

**Gendering, courtship and pay equality: developing attraction theory to understand work-life balance and entrepreneurial activity**

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# Gendering, Courtship and Pay Equality:

## Developing Attraction Theory to Understand Work-Life Balance and Entrepreneurial Activity

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**Objectives:** This paper examines one of the most intractable problems of the last 40 years: the difficulty in closing the pay inequality gap. Current wisdom is that the pay gap exists because of men's power to control the workplace, and men's dominant position in society generally. This paper examines an emergent literature on matriarchal power structures and proposes Attraction Theory as a holistic framework.

**Prior Work:** This paper acknowledges a range of feminist literature that examines the underlying social relations and power structures that impact on pay differentials. This is critiqued on the basis of findings from courtship research as well as studies emerging from liberal / progressive writers in the men's movement.

**Approach:** This paper is conceptual, using an inter-disciplinary understanding of social processes to critically appraise both the dominant discourse on equal pay and its emergent alternative. Attraction Theory is presented as a framework for exploring a complex discourse that unequal pay exists both because of men's power to control the workplace and women's power to control courtship and family life.

**Implications:** Tackling pay inequality and work-life balance issues by focussing on power sharing in the workplace represents only a partial policy solution. Further progress depends on power-sharing in parental rights through academic recognition and political action to tackle negative stereotypes that impact on men during romantic courtship, conception, birth and divorce.

**Value:** The value of the paper lies in the originality of the analysis and the range of insights that Attraction Theory provides into societal dynamics that impact on equal pay. The identification of paradoxes in the dominant discourse opens up new avenues for research and policy development on work-life balance. Whether these will close the pay gap is unclear, but it would advance equality and diversity goals by creating confidence that consensual choices rather than the institutional inequalities perpetuate any remaining inequalities reported in statistics.

**Key Words:** Equal Pay, Entrepreneurship, Attraction Theory, Sexuality, Masculinity, Femininity

## Introduction

The motivation to write this paper comes from discussions with colleagues about the application of findings from a doctoral study (Ridley-Duff, 2005b) to research on work-life balance and equal pay. Courtship research, and particularly its interpretation by the 'progressive' part of the men's equality movement, has recently started to influence thinking on pay inequality (Farrell, 1988, 1994, 2005). Ridley-Duff (2005b) takes this further by theorising how courtship affects employment and entrepreneurial choices. This paper sets out *Attraction Theory* as a framework for hypothesizing the relationships between family life, work and entrepreneurship in order to generate new insights about pay inequalities. As part of this analysis, comparisons between research on men's and women's career development and entrepreneurial practices are discussed.

Most current research points to a continuing gap in gross income by sex with UK men earning 17% more than women and 16% more internationally (ITUC, 2008; TUC, 2008). Research into sex discrimination and pay inequality remains full of unexplained contradictions. Several authors chart the history and debate over claims that women earn less than men for the same work (Farrell, 1988, Hoff-Sommers, 1995, Doherty and Stead, 1998). At the heart of these analyses is the impact of vertical and horizontal segregation (Hakim, 2006). Vertical segregation occurs when women or men find that they cannot win promotions within an organisation or profession on the basis of their gender<sup>1</sup>, or achieve access to social networks that support entrepreneurial activity (Timberlake, 2005). Horizontal segregation occurs when men and women are socialised into different occupations at the same level, often leading to different levels of pay (see Krantz, 2002).

Doherty and Stead (1998) point out that the size of the pay gap can be obscured when data is aggregated. Headline figures can understate vertical and horizontal segregation because women with higher education typically earn more than men with few qualifications. When data is disaggregated, the gap can grow to over 30% in some industries and occupations. On the other hand, Farrell (1994) and Hoff-Sommers (1995) criticise studies for ignoring differences in actual (rather than contractual) hours worked, commuting, length of service, and aspects of socialisation linked to courtship and family life. They find that "full-time" men often habitually work longer hours (particularly when commuting time is included) and that parenting tends to disproportionately increase demands on men to choose careers with higher pay.

There are also unexplained contradictions that indicate women can be systematically advantaged. While men's gross earnings are higher (particularly amongst full-time workers), single-women earn more than single men over their lifetime, and have done so since the 1950s. Secondly, part-time women in the US, while having lower average gross earnings, have higher hourly rates of pay. Moreover, this gender gap grows as the number of hours *decreases*. Part-time women in the US working between 24-29 hours a week earn an average of 40% more than their male counterparts (see US Census 2003, cited in Farrell, 2005:79).

