moved to Australia with her husband and their two young children 26 years ago. She began working for the South Australian government six years ago and has now reached the AO1 level, and during this time has come to be regarded as an influential ‘player’ in multicultural policy development and a role model for women of NESB.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Anna has memories of a close and happy family life, where she and her older sister were raised to believe strongly in social justice. Her father had a degree in Law and was the local Burgermeister while her mother’s role focussed on her parental responsibilities and being her husband’s partner at the official functions which were part of his job. She subsequently undertook Speech Pathology studies when her children became adults. The family spoke Dutch and Friesian at home.

School was academically rewarding and provided Anna with many friendships, some of which are maintained today. The Second World War and the years preceding and following it, brought her father considerable abuse for his stand on social justice issues, and he and her mother were forced to ‘go underground’ during the War to escape Nazi persecution. During this period the family was separated. The children, not knowing
where their parents were, moved to a nearby city to live with their aunt, a medical practitioner, who became a key role model for Anna.

The effect on Anna of her father's ill-treatment was such that she left her country of birth as a means of rejecting the injustice meted out to him. She believes that this early experience toughened her against injustice and led her to seek work which involved commitment to social justice principles.

WORK

Anna's early work life, in Europe and Canada utilised her Social Work training as did her first years of work in Australia. In 1985 she moved from service delivery to policy development work, again with much of her activities being geared to social justice goals.

Her work fulfils her father's commitment and both of her parents' expectations that she would pursue a professional occupation. However, Anna also holds as important, work which provides enjoyment, satisfaction, autonomy, creativity and intellectual stimulation. She does not perceive herself as 'career-oriented', despite her logical progression through a variety of occupations, all geared to social change and social justice, and her involvement at the level of policy development. Had it not been for her husband's unstable income, Anna believes that she would have pursued a more traditional 'wife and mother' role. Instead, she became the prime income earner for her family. In other words, her career is seen by her as having evolved incidentally. However, given the commitment which she displays to her work and the successes which she has experienced in this work, it is unlikely that the traditional role would have been sustained as Anna's permanent work model.

Anna believes that immigration has also been responsible for her career development because had she remained in Northern Europe, she may well not have pursued a career, because it was quite unacceptable for married women to do so (at that time).

At this stage, Anna does not seek senior management work, because she regards this as involving excessive 'political stress' and a level of responsibility which destroys the enjoyment she now has from her work. Her main work goal is — 'to keep enjoying work'.

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IDENTITY

Anna regards work as a critical influence on her identity, and describes her work as entailing a significant emotional and intellectual investment. As she says — 'I must be able to identify strongly with my work in order to do it'.

Being of Northern European origin is described as another important part of her identity, but Anna regards this as being synonymous with being adaptable and cosmopolitan, due she says, to the need for Northern Europeans 'to look outside of their borders'.

On reflection, Anna believes that for many years she denied this background and 'blended' with the Anglo-Australian culture (mainly because she felt a subtle, but insistent pressure to do so in order to succeed). In recent years, she has found it liberating to identify her original cultural background, and feels that her move into her present policy-oriented work role has allowed her to bring —

all the parts of myself together, which is very satisfying at the end of my career. I have felt my identity confirmed.

The key role models in Anna's life are all part of her formative years in her home country. One was the aunt with whom she and her sister lived during the War. One was another unmarried aunt who was a Child Care Director. (Both, it should be noted, not conforming to the traditional female role upheld at that time). The third role model was Anna's mother, whom she remembers for her organisational ability — 'Whether I like it or not, I am very much like her'. There have been no mentors in Anna's work situation.

Anna's daughter has been raised with a clear knowledge of her heritage, and with encouragement to pursue a career from which she can derive enjoyment and a sense of fulfillment.

7. KATHY

Kathy is 50 years old and was born overseas, as were her parents. (Kathy has experienced continuous harassment in her work situation and does not want her ethnicity described because it would lead to her identification). Kathy came to Australia at the age of 22, on leave from her work, and married an Australian. She spent her first 10 years in Australia on a cattle station, and moved to Adelaide 18
years ago. She has worked in the State Public Service for 14 years and has remained at the CO1 level for the entire period.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Kathy was the second eldest of a family of five girls and three boys. Her father was an engineer and her mother was a full-time parent. The family spoke mainly English in the home; they were also fluent in their own languages. Kathy remembers her home life as one of great happiness.

She has similarly contented memories of her school years where she attended a school whose students came from a number of overseas countries. Kathy still maintains friendships from her school years.

Kathy’s memories of her first years in Australia are of an initial period of some two years of significant adaptation, which were not eased by the isolation of her living situation. She was accepted readily by all members of her husband’s family (except her mother-in-law who rejected her for her racial identity).

WORK

Kathy joined the Public Service in 1975 as a clerk, transferring to her present Department one year later. She had always wanted to do secretarial work, mainly because it was regarded as secure and ‘appropriate’ work for a woman. Her parents supported and promoted this attitude.

However, after 14 years as a CO1, and 13 years in the same Department, she is ready for a complete change of occupation, and would like to work in the child care field.

Kathy’s work life has been far from rewarding. She regards her current place of work as very racist and very sexist. She has endured comments from male colleagues which are vindictive and demeaning, for example ‘black bitch’ and ‘picanniny’. She believes that she was not raised to be aggressive and cannot defend herself from such behaviour.

During her years in this Department, she has also developed occupational-related illnesses and has been treated without sympathy as a result. Her section was restructured during her recuperation period and she returned to work to find that her
job had been eliminated. The Public Service Association supported her in reclaiming her job and she remains in the same section being intimidated daily by some of her colleagues. Jo, (case study 14) has also worked in the same section of the Department in question and moved to another area to escape the male 'bully-boys'. Her perception is that their type of behaviour is not typical of this Department as a whole, but occurs in individual units.

Kathy's endurance of this situation for so many years can be questioned, and may be due to the eroding of her self-esteem and a subsequent inability to act to change her situation. She acknowledges that she has never sought promotion because she does not believe she will be successful. She also acknowledges that she needs to move away from her work setting, but seems to need support (perhaps from the Personnel Section) to do so. She believes that she would benefit from in-service training, but any application to do so has been met with indifference by supervisors.

IDENTITY

Not surprisingly, Kathy does not regard her work as a major influence on her identity development (although it must affect her self-confidence). Her cultural background, however, is seen as highly significant and she promotes this rather than attempting to 'blend' with the Anglo-Australian culture.

She has had role models in her home country, who were career-oriented and successful women, but has had neither role models nor mentors in the work setting during her years in Australia Kathy feels her main role model has been her mother who has always encouraged and supported her children. Kathy's daughter has been successful in her profession and Kathy has given her total support in fulfilling her career-related goals.

Where they place a value on higher status and security, she values enjoyment, job satisfaction, variety, autonomy, working with intellectually stimulating people and 'contributing to the general good of the community'. Her parents cannot relate to computing and believe that she should have pursued a higher status profession, particularly, law or medicine.