In recent years, there have been encouraging signs that women who apply for promotion receive equal treatment and success rates (Farrell, 2005; Doherty and Manfredi, 2006). Nevertheless, in both studies there remain cultural issues with women reporting lower levels of confidence and believing that institutional discrimination inhibits their progress. In other studies, women are found to have made key advances in publishing, media and advertising (Buerk, 2005), but there is less evidence that women are advancing to senior positions in multi-national corporations (Wilson, 2003).

Research into women's entrepreneurship indicates similar issues. There has been growth in women's involvement across the western world with approximately 30% of enterprises majority-owned by women (Bruin et al., 2006). Nevertheless, only 6% of equity capital was invested in them over a 30-year period (Greene et al. 2001). While this can partly be explained by the size and age of their businesses, there are striking patterns that bear comparison to Doherty and Manfredi's analysis of employment.

Two studies find that women are less confident applying for support, but that when they do, access to capital is not affected by factors other than the size, turnover and age of their businesses (Coleman, 1998; Goodwin et al, 2006). Nevertheless, low application rates may indicate cultural inhibitors. Timberlake (2005) and Morrison (2006) examine women's access to social capital and find that they have to rely more on family support networks. There is also the ongoing controversy about women's disposition to work-life balance issues generally, and whether their aspirations will ever be the same as men's (Hakim, 2006). Lastly, there is the issue of discursive practices in society that reproduce negative stereotypes and influence the credibility and status of women establishing entrepreneurial lifestyles (Ahl, 2006).

Gender based differences in working hours and commuting are also duplicated amongst entrepreneurs: male entrepreneurs in the US average 38.6 hours per week against women's 29.9 hours. Male entrepreneurs also commute an average 169 miles a week compared to women's 115 (US Census 2004, cited Farrell, 2005:134). This suggests that societal constraints and pressures apply across all types of work, not just employment.

This paper advances *Attraction Theory* as a way of understanding both employment and entrepreneurial choices that affect work-life balance. As Farrell comments (2005:135):

*"The bigger question...is not the differences between men- and women-owned businesses, or even the differences in behavior between men and women workers, but the underlying male-female dynamics reinforcing the pay gap."*

In advancing *Attraction Theory*, there is a challenge to the idea that pay differentials are solely an outcome of men's individual and collective power (Collinson and Hearn, 2001). Instead, the argument is developed that progress towards equal pay depends on an acknowledgement of women's bases of power and their impact on paid work. Given this perspective, it is first necessary to establish the extent to which women have sources of power that affect both men's and women's choices. Is there a matriarchy as well as a patriarchy? If so, where is it located?

In the next section, the origins of an alternative perspective is outlined. By examining Warren Farrell's construction of power it is possible to discuss the impact of courtship research from a more holistic perspective. Aspirations to work, including entrepreneurial work, are bound up with the development of sexual identities and gender roles that affect our aspirations and ability to raise children (Ridley-Duff, 2007). This "societal dimension" (Bruin et al, 2007:332) provides a context for theorising the socio-emotional and economic processes that affect work choices. Having outlined early theory development, the section that follows presents *Attraction Theory* as a framework that provides insights into work, entrepreneurial and family choices. This is followed by discussion of studies that illustrate its usefulness. In the conclusions, the paper summarises the key contributions and returns to the question of how to frame policies that advance the goal of equal pay.

### **The Emergence of an Alternative Discourse**

The traditional argument on equal pay is that inequalities are a product of cultural and institutional discrimination against women that are buttressed by direct and indirect, conscious and unconscious, opposition to equal pay amongst groups of men (Segal, 1990; Cockburn, 1991, 2001; Connell, 1995). An alternative discourse draws on liberal feminist arguments from the 1970s/1980s that sexism affects *both* sexes, and that they experience different forms of discrimination linked to the way they resist socialisation processes (see Friedan, 1980; Farrell, 1994; Hoff-Sommers, 1995; Ridley-Duff, 2007).

Warren Farrell, a former board member of NOW<sup>2</sup>, has been leading the intellectual development of gender consciousness amongst men (Farrell, 1974, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2008). From the 1980s onward, he started to question his early assumptions after re-examining tape recordings of men's and women's groups. Throughout the 1980s, he conducted his own primary research into the values implicit in women's spending priorities and published his results in *Why Men Are The Way They Are* (Farrell, 1988). This proposed a paradigm shift in understanding why men seek status and income, and particularly the criteria as to what is, and is not, an expression of gendered power.

*By reconceptualising power as control over our own lives, we can ask questions that illustrate the limitations of our traditional view of power – as status, income and control over others. Does a company president who has never known how to be intimate have power? Does a thirteen-year-old Olympic gymnast who has never known whether she is loved for herself or for how she performs have power? Does a boy who must register for the draft at eighteen and is shot through the face in Vietnam have power? Does a beautiful woman who marries a doctor have power, when she never discovers her own talents? Which of these people have power over his or her own life?*

Farrell, 1988:10

Farrell argued that power can be constructed as the capacity of a person to *access five things on a level equal to their expectations and desires*:

- **External rewards** (e.g. income, possessions, status)
- **Internal rewards** (e.g. emotional release, positive self-image)
- **Interpersonal contact** (attention, affection, love and recognition)
- **Physical health** (well-being, attractiveness and intelligence)
- **Sexual fulfilment** (satisfaction of desire and enjoyment of sensual pleasures)

This conceptualisation puts 'internal rewards', 'interpersonal contact' and 'sexual fulfilment' on a level playing field with 'external rewards'. It also makes it possible to theorise that a person socialised to earn income, possessions and status that they do not need or desire (or to fulfil the desires of another) is *disempowered* not empowered.

Farrell's position originally drew mainly on feminist theory and embraced the goal of emancipation from sex roles combined with greater sexual freedom (Farrell, 1974). His findings from interviews and focus group sessions, however, slowly revealed the extent of anxiety amongst men about work and women (much as Betty Friedan found amongst women in 1963 when she published *The Feminine Mystique*). When he started to articulate how men sacrifice their personal wishes for higher pay, and the extent to which they are disempowered by the health problems associated with their roles in society, hostility prevented his continued involvement in the mainstream feminist movement.

Over the next 20 years, he continued to develop his arguments and documented the way that men, in much the same way as women, enjoy advantages and disadvantages linked to the expectations and obligations that spring from both personal and workplace relationships (Farrell, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2008). To understand women's desires, he analysed the circulation and content of women's magazines and discovered that men are cast as "success objects" who are pursued by women: this was conceived as a counter-point to the way men pursue women as "sex objects". Based on international studies (see Buss et al., 1990) he started to theorise that 'successful' men adapt to attract women in much the same way that 'successful' women adapt to attract men. Men's 'macho' style, therefore, is highly variable and cast as a conditioned (and ambivalent) response to satisfy women's desires in much the same way that women have a complex and ambiguous relationship with the 'glamour' industry.

Concurrently, formal research programmes into courtship started to report findings that questioned basic feminist assumptions. In Walby (1994), male domination of the courtship process is not only assumed, it is also believed to emanate from men's potential for violence. This has been supported by many studies in the feminist tradition that draw attention to the level of physical and verbal harassment of women in the workplace (see Connell, 1995; Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999). As there is greater consideration of non-verbal behaviour in courtship research, doubt is cast over the robustness of feminist assumptions derived from Foucauldian discourse analysis because a focus on deconstructing language games and texts ignores physical behaviour and other types of symbolic discourse (Foucault, 1972, 1980, 1985; Barrett, 1993; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999).