Jo-anne perceives that she has changed considerably through her work, having lost much of her shyness, particularly with males. She can see opportunities for promotion
in the computing field but does not feel either competent or confident to seek promotion.

Her deficiencies, she believes, do not arise from lack of technical skills, but a lack of management skills. She believes that she needs considerable in-service training in these skills and in building her self-confidence.

IDENTITY

Jo-anne believes that her work makes a significant contribution to her identity, as does her cultural background. However, while she feels that she identifies more with Anglo-Australian women than with Greek women, Jo-anne remains ambivalent about the cultural components of her identity.

Describing herself as ‘Greek-Australian’, she believes that she neither ‘blends’ in with the Anglo-Australian culture nor actively promotes her Greek background. She is aware of ‘playing roles’ according to which cultural group she is with at a given time and has felt some confusion over the relative influence exerted by each culture. She remembers wanting to be like her Anglo-Australian high school and university peers (i.e. in clothing, socialising etc) and not being permitted to do so. Despite her anger with her parents, Jo-anne believed in respecting their standards, and because of her overwhelming lack of social confidence took her need to obey them as a way of avoiding trying social situations.

Jo-anne found that university provided more opportunity to socialise, and that her parents preferred not to question late hours.

She feels that this represented a tacit agreement on their part not to prevent her from developing her social and personal life without having to ignore what they believed to be their parental obligation. As she says, a form of game evolved with each player fulfilling their responsibilities without having to deny their wishes.

Jo-anne cannot identify any role models, other than a Greek family friend who has combined a career in medicine with raising her children. Nor can she identify any mentors in her work situation, which she regards as a major gap in the support which she needs in developing a career path.
Her mother has been a personal role model in her combination of toughness and
diligence with kindness and emotional support. But her expectation for Jo-anne to
marry a Greek and have children is not perceived by Jo-anne as something which she
wants to do.

If she does have children, Jo-anne dreads duplicating her parents' autocratic
behaviour. She prefers to create options for and to give her children the confidence to
trust in their own judgement. She would want them to understand their Greek cultural
background and believes that her parents could play an important part in this process.

9. SUSAN

Susan is 23 years old and was born in Australia Her parents were born in Italy and she
identifies herself as 'Italian-Australian'. She joined the State Public Service three
years ago, after completing a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education. She has
spent her three working years as a Project Officer, beginning at the CO3 level and
progressing to the CO5 level.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Susan is the youngest of three children and describes her home life as happy, if
somewhat controlled. Her parents have been strict in setting standards about social
activities and Susan was only given more freedom in this area during her university
years. Susan's mother has been a factory worker and her father a truck driver and
they have always had a large number of Italian friends.

Although her family were not involved in Church activities, she grew up in a
household which was essentially Italian in its cultural pursuits. Both Italian and
English were spoken at home.

Susan remembers little about her primary school years but does recall secondary school
as being more enjoyable, academically and socially. She was part of a close-knit group
of European girls at both the schools which she attended. At one of these schools
NESB students represented a minority group and were the subject of considerable racial
prejudice. She now has a range of friends, from different cultural backgrounds and
avoids maintaining friendships with the children of her parents' friends because they
are 'into the Italo-Australian culture' and Susan neither likes nor feels part of this
group.
WORK

Susan has been working as a Project Officer in the State Government for the three years of her working life and has derived significant enjoyment and satisfaction from her work. She had planned to pursue this form of work when she left school and her future goals involve developing a range of skills and experiencing a number of 'challenges'.

At this stage, she is not keen to be promoted to a level involving considerable responsibility. She believes that knowledge-specific in-service training would be the most valuable source of assistance in fulfilling her work goals.

Susan's parents had always hoped that she would choose a white collar occupation, in a bank or the Public Service (i.e. providing security). They had also expected that she would not become involved in demanding work because they see her first priority as having children. Susan, however, sees child-bearing as a long-term goal. She believes that work should be —

something that allows you to develop many skills; that is useful... of direct relevance to society... not just pen-pushing... or doing one set thing... and something that you enjoy.

IDENTITY

Susan believes that her work is making a considerable contribution to her personal development, and while work shouldn't dominate one's life or picture of oneself, she perceives the feedback about oneself which work provides as constituting an important part of one's identity. She also believes that her cultural background has played a critical part in the development of her identity.

Susan does not consciously promote her Italian background and believes that she tends to 'blend' with the Anglo-Australian culture at work. However, she does not do this as a rejection of her Italian culture. She recalls experiencing some confusion over the conflicting social and behavioural standards of each culture during her adolescent years but does not feel conflicting cultural pressure at this stage of her life. As she says—

You have to accept what fits at a certain time of life... you have to form your own opinions.

Susan feels that she belongs to both cultures.
Susan has had a number of role models, who have been women with a clear purpose in their lives, who cope calmly and have a clear sense of their identity. However, there have been no mentors in her work situation. Her mother has been a role model for some of her behaviour, particularly in setting high standards and accepting challenges.

If Susan has a daughter she will provide her with knowledge about her Italian background and will encourage her to pursue a career, if she wants to do so. She will also teach her to be confident (Susan feels she has suffered from her own lack of confidence).

10. HELEN

Helen was born in Poland and both of her parents were born in the Ukraine. She and her parents came to Australia as post-war refugees when Helen was 12 years old. She is now 52 years of age and works part time as a Typist/Receptionist. Because she speaks fluent Ukrainian, Russian, Polish and Yugoslav, she is also called upon to act as an interpreter for clients from these language groups in her place of work. Helen does not regard her language skills as an avenue to a career in interpreting or translating, although she is keen to increase the amount of time she spends interpreting. Her attitude to work in general is not career-oriented, nor does work play a critical role in her identity.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Helen remembers her early years as a period of enormous struggle and hardship, but despite this, her home life was a happy one. Her parents had been placed in a work camp and, prior to arrival in Australia, this was her first period of continuous schooling as the War had interrupted her primary education. Her parents experienced difficulties on arrival associated with being separated by their work situations. For the first two years of their settlement, Helen and her mother were sent to the Riverland while her father was employed in Adelaide. Four years after her arrival, they had to endure the death of her only sibling. Both parents worked, her father as a labourer and her mother as a factory worker (her father had been a teacher in Europe).

Helen remembers the difficulties of her first years of schooling in Australia, when she had to contend with learning English and the embarrassment attached to being older than her classmates. Nevertheless, the children at school (especially in her
secondary years when she attended an all girls technical school) were extremely supportive and her friends came from a range of backgrounds — both European and Anglo-Australian.

Helen was raised in an environment which strongly promoted the Ukrainian culture. Her parents sought out other Ukrainians for friendship and social activities, attended Ukrainian church and celebrated Ukrainian religious events.