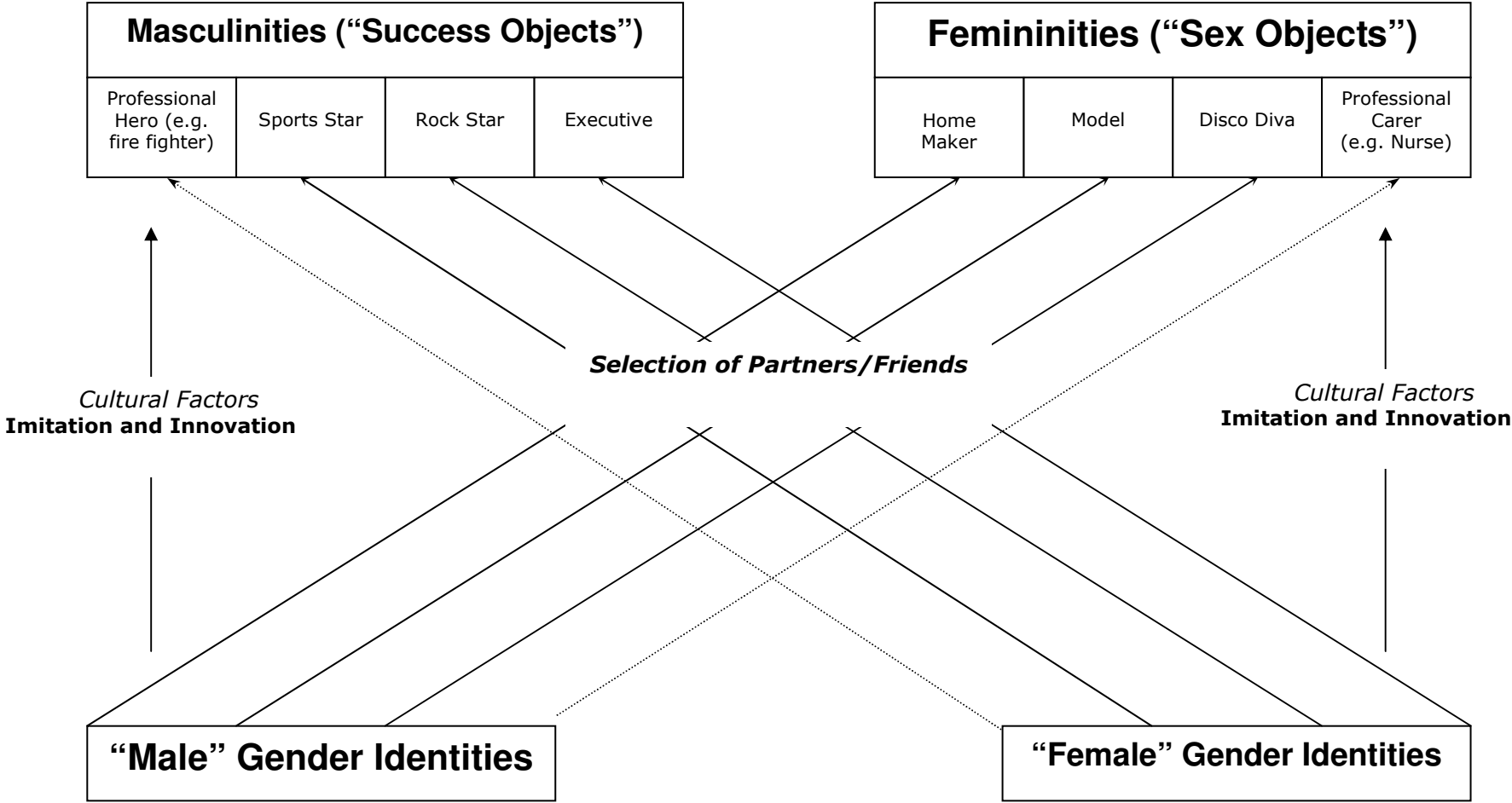
It is now known that women are proactive in the courtship process (Williams et al. 1999; Pease & Pease, 2004; Dutton & Winstead, 2006). Moore (1985) established that women, not men, initiate nearly 70% of relationships through non-verbal cuing (cited in Lowndes, 1996). Pease and Pease (2004) claim that the vast bulk of courtship and body language research puts the figure even higher (90% initiation by women). Perper's study (1985) has increased understanding of body language messaging as people establish interest in each other. Based on 3,000 hours of observation, he theorised that there is a consistent stream of subliminal non-verbal messages communicated by "successful" couples as they become more intimate (non-verbal signal, talk<sup>3</sup>, turning, touching, synchronization<sup>4</sup>).

Hearn and Parkin (1987) opened the door on research in organisation settings, adopting feminist theory as a starting point. They report levels of relationship formation at work approaching 40% but rely on surveys designed for, and published in, women's magazines. In contrast, Farrell (2000) found that two-thirds of women met their long-term partners in an organisation setting, based on a convenience sample of approximately 3,000 participants at workshops over a 3-year period. Molloy (2003) provides stronger evidence that 40% of women who marry use the workplace as a *principal* means of finding a partner<sup>5</sup>. Another cultural indicator comes from an investigation into romantic fiction. Storylines that involve successful men overcoming the resistance of women *at work* are now a standard formula in Harlequin novels<sup>6</sup>.

Academic studies support these populist claims. Against expectations, cross-sex studies have found that 94% of men and 98% of women report "unwanted sexual attention" and that 63% of men and 46% of women report "unwanted sexual intercourse" (Muehlenhard and Cook, 1988), although a follow up study also found that the emotional impact from 'unwanted' sexual attention affects women more severely than men (Muehlenhard and Kimes, 1999). In other studies, men show more interest in 'short-term mating' and women more interesting in 'long-term mating' (Buss, 2002) but the differences are much smaller than is generally supposed. Kakabadse and Kakabadse's (2004) recent international survey reinforces the view that there is a significant amount of relationship formation at work: 60% of people report consensual 'intimate' relationships with colleagues with two-thirds of these involving sexual intercourse.

In Ridley-Duff (2005b), underlying patterns in these studies are summarised diagrammatically (see Figure 2). Masculine and feminine stereotypes and identities are not viewed solely as products of patriarchy, but as an outcome of selection strategies that are linked to attracting a partner and raising the next generation of children. Men and women watch and mimic the identities that help them enter social networks and form relationships. Once they are established, identities are modified to restrict or thwart relationships that may threaten existing family and friendship networks. Masculine and feminine identities, therefore, are not regarded as cultural constructs to maintain male power and domination *per se*, but as products of a complex socialisation process that prepares men and women for the demands of courtship, parenting and family life (in which economic activity is an integral component).

Figure 2 – An Interpretation of Farrell (1988, 1994)



Courtship, therefore, is presented as a powerful factor in occupational segregation and pay differentials, and occurs most where it serves broader courtship and family-raising purposes. In the case of men, this is experienced as a pressure to seek occupations that involve greater risks, and which will project (or protect) an identity that is sexually attractive. Against this, men and women will also seek occupations (or support occupational segregation) that limit opportunities for sexual relationships where they wish to protect existing relationships and family networks (Ridley-Duff, 2005b, 2007).

The durability and cross-cultural application of this theoretical perspective is supported by the work of Buss et al. (1990). Research over 10 years finds that women are twice as interested in men's income as a criteria for sexual relationships (both short-term and long-term) in all 37 cultures studied. This finding remained consistent in both advanced and developing economies. Men, on the other hand, were similarly interested in the woman's youth and beauty (i.e. fertility). Only these two, out of 32 variables, were consistent across all cultures and showed marked differences between the sexes (see Buss, 2002). Both are readily understandable if the underlying dynamic is a search for an ideal sexual partner who maximises the desire to have and raise children.

Until now, scholarly research into masculinity has tended to argue that careerism, authoritarianism and entrepreneurialism are masculine behaviours that *subordinate* women at work (see Whitehead, 2001; Collinson and Hearn, 2001) rather than a strategy to win respect and find love. In the following section, the alternative gender discourse is developed through Attraction Theory that theorises how both sexes (genders) manage their attractiveness by making employment and entrepreneurial choices.

### **Attraction Theory**

In Ridley-Duff (2005a, 2005b), theoretical contributions were developed using Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) from data collected during an 18-month critical ethnography examining democratic workplace cultures (for methodology see Ridley-Duff, 2006). Gender segregation and male-female dynamics surfaced to such an extent that the scope of the study was expanded to analyse this dimension. The entrepreneurial aspect was reflected in a finding that 15 of the 16 people in the study engaged in developing *external* organisations were men, while 9 of the 10 people most prominent in developing *internal* organisation were women. Both sets of activities supported new enterprise development, but the roles were gendered in terms of their inward / outward facing nature.

At the same time, empirical data supported background reading that there are now substantial populations of men living on the fringes of society whose lack of power affects their employment prospects and behaviours. One of the case study companies proactively favoured women as salespeople through an unwritten policy involving the selection and recruitment of women married to wealthy men. The recruitment policy overall favoured 'soft' skills with the result that the workforce of 130 staff comprised 75% women (80% in the Head Office). No men at all were engaged in customer care, financial administration, telesales and human resource management. Men dominated warehouse management and information technology. Production was organised into two units, one comprised mostly of men (printing) while the other comprised 90% women (embroidery). The board was dominated by men (4 to 2) while women dominated middle management (10 to 4). Mixed gender groups undertook the skilled tasks of design and marketing.

Ridley-Duff (2005a, 2005b) witnessed, evidenced and discussed business, employment and deployment decisions taken in light of family and/or sexual relationships. This generated theory that critical decisions are influenced by past, current and future relationship aspirations, and that these materially influence both entrepreneurial behaviour and organisation development (compare Miller and Rice, 1967; Ben-Porath, 1980; Turnbull, 1994; Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Welter et al. 2006).