The Ukrainian, Russian and Polish languages were spoken at home, and Helen is echoing this pattern with her own four children, but in a more laissez-faire fashion.

Having married a Yugoslav, she has reared her children to understand both the Yugoslav and Ukrainian cultures but allowed them to choose their degree of active participation in each culture.

The only differences in opinion between Helen and her parents occurred, not surprisingly, in her adolescent years and centred on the issues of clothing and social activities. For Helen, the impact of these altercations was softened by her recognition of the fact that her friends faced similar restrictions.

WORK

Helen had always wanted to work in an office and her parents (particularly her father) encouraged her in this. Her first job involved office assistance but by the time her first child was born (seven years later) she had become Chief Stenographer. She stopped paid work while she had her second and third children and then worked as a factory worker and a housemaid until the birth of her fourth child. (She took this work because her stenographic skills had declined during her period out of the paid workforce).

By this stage, her parents had retired and were able to offer child care support and she completed a refresher course in order to return to office work. This led to full-time office work and she began working in the Public Service in 1974 as an Office Assistant for the Department which now employs her. Like many people employed at the CO1 level, she has remained in this level for the past fifteen years, although she does not fret over this.

Helen’s criteria for a ‘good job’ involves enjoyment, getting along with one’s work group, not having to travel far from home to work and with a reasonable salary.
Interestingly, her parents shared this view of work and, like many people who have had to work in 'blue collar' jobs, regarded as essential having a clean work environment, in a 'white collar' field of employment.

Helen is not interested in promotion because she believes that management removes one from contact with 'everyday people'. The only goal which she has for her work, at this stage, is to increase her interpreting time, as she has discovered great enjoyment from helping her Department’s NESB clients.

(It is only in recent years that South Australian government departments have begun to act on access issues for people of NESB and this seems to coincide with Helen's discovery of a key source of enjoyment in her world.)

IDENTITY

Helen does not regard work as contributing in any significant way to her identity and can easily separate her work from her personal life. Nor does she attach much importance to the role of her cultural background in forming her identity. She identifies herself clearly as Ukrainian but believes that this is a matter of personal choice — that one can grow up with traditions but choose whether or not to follow them.

In relation to the way in which she identifies herself in cultural terms, Helen feels that she does not actively promote her Ukrainian background nor does she feel obliged to 'blend' in with the Anglo-Australian culture. Her friends come from both cultural backgrounds.

She does not believe that she has ever experienced discrimination because of her Ukrainian background, and she is very relaxed about her perception of other people's attitudes to her. As she says — 'I think I've been lucky'.

Helen has not had any role models with whom she can identify, other than her own mother whom she respects because she is supportive and just and 'not afraid to speak her mind'. Nor have there been any mentors in her work setting. She has an excellent relationship with her mother, and has raised her own children in a similar fashion. She held no expectations for them regarding work — only that they be content in their choice of employment. Her children are all adults now, with her two sons working as a policemen and fitter and turner, and her two daughters working for government human
services departments — one being at middle management level and the other (who is a COI like her mother) preparing to study for Social Work.

11 SEIKO

Seiko is 35 and was born in Adelaide. Her parents were both born in Yugoslavia and she describes herself as an ‘Australian-Yugoslav’. Her work life has been a steady progress in the past nine years during which she entered the Public Service as a Clerk (COI Level) and now holds a relatively senior position as a Personnel Officer (at the AO1 level). Seiko is very clear about her abilities and her need for a stimulating work role, but also appreciates her family life and feels that promotion to senior management brings a degree of pressure which is undesirable.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Seiko’s father worked as a fitter and turner, and her mother as a shop assistant. Seiko has one older brother and two younger sisters. Her father died when he was relatively young and she remembers him for being both ill and extremely autocratic. Until he became bedridden, he was physically abusive to her mother and for many years Seiko associated his oppressive behaviour with European cultural standards of male behaviour. He was also deeply involved with the Yugoslav Church and Seiko recalls that the family went without while he gave much of his earnings to the Church. Not surprisingly, she remembers her childhood as a time of anguish and struggle, and has blocked out most of her early years.

School provided a source of happiness, even though she didn’t regard herself as academically able and experienced difficulties with all subjects, with the exception of those oriented to secretarial work. Seiko made many friends, who were (by choice) mainly Anglo-Australians.

Seiko married for the first time at the age of eighteen, which she now recognises as an attempt to create a ‘home’ for herself. Her early years in the workforce were spent, in the main, working in her husband’s trucking business.
WORK

When her marriage ended, Seiko began working in the State Public Service as a Clerk (at the CO1 level). After four years she moved to another department and after one year had reached the CO3 level as an Assistant Personnel Officer.

She then moved to the Department where she currently works as an (Acting) CO5 and a year later became a Personnel Officer at the AOI level.

When she left school, Seiko had thought only in terms of secretarial work for a career, but her work experience has widened her scope by providing the opportunity for her to develop a range of skills. The development of her career in personnel has not been planned and Seiko believes it has occurred due to her being ‘alert to opportunities’, understanding the value of networking and ‘falling on my feet’.

Seiko has no idea of her parents’ criteria for a ‘good’ job. She received no guidance from them on the subject and even today, her mother has no idea of the work which she performs. Seiko, however, sets definite standards which involve being able to use initiative and creativity, with a combination of problem solving and helping others. She says that one should ‘enjoy coming into work’ and should develop at all levels through one’s work.

Seiko has a number of long and short term career goals. In the long term she would like to establish her own business, possibly in a different field, such as furniture restoration. In the short-term, she would like to progress into senior management work but wonders whether lack of tertiary qualifications will hinder her in achieving this goal. Nor is she certain that she wants the additional pressure involved with this level of responsibility. She is aware of the need to broaden her skills and experience in budgeting and finance, and supervision. The opportunity to act in this type of work is seen by her as essential to further promotion.

IDENTITY

Seiko identifies herself as Australian-Yugoslav but regards herself as ‘100% Australian’. Despite her career achievements to date, Seiko does not perceive her work as making a significant contribution to her identity and regards her cultural background as significant in helping her to reject many values which she describes as ‘European’. For most of her adult life, she has promoted her Anglo-Australian
background and chosen only people from this background as her friends. She refused to marry any European, because she did not want to replicate her mother's life and her second husband is of Anglo-Australian background.

As a child and a teenager, Seiko felt considerable pressure from the dual influence of each culture. Her family (mainly her father) insisted that she attend Yugoslav school and church and set strict rules about dress which were at odds with the standards set for her Anglo-Australian friends. She remembers having to use deception to enjoy her friendships with them, and this contributed to her feelings of cultural conflict.

For Seiko, life changed when she began working in the State government because the people with whom she was working presented a new perspective which challenged the norms and values which she had accepted for most of her life. It was here that she found her first role models, who were two women at senior level who were strong, ambitious, caring and supportive. These two also fulfilled the role of mentor in giving her confidence to pursue a career path. She has also had one male mentor who has guided her in developing her career in the personnel field.