Overall, working life emerged less as a battle between the sexes in which men dominated women, and more as a world where the critical dynamic was the desire of men and women to develop satisfying personal and professional relationships with each other without upsetting other valued relationships. Some individuals, however, found that their efforts led to rejection (either individually or by a group). The social processes triggered were significant in making sense of gendered power and workplace conflict so it is surprising that they receive scant attention in both organisation and entrepreneurship theory (see Hearn and Parkin, 1987; Gummerson, 2000; Wilson, 2003; Bruin et al, 2006).

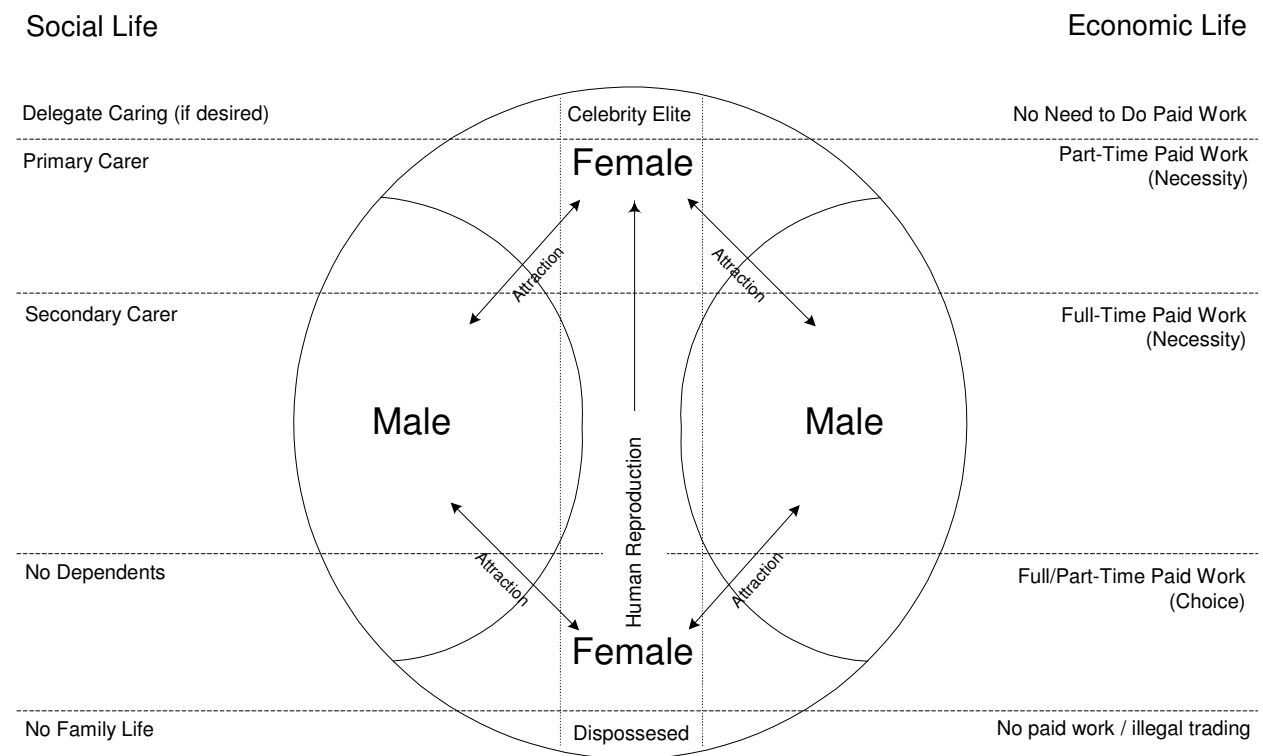
Before setting out Attraction Theory, it is necessary to state that the focus on heterosexuality is not an attempt to marginalize lesbian and gay couples. Around 10% of men and women have same-sex relationships at some point in their life, but less than 2% of all sexual activity is between people of the same sex (Johnson et al, 2001).<sup>7</sup> Heterosexuality reflects the wish of most men and women to establish the conditions in which they can raise children. Nevertheless, there is recognition that some lifestyles are based on a rejection of heterosexuality, and also that gendering processes apply in these cases as well (Levy, 2005).

When men and women do have children together, biology impacts strongly on their short-term choices (Hoff-Sommers, 2005). Generally, men intensify their commitment to wealth-creation while women intensify their commitment to childraising. It does not *have* to be so over the longer term, but there are institutional processes, biological factors and health arguments that encourage a division of labour (Veblen, 1898; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scher and Dix, 1990).

In most households, the arrival of a child is accompanied by a drop in joint income (Farrell, 1994) with the result that men frequently delay marriage and parenthood longer than women in order to develop their career (Molloy, 2003). It has also been theorised that this is the reason that mature high-earning men are more sought after as long-term sexual partners (Buss, 2002). Men who understand the attraction of wealth-creating skills and career success have an added incentive (relative to women) to develop their sexual identity on this basis. As women's wealth-creating skills do not hold the same attraction for men (Buss, 2002), they are less intertwined with the development of their sexual identity.

The premise of Attraction Theory is that selecting sexual partners and raising children involves navigating two conflicting perspectives that shape our epistemological and ontological assumptions about the purpose and nature of work. One is grounded in the concept of *social rationality*, the other in *economic rationality* (see Ridley-Duff, 2005a, 2005b, 2008). A socially rational perspective prioritises human reproduction and strong personal relationships: from this view, work is the means by which we support the development of children and develop satisfying personal relationships. An economically rational perspective is task-focussed, prioritising wealth creation and sees (or uses) personal relationships and family policy to support the career advancement of key workers, promote economic efficiency and profit-maximisation. Figures 3 and 4 show the theoretical implications of these perspectives:

**Figure 3 – Economic Life from a Socially Rational Perspective (Matriarchy)**

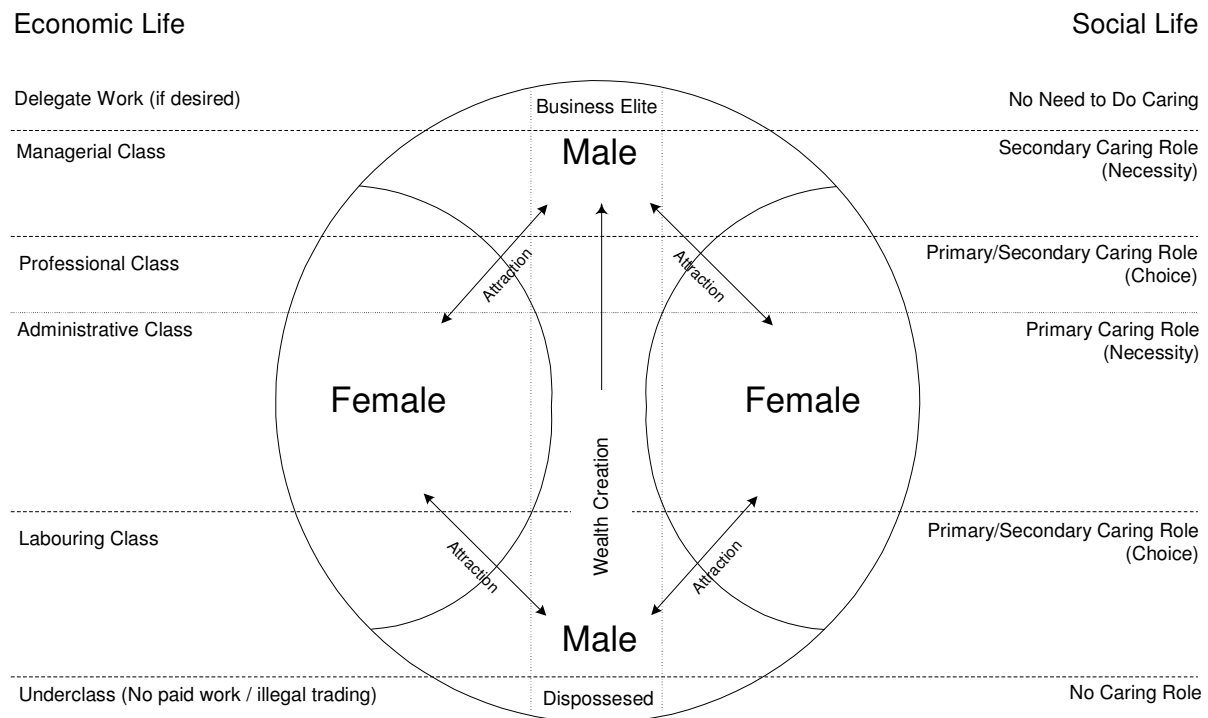


In Figure 3, a celebrity elite is able to exercise choice over whether to engage in paid work<sup>8</sup>. A link is made between a person’s choices regarding their caring responsibilities and their contribution to *economic* life. Outside the celebrity elite, primary carers need to find a way to contribute to the economy. Secondary carers are *primarily* concerned with paid work as their contribution to family life. This can, however, affect their emotional connection to family and work colleagues depending on the level of earnings needed. Those with no dependents, not surprisingly, can exercise more choices.