Seiko's mother has proved to be a personal role model because of her strength and her supportiveness. But she is not perceived by her daughter to have had any influence on her career.

Seiko has two sons whom she is raising 'as Australians' and says that she is glad that she has no daughters.

12. TRACY

Tracy was born in Adelaide and is 23 years old. Her father was born in Greece and her mother is second generation Greek. Tracy has grown up within a close, but strict family, living between the parental home and the grandparental home. She now lives with her aunt and grandmother but sees her parents daily.

Tracy works in the Personnel section of her Department doing reception and some clerical work. She began working at the COI level five years ago and she is still classified at that level, but her attitudes to work have undergone some change in this period. As she says—
Being Greek, I thought I would only have to work for a bit, and then get married. But it doesn’t happen like that times have changed... You should think of a work future.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Tracy’s parents now own a chicken shop, but prior to this, her father worked in a variety of labouring and factory jobs. They have always spoken English in the home, but Greek is the only language spoken in her grandmother’s home. Tracy has one younger brother.

She and her brother have had a ‘traditional’ Greek upbringing, attending Greek School and adhering to religious feast days and ceremonies. Her parents have only Greek friends and a lot of time is spent with the extended family.

School is remembered as interesting academically, but Tracy did not enjoy studying. She completed Year 12, doing a hybrid course involving some matriculation subjects and Stenography. Tracy’s school friends came from a range of cultural backgrounds but it was those from non-English speaking backgrounds who were her closest friends. Tracy found that she ‘gravitated towards them’ because they ‘had more in common’. She recalls only minimal tension between Anglo-Australian students and those of NESB, and she remembers that it involved male students only.

WORK

Tracy’s first working year involved temporary office jobs between periods of unemployment. She then began working in a State government department as a receptionist/typist and over the next three years took on clerical duties as she moved across a number of acting positions. She recalls this period of work as involving considerable boredom.

When she left school Tracy had sought a clerical occupation, in the Public Service, because she perceived this as secure and stress-free (which makes the boredom she has experienced seem ironic). Her father had encouraged her to attend university while her mother urged her to seek a steady, reliable occupation in the public sector. Both parents placed a high value on their children working in white collar occupations.
In 1989, Tracy moved to the Personnel section of her department and began to enjoy her work for the first time. Her original perceptions of the value of work have now been altered and she regards a ‘good’ job as involving variety, being able to learn constantly and to use one’s initiative, to feel a sense of achievement and to have a sense of direction. This stands in contrast with her original expectations of valuing work which made little demand on one’s ability and effort, and which avoided any form of stress.

Tracy now wants to gain experience in the personnel area and is aiming for promotion. She does not feel that she achieved a great deal from her five years as a COI, but the experience has clarified for her what she is seeking from her work. She believes that promotion is dependent on her gaining the appropriate skills and experience and developing her self-confidence. She also notes that promotion is also dependent on possessing information about available opportunities to work in an acting or substantive capacity, and this is enhanced by being part of an appropriate ‘network’.

IDENTITY

Work does not constitute a major influence on the development of Tracy’s identity — although this may change as work becomes less tedious and more challenging.

Her Greek background, however, has been a major influence, and she describes herself as Greek (rather than Greek-Australian). She values being Greek and tends to promote this part of her cultural background rather than ‘blending’ in with the Anglo-Australian culture.

Tracy’s first work year involved some experience of cultural discrimination, which took the form of patronising remarks from her superiors, (e.g. being ridiculed as a ‘good little Greek girl’). However, she has reacted to this behaviour by defending the Greek culture.

While acknowledging the dual influences of the Greek and Anglo-Australian cultures, Tracy does not feel confused by them; she identifies clearly as Greek, and is proud of the Greek culture and its values. Although she experienced some conflict with her parents during adolescence (over appearance and social activities) she says that her loyalty to ‘Greek’ standards was always most important to her, and as she grew older, her parents became more lenient.
Tracy has grown up with no identifiable role models and without any mentors in her work environment. She admires her mother for her caring and supportive qualities and for her sense of humour. If Tracy has a daughter, she plans to teach her about her Greek background, but in a non-directive manner. She will encourage her to obtain as much education as possible and to be able to make choices about her personal and working life.

13. MARY

Mary is 27 and was born in Adelaide. Both of her parents were born in Italy and she identifies herself as ‘Italian Australian’. Mary’s parents raised her with ‘traditional’ expectations of a future role as a wife and mother and when she began her career in the South Australian Public Service 10 years ago, at the level of Office Assistant, Mary thought of her work as ‘just a job’, not as a career.

She reached CO5 level two years ago and is now an Acting AOI, and her work involves a range of challenging responsibilities in the personnel area. Mary’s expectations about work have undergone a radical change as a result of her work experiences and she is aligning her career goals to encompass a future managerial role.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Mary was the second child in a family of three girls and one boy. She grew up in a happy home which included her immediate family and her uncle and his two children. The family mixed mostly with other Italians through the local Church and the Italian Club. Mary’s mother worked as a domestic cleaner and her father was a drain layer.

School was also a time of enjoyment for Mary. She was not aware of any discrimination on the part of other students, but did feel part of a minority and ‘clung’ to other Italian students during her primary school years By secondary school she had a wider network of friends, most of whom were Italian. It was only when she began working that Mary made more friends of Anglo-Australian background.

WORK

After completing Year 12, Mary began working as an Office Assistant in the State Government. After eighteen months she became a Typist Clerk and successfully
applied to be reclassified at the CO2 level. She then became an Assistant Personnel Officer, acting at the CO3 level and becoming permanently classified at that level some four years later. After two years she obtained her present CO5 position, and is now acting at the AO1 level. Mary has also completed the TAFE Personnel and Industrial Relations Certificate.

Mary's parents had always encouraged her to seek 'white collar' work offering a predictable income and security, and her choice of State Government clerical work met all their expectations. However, Mary's work experience has led her to place a higher value on work which is —
challenging, creative, people-centred and self-motivating one that I look forward to going to each morning.

Her work goals now are directed to pursuing her career at the management level, and she believes that her current place of employment, which she describes as being free of the gender based discrimination which she has encountered in other Government Departments, offers her the opportunity to achieve these goals. (Mary's Department is headed by a woman). Mary believes that the only obstacle to achieving her career goals is her lack of tertiary qualifications. However, she believes that most women of NESB need specially developed personal development courses designed to increase their self-confidence, to provide a structured opportunity to analyse the impact on them of dual cultural background and to help resolve any conflict resulting from this dual influence.

IDENTITY

Mary believes that her work shapes her identity to a significant extent, especially since she began to think of work in terms of a career. She has no difficulty separating her work from her personal responsibilities, and interestingly, has chosen to pursue a more traditional gender role in her personal life while her approach to work is based on a non-traditional gender role. Mary feels that these dual roles correspond with the dual cultural backgrounds which have executed a powerful influence on her identity.

Mary describes herself as 'Italian-Australian' but sees herself as Italian rather than Australian. In her work environment, she feels no pressure to support or identify with either culture, but she does feel conflict in deciding which 'set of values' to follow in certain situations. These usually involve a conflict between her responsibilities in her
personal life and her work responsibilities. This type of conflict could well be
construed as gender-based, but for Mary its origin is seen as cultural.

She points out that she does not experience this 'conflict' in relation to her work
situation, but only in relation to her personal responsibilities and wonders if this
means that she is actually more comfortable with Anglo-Australian cultural values.

There have been three women who have been both role models and mentors for Mary.
One of these was of NESB. All have been achievement oriented and successful in their
careers but with caring personalities. Mary's mother has been a role model in a
personal sense, mainly because of her organisational skills and she influenced Mary in
her initial choice of and attitudes to work. But as work became a means to a career, her
mother's influence in this sphere waned, and is now non-existent.

If Mary has her own daughter she will raise her with the influence of the Italian and
Anglo-Australian cultures, but her upbringing will be non-traditional and free of the
gender-based restrictions which Mary has been shedding as she develops her career.

14. JO

Jo is 21 years old and was born in Australia. Her parents were born in Yugoslavia and
she is married to a Yugoslav. Jo identifies herself as 'Yugoslav'.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Jo is the second of two children and was raised by her mother after her parents
divorced when she was 5 years old. She remembers her mother's struggle to support
her family on Sickness Benefit payments, following an industrial accident in the
factory where she worked as a Supervisor. Nevertheless, her home life is remembered
as a happy one.

She also recalls her school years as enjoyable and had many friends, from a mixture of
ESBs and NESBs. In her adult life Jo's friends represent a similar cultural mix. Her
life at home revolved around Yugoslav cultural activities and many of her friends
were Yugoslav. Both Yugoslav and English were spoken at home. But she does not feel
that she was pressured to adopt the Yugoslav culture.
WORK

Jo began work 5 years ago, having completed Year 12, as a Word Processing Operator (at the CO1 level). She has remained with the same Department during this time, having worked within three sections.

Jo had been interested in Commercial Studies at school and had wanted to teach in this area, but was unwilling to undertake the further study required and chose work which would utilise her skills in this area.

Jo believes that her work fulfils her criteria for a ‘good job’ in that she likes her colleagues and finds her work enjoyable. She also values the security offered by her employment. These criteria reflect those held by her mother who values security as the most important feature of work and regards ‘white collar’ occupations (as opposed to ‘blue collar’) as most desirable.

Jo is now expecting her first child and will pursue parenthood on a full-time basis. She has passed the ‘clerical barrier’ and has been appointed a CO2, and would aim to become a CO3 if she remained in paid employment. Because of her impending parenthood, she has not made clear plans for her return to work and the path which she would then take, but suspects that she may embark on further studies before resuming paid employment.

IDENTITY

Jo does not believe that work has influenced the development of her identity to any significant degree, but believes that her Yugoslav background has been an important influence. She has never felt confused by the dual influences of the Anglo-Australian and Yugoslav cultures, and feels that she retains a balance between both.

However, it is her Yugoslav background with which she identifies and which she promotes, and she has found it relatively easy to defend this background when she has encountered race-based discrimination from some sections of her Department.

Jo cannot identify any women who have constituted role models for her, but does recognise two people (one female, one male) who have acted as mentors in her work situation. Her mother provides a role model for some of her personal qualities.
Jo's children will be raised to understand and appreciate their Yugoslav heritage, but will not be forced to accept its standards as their own.

15. ASTRID

Astrid is 47 and was born in Latvia. Her parents are Latvian and her mother came to Australia in the post-war period with Astrid, her older brother and younger sister (her parents had been separated by the War). Astrid remembers the first two years of their settlement here as 'living in a dream', when she and her siblings lived in an orphanage during the week so that her mother could work as a seamstress.

The nuns operating the orphanage were extremely strict, but Astrid's English training was excellent and the nuns accompanied this with elocution lessons. Astrid believes that this accounts for her lack of an accent in her speech.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

After two years, Astrid's mother re-married (to a Latvian) and she and her children were able to live as one family. Astrid recalls that her upbringing involved constant involvement with the Latvian culture, mainly through her parents and their friends (who were also Latvian). Latvian was the main language spoken in the home, but over time English increasingly became the main language.

Astrid recalls her family and her school life as being happy. She had a mixture of friends from European and Anglo-Australian backgrounds, and was never victimised for her Latvian background (which she believes was largely due to her accent-less speech). Astrid left school at the end of Year 9 and matriculated when her children were young. She then completed the TAFE Graduate Library Technician course.

WORK

Astrid joined the Public Service ten years ago, as a CO1, doing basic clerical work, and gradually working in accounting. She now works for two days each week doing general administrative work, for which she is classified at the CO2 level and works for another two days as a Sundry Debtors Clerk, which is classified at the CO1 level.

She has always enjoyed her work, but is not motivated to develop it into a career. When she left school, Astrid had regarded work as a means of 'economic survival' only and her main goal was to be married. She retains a commitment to combining her
family and work responsibilities without allowing work to jeopardise her family life, but has found that her work is now more important to her than mere economic survival. She now thinks in terms of further study (perhaps an Arts degree) and is examining work opportunities which would allow her to utilise her Russian and Latvian language skills.

Although Astrid is not seeking promotion, she believes that there is a lack of support and guidance for COI and CO2 level employees on the part of senior staff, and that this acts to discourage many people from setting promotion as a work goal.

IDENTITY

Astrid is somewhat unclear about key influences on the development of her identity. She has never thought of her cultural background as affecting her self-picture — although she identifies herself without hesitation as ‘Latvian’. She has married a Ukrainian and their friends come from a range of Anglo-Australian and European backgrounds. Her involvement is with the local neighbourhood and not with any ethnic community group.

Astrid does not regard her work as relevant to her identity, perhaps because she has not placed a high priority on work. She recalls that she has often described herself as being ‘only a clerical officer’.

There have been no mentors in her work situation, but Astrid recognises their importance for people who wish to further their careers. She has always admired famous and successful women and finds that her Director-General (who is female) provides a role model for her and many other women in her Department. Astrid’s mother has been a role model for her organisational ability and personal strength.

Astrid has two sons and a daughter and describes her upbringing of her daughter as ‘traditional’, which she says, her daughter has not accepted as being appropriate for her goals in life.

16. JULIE

Julie is 29 years old and was born in India, as were her parents. She came to Australia seven years ago to marry an Indian man living here. At that time she had a degree in Science and went on to complete post-graduate studies in Computing Science. She has also had two children and her present job is her first.
Julie is a high achiever who has clear goals for her career yet balances this with a strong commitment to her immediate family. In the short space of seven years she has had to adjust to the settlement process (which for her was most difficult in the first year because she missed her family in India), has completed her tertiary studies, produced two children and begun her work life at a relatively senior level.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Both of Julie's parents, and her three siblings were tertiary educated, and she grew up in an environment which combined a great deal of love with intellectual stimulation. It was an upbringing which was very liberal and which she describes as the best possible — 'I couldn't ask for anything better'.

Julie's father was the Reserve Bank Manager and even though her mother chose to pursue home duties, this was not presented as the role expected of her daughters.

Memories of school are also positive for Julie. She found academic work easy and had a wide range of friends with whom she has maintained contact. She describes this school as liberal, bringing together students from different religious backgrounds and different parts of India. Students learned to speak and write fluent English and Julie is one of a minority of adults who can not only look back with affection on this period of her life, but wishes she could return to that period.

WORK

Julie's work is split between two places of employment. One work role began with research assistance while she was completing her computing studies and has progressed to experimental scientific work, in computing.

The other role began two years ago when she was employed as a Grade I Computing Officer (CSI). After one year at this level, and another year on maternity leave (for her second child), Julie has been promoted to Grade 2 Computing Officer (CS2), which is an unusually rapid rate of progress in this area.

Julie believes that a lack of available staff facilitated the move to CS2 level, but it is also clear that she had performed to the expected standards, perhaps beyond that
level. Significantly, she also had the support and encouragement of her boss in the promotion.

Computing was not Julie's original career choice. As school she had planned to complete a Doctorate in Chemistry and then to pursue a career as a University lecturer. However, the relative lack of career options in Chemistry led her to computing, which she enjoyed as a field of learning.

In terms of work, Julie holds identical views to those of her parents in regarding enjoyment and job satisfaction as the main criteria for worthwhile employment, with a good salary as secondary in importance. Julie also places value on being happy at work and relating well to one's colleagues. To date, work has fulfilled all of these expectations for her.

As to the future, Julie has long and short term goals which she is keen to achieve in her career. In the short-term, she aims to move into management and in the long-term, to establish her own business. In order to fulfil these goals, Julie believes that she will need to undertake relevant in-service training courses and be given the opportunity to act in more senior roles.

IDENTITY

Julie believes that her work makes an important contribution to her identity, but is less clear about the contribution made by her cultural background. She identifies herself very clearly as being Indian, but perhaps because of her liberal and cosmopolitan upbringing does not regard this as exclusive. Her friends are from a wide range of backgrounds, and she has not been made to feel 'different', nor has she experienced any form of discrimination in the work setting.

While she has been very achievement-oriented and career-minded since at least adolescence, Julie has not followed any role models but believes that she has set her own standards. She does regard her mother as a role model on a personal level and as a parent.

There have, however, been mentors in her work situation (one male and one female) who have supported and advised her in developing her career.
Julie is raising her children (she has one son and one daughter) as she was raised, where learning was encouraged and girls and boys were treated as equals. She hopes that she is providing her children with the skills and education which will give them choices and unlimited opportunities.

17. DORA

Dora is 27 and was born in Adelaide and identifies herself as 'Italian-Australian'. Her parents were born in Italy and her father works as a storeman while her mother works as a domestic. They have been extremely strict in the upbringing of their children and Dora now wants to live away from them in order to live an independent life. She is re-assessing her work and wants to expand her skills and develop a career structure.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Dora's upbringing has been imbued with 'traditional' Italian values and despite her conflict with her parents over some of these standards (mainly those governing social activities) she remembers her childhood as a happy one.

The eldest of three children, and the only daughter, Dora recalls her primary school years as enjoyable but disliked the first four years of secondary school because she was separated from her primary school friends. Her school was predominantly Anglo-Australian and she mixed exclusively with the small group of Italian students. She hated being separated from the mainstream student population and being identified on the basis of her Italian background because she preferred the Anglo-Australian way of life but was unable to be part of it.

WORK

Dora completed Year 12 and joined the Public Service 10 years ago at the CO1 level. She began working as a typist but, through relief work, gained wider experience, until 2 years ago, when she began working in the Personnel area. She was assessed to progress beyond the 'clerical barrier' and is now classified as a CO2.

When Dora left school she had wanted to become a hairdresser or a secretary. After 10 years, and because of the opportunities provided through work to experience a variety...
of occupational situations she is keen to develop her skills within the Personnel field. She is aware of her interpersonal skills but believes that she is lacking in critical communication skills (both verbal and written).

Dora believes that she needs both specific in-service training to develop her skill-base and more guidance and support from senior staff than she has received to date — to boost her confidence. She regards her lack of confidence (and her inability to seek assistance from senior staff) as major inhibitors to the achievement of her work goals. She believes that their support is also essential in helping her to maximise the value of in-service training courses, as she has experienced difficulty in applying much of their content to the work setting. (Many of the women interviewed for this study have echoed this point).

Dora's parents have promoted 'white collar', steady and secure occupations as the preferred vocational choice for their children. Her criteria for a 'good job' vary enormously from those of her parents, now that she has experienced work. Dora looks for work offering variety, enjoyment and a degree of control for the employee. However, her parents regard her work as an achievement.

IDENTITY

Dora believes that her work makes a major contribution to her identity and has difficulty separating this from the other components of her self-picture. She does not believe that her Italian background has contributed significantly to her identity.

Dora has experienced race-based discrimination within the work setting and outside of work, but describes that which occurs at work as more covert. As she says —

they cover it up well at work.

Like many of the women in this study, Dora has moved through a number of age-related phases in coming to terms with her dual cultural background. She remembers a period of conflict with her parents during secondary school and her early years at work when she sought to pursue Anglo-Australian standards for socialising. She came to reconcile this conflict by withholding information from her parents, thereby removing from them the scope to behave as strict, protective parents.

Despite this parent-based cultural conflict, Lora perceives herself as not having thought in cultural terms, and it is only in the past two years that she has thought of
herself as 'Italian' or 'Australian'. She believes that a visit to Italy has clarified much of her thinking. Of particular significance for her was the discovery that her parents' behaviour towards her was both traditional and conservative rather than 'Italian', for most of the Italy which she experienced was much more progressive (and more like the Anglo-Australian culture in its behavioural norms) than that portrayed by her parents. As a result, Dora has felt more comfortable with her Italian background and, therefore, more able to identify herself as Italian.

Dora can identify a number of female role models, and these have been senior work colleagues who are both successful in their work and personable, with good communication, and interpersonal skills. She can also identify two mentors (one female, one male) who have provided her with support in her work. She does not regard her mother as a role model and dislikes her behaviour. She sees her mother as expecting her to marry, have children and live close to her. Dora cannot fulfil such expectations.

If she does have a daughter she will encourage her to aim for any type of work without being restricted by gender-based stereotypes, and will give her choices in all aspects of her life.

18. MARY

Mary is 40 years old and was born in Malaysia, as were her parents, and she identifies herself as 'Chinese'. She came to Australia as a student, to complete post-graduate work in Librarianship, and returned some ten years ago, by herself, to settle here. She now works as a Reference Librarian.

Mary does not believe that the settlement process has been difficult, because she feels that she knows Australia well and understands its way-of-life. Her choice to migrate was based largely on a desire to escape the pressures associated with life and work in Malaysia. Mary believes that Australians take life more easily and she chose to settle in Adelaide because of its relaxed life-style.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Mary was the third child born in her family and has one brother and two sisters. Her father works as an office clerk and her mother has remained at home. Mary remembers her home life as being 'basically very happy'.

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At school, she had a few good friends, and while she did not find study a struggle, she resented the competitiveness involved in academic achievement.

WORK

Mary's first job involved research work and was based in New Zealand where she remained for three years. She then went to Sydney to undertake her Librarianship studies.

In 1979, Mary settled in Adelaide and joined the Public Service as a Reference Librarian (Grade 1). She has remained with the same Department, at the same level, and is content to remain so, as she believes that promotion brings more responsibility than she is willing to accept. She has found her work in this Department to be stimulating and varied, with good working conditions. Although she did not always intend to be a Librarian, she has found it to be a satisfactory occupation and her primary work goal is to continue with this work.

Mary's parents have always valued work which provides security and a reasonable salary, in a white collar occupation. She concurs with this view, but believes that conditions of employment are more valuable than salary.

IDENTITY

Work contributes significantly to Mary's identity but she keeps her work life separate from the rest of her life. She does not feel that her Chinese background has been very significant in the development of her identity. Her friends are mainly Anglo-Australian. As she puts it —

I'm just me. I don't deliberately blend in [with the Anglo-Australian culture]
I haven't felt the pressure to do so... I'm just me.

Mary does not feel that there have been any role models who have influenced her development and because she lived away from home from a relatively young age, does not feel that her mother has influenced her development to any significant extent. She has had a number of mentors in her work environment — both women and men who have developed her skills and knowledge and provided support.
She does not believe that she has ever experienced any form of discrimination in the work setting, and while acknowledging that her Department provides a very 'tolerant' environment, she also believes that —

Discrimination is something that is there. If you look for it, you’ll find it. You have to keep an open mind.

19 BARBARA

Barbara is 34 and was born in Adelaide. Her parents were born in Poland and she identifies herself as 'Polish'.

Barbara did not begin her work life with plans of developing a career but in the past five years she has moved from the CO1 to the CO3 level and is currently acting at the CO4 level and her work has expanded from basic clerical activities to personnel work involving supervision of other staff. She has discovered new interests and abilities and her attitude to work has undergone a significant change.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Barbara's mother has worked as a waitress, a factory supervisor and then as an anaesthetist's assistant. Her father worked first as a factory hand and then as a hospital orderly. She remembers them as always working hard but giving their children affection and a warm 'family' life. Barbara has one older brother and a younger sister.

School is recalled as 'mostly happy' but marred somewhat by teasing about her Polish surname. She had friends of Polish and Anglo-Australian backgrounds and was raised with a close involvement in the Polish Church, Polish School and the Polish community in general.

WORK

Barbara completed Year 11 and worked for about five years as a typist/receptionist in a State Government Minister's office. She then spent seven years in full-time child rearing and returned to the Public Service five years ago as a base grade clerk. At the time, her motivation to work was based on the need for income and to be with other people.
Her experience in her current position (obtained less than one year ago) has changed her expectations about work. She now holds as important work which provides a sense of achievement, challenge, responsibility, good pay and recognition for effort. She and her mother once believed that a 'good' job needed only to give happiness, but her mother has also experienced a wider view of work since she moved from factory work to her hospital position.

She now tells Barbara that —'women can do whatever they like'.

Barbara plans to expand her knowledge and skills in the personnel area, but feels hindered by her lack of formal qualifications, a fear of failure and a lack of confidence. She is also acutely aware of a lack of promotional and career options for people employed in the Clerical Officer category. She describes a prevalent attitude among male supervisory staff in her Department which is 'anti-woman'. While she has not encountered race-based discrimination at work, she describes gender-based discrimination involving derogatory comments and domineering behaviour, coupled with a complete lack of support or encouragement for junior staff particularly if they are women.

Barbara believes that she would benefit from regular personal development courses, and of course, from a sympathetic and supportive management structure.

**IDENTITY**

Before experiencing work which inspired her to think in terms of career, Barbara did not feel any significant influence on her identity from her work, but she believes that work is making an increasing contribution to and impact on her self-picture.

She regards her Polish background as the other significant force in the development of her identity. She always describes herself as Polish and has never felt that she needed to ‘blend’ into the Anglo-Australian culture. The only pressure experienced because of a dual cultural influence occurred during her adolescent years, and she regards this as being more an issue of parental discipline than of 'culture'.

Barbara has been influenced by two female role models, who hold responsible positions in her Department, and who are models because of their confidence, interpersonal skills, achievements and outgoing personalities. One of these women has also acted as a mentor for Barbara, as has another female employee.
Barbara does not regard her mother as being a role model for her because she has been ‘too accepting’ and for too many years encouraged Barbara to aim only for ‘happiness and contentment’. Barbara would raise her own daughter in a ‘totally different’ fashion, providing a wider scope for her in setting goals for her work and career.

20. JUNNY

Junny is 26 years old and was born in Vietnam as were her parents. She identifies herself as ‘Chinese-Vietnamese’. Junny was separated from her parents by the war in Vietnam and came to Australia with a friend when she was 16 years old to join her older brother. Her four younger brothers and 2 younger sisters are with her parents who now operate a business in Amsterdam.

MAJOR INFLUENCES

Junny has spent most of her adolescent years away from her parents and all except one of her siblings. She describes her school years in Australia as difficult because she had missed several years of schooling prior to settlement here and because her English language skills were limited. (She had spoken some English at home, together with Chinese and Vietnamese). However, she remembers her student peers as friendly and supportive. Junny has not had a great deal of contact with her original culture since settling in Australia. She does not believe that she has the time to pursue cultural activities and her friends come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Junny completed Year 12 and is now undertaking a TAFE Library Technician’s course (part-time) while working in the Cataloguing Section of a State Government library.

WORK

Junny has been working in State Government Libraries for six years, at the CO1 level. When she left school, she considered secretarial or reception work but found enjoyment in library work and now plans to become a Library Technician. She is also interested in undertaking Computer Studies and developing a career in this field, and receives much encouragement to do so from her husband who is a Computer Analyst Programmer.
Junny's parents have always promoted the value of study as a means of increasing vocational choice. At this stage, her immediate work goal is to obtain an Associate Diploma in Library Technician Studies and then to seek promotion in this field. She believes that she also needs to improve her English skills and to 'learn more about the Anglo-Australian culture'.

Junny feels that she would be assisted in achieving her work goals by in-service training designed to increase self-confidence and by receiving support and encouragement from senior staff.

IDENTITY

Junny regards work as contributing to only part of her identity and assigns a more powerful influence to cultural background even though she feels that, in her case, the absence of senior family members has meant a lack of reinforcement of the Chinese-Vietnamese cultural influence.

She does not regard herself as actively promoting this background, nor does she believe that she is pressured to align herself with Anglo-Australian cultural mores. Junny is not aware of having experienced any form of discrimination in her work environment and feels comfortable with both cultures.

There have been a number of women in the work setting who have acted as role models and mentors for Junny. They have all been Anglo-Australian, aged between 30 and 50, well-liked, helpful and highly organised. Junny does not regard her mother as a role model because of their physical separation. If Junny has a daughter she will educate her about her Chinese-Vietnamese heritage and will encourage her to study and to explore a wide range of work options.
CONCLUSION

Research studies of women of non-English speaking background in the paid workforce have focussed exclusively on 'blue collar' occupational groups in the private sector. Such studies are very important but as a totality, present an unbalanced portrayal of NESB women, and one which can stereotype them as victims in the workplace.

This study depicts NESB women in a different working context, namely, the 'white collar' occupational groups within the public sector. It thereby aims to redress the imbalance which exists in current understanding of NESB women in the work setting.

Although gender and cultural background are the key distinguishing features of the sample studied, a number of other factors have emerged as critically affecting expectations of work and work experience, and these are discussed in this concluding section.

The relationship between the factors of gender and culture is found to be extremely interdependent, but in terms of work aspirations, attitude and opportunities, the most influential factor is seen to be gender, with cultural background adding another, albeit highly significant, dimension to gender. It is, therefore, concluded that Equal Opportunity strategies cannot be directed to women as if they were a homogeneous group, but that NESB women must be targeted specifically.

Parental attitudes to work and expectations regarding their children's occupational choices were found to be important (even if parental standards have been rejected by children in their adult years).

The immigration process emerged as having played a powerful role in shaping parental expectations of children's work patterns. Many of the parents of the women studied have had little formal education and one of their primary motives for emigrating to Australia has been the desire to ensure the economic security of their children. Obtaining a sound education for these children has been part of the goal to guarantee the future well-being of the second generation. Many of the 'first generation' women studied had experienced similar parental expectations because they were preschoolers when they arrived in Australia.
Most of the women studied have grown up in homes where parents worked extremely hard to fulfil their ambitions for their children. Financial security has been the key to attaining such ambitions, especially when a lack of formal qualifications (or a lack of recognition of overseas qualifications) prevented access to economically rewarding work. It is not surprising that many parents regard as successful, work yielding substantial financial rewards and which is high in social status. Careers in law and medicine were regarded by many parents as ultimate symbols of vocational success.

At the same time, such symbols of career success were often gender-restricted, and for several women, these and other career-oriented work choices were presented as options for males only. Others were encouraged to aim for such professions but were also expected to eventually pursue a traditional wife/mother role. The mothers of most of the women interviewed had pursued such a traditional role. Therefore, most of the women studied have grown up without models of work which promote women pursuing a career, and which attach to work intrinsic as well as extrinsic reward. However, many women — regardless of ethnicity — have been raised with similar expectations and this trend should be seen as a gender issue.

The role model factor has emerged as extremely important in this study.

For many of these women, the experience of work has brought a gradual distancing from parentally-influenced attitudes to work, especially when work has been found to hold intrinsic value as well as security. However, the lack of NESB women in senior and/or influential positions has also meant a lack of NESB female role models, and many of the women studied lament this void.

The absence of NESB female role models has meant that most of the women in this study are acting as pathfinders — identifying their own niches in the work setting, and in the process, becoming role models for the next generation of NESB women.

The effect of this absence of significant numbers of NESB women in the work setting who symbolize career 'success' assumes greater significance in relation to the factor of confidence.

This has emerged as a critical feature of this study, with many of the women interviewed expressing a lack of confidence in their abilities, regardless of the degree of success experienced in their work. This was also described by them as a major barrier to pursuing their work-related goals. (see Section 2.2.4).
Whether or not such low levels of confidence find their origins in gender or cultural factors, or in the interrelationship between both, cannot be determined with any degree of accuracy. However, a number of women believed that its source lay with their parents, whose own confidence levels had been decimated by the immigration and settlement processes.

These women pointed to their parents' feelings of inadequacy in their new country, and the reinforcement of such fears by negative attitudes held towards migrants. A lack of economic security and educational qualifications exacerbated feelings of inferiority and this was seen to have been conveyed to the children.

In discussing their mothers as role models, several women felt that their mothers' own confidence levels regarding paid work and career options had been eroded by migration-related experiences and were further fragmented by the isolation experienced in pursuing a traditional wife/mother role, especially when they were not given the opportunity to learn and/or use English. This was seen to have had a special impact on daughters and their work aspirations, given the influence of the role model embodied by mothers during the formative years.

Nevertheless, most of the women studied nominated their mothers' personal strength and organisational abilities as qualities which they sought to emulate. In short, mothers were seen as personal but not work role models and this experience can just as easily be associated with ESB women. It is not necessarily culture-specific.

In the work setting, a lack of confidence was found to be mitigated when supervisors provided ongoing support and encouraged the pursuit of promotion. Similarly, the presence of colleagues who have acted as mentors (and sometimes supervisors fulfilled this role) was found to have provided a direction, a means of goal-setting and goal pursuit, which counteracted the lack of career guidance in the family setting.

However, the presence of such mentors was not, of itself, found to have diminished the impact of low confidence levels. Supportive and sensitive supervisory and managerial staff was of critical importance.

This finding has direct implications for organisations' staff development processes. It means that senior staff need to be attuned to the special needs of NESB women employees — such as, low confidence levels — and need to be aware of the type of
support needed to address these needs. Without this support, many NESB women will not seek promotion or other forms of career challenges.

It should also be noted that for many women who lack confidence in their abilities, and who remain at lower occupational classifications, the success experienced by managing work duties is valued (even if the work is not intrinsically rewarding). These women may continue with this work, buoyed by the knowledge that they do it well and paralysed by fear or failure to test their abilities with work classified at more senior levels. The situation is perpetuated when self-seeking supervisors with an investment to keep competent staff, do not encourage them to seek promotion.

Part of an organisation's training program must also address the confidence factor directly, perhaps by developing special personal and vocational development programs targeted to women of NESB. Many of the women interviewed had found such programs of benefit when they provided a structured approach to addressing issues which could be related directly to the work setting. It is essential that affirmative action efforts be developed specifically for women of NESB (rather than for women as one group) and that NESB women be involved in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of these programs.
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