This perspective contrasts with the one shown in Figure 4. In this case, the elite is defined as a group whose financial assets and wealth-creating abilities are so great that others give them freedom to choose their level of involvement in *family* life. The elite is small. Most people need to offer more than wealth to attract others. Entrepreneurship, management and the professions all involve career-building phases that demand additional time commitments. As Hakim (2006) points out, it is no coincidence that 50% of women prioritising careers and business development do not have children (even after they marry), or that senior male executive spend long periods away from their home and family<sup>9</sup>. Some professions, however, offer a level of flexibility sufficient to share job responsibilities and childraising (see Walton, 1995).

Neither of the models (Figures 3 and 4) should be taken as a justification for arguing that men should focus on work, and women should focus on the home. Both recognise that both sexes can (and do) take leading roles in family life and/or wealth creation depending on specific circumstances. At the same time, the models reflect that lifestyle choices are constrained by class, gender and courtship processes linked to biological differences. In the context of entrepreneurship, it provides a meta-theoretical framework for understanding different social constructions of entrepreneurial discourse (see Bruin et al, 2007).

**Figure 4 – Social Life from an Economically Rational Perspective**



An unacknowledged aspect of gendering is its construction in the context of two interlinked processes. Firstly, men (and those adopting a 'male' identity in same sex relationships) divide 'female' partners into those they will and will not support at home. The converse is also true with 'females' dividing 'males' into those they will and will not support at work (Farrell, 1988; Hakim, 2006)<sup>10</sup>. The boundaries in Figures 3 and 4 are not fixed. Firstly, they will vary in different cultural contexts; secondly, they can be affected by technological developments (particularly in contraception and childbirth); lastly, they will respond to social and political discourses.

Nevertheless, the model also theorises that boundaries will be reconstructed as each new generation makes work choices that affect their attractiveness as a sexual partner and role in family life. A critical realist perspective (Bhaskar, 1998) promotes appreciation of generative mechanisms that impact on work-life balance and equal opportunity outcomes (Rubery et al, 2005; Hakim, 2006). Attraction Theory suggests that these are hindered not only by men's power over work, but also by women's power over courtship, childraising and intimacy. Gendering processes, while socially constructed, are constrained by the recurrent physical and psychological needs of men and women who wish to have children. Women and men will continually be caught between contradictory desires to reinforce and exaggerate gender differences that are functional for sexual seduction while navigating sexual harassment and health & safety laws that attempt to desexualise the workplace (Ridley-Duff, 2007).

**Discussion**

Goldberg argued in the mid-1970s that equality discourses played a major role in helping women create more varied roles and options in their lives. At the same time, cultural values regarding men's role were becoming more restrictive:

*[Men] lack the fluidity of the female who can readily move between the traditional definitions of male or female behaviour and roles...the male is rigidly caught in his masculine pose and, in many subtle and direct ways, he is severely punished*

*when he steps out of it...It is a myth that the male is culturally favoured – a notion that is clung to despite the fact that every critical statistic in the area of longevity, disease, suicide, crime, accidents, childhood emotional disorders, alcoholism and drug addiction shows a disproportionately higher male rate.*

Goldberg, 2000 [1976]: 16-17

Strauss's (2008) cross-cultural study of 32 nations provides empirical support for the claim that men are no longer dominant outside the workplace. Women were found to be the dominant partner in intimate relationships more frequently than men (in 23 of the 32 nations studied)<sup>11</sup>. The alternative discourse, therefore, questions whether men are – or ever have been – dominant in all spheres of life. This allows discussion of arguments and points of view that have been silenced in mainstream feminist debate.

One key question is whether the 'dominance' of men in risky and physically demanding occupations is a product of power structures rooted in courtship and family life? From the 'maternity' ward onward, men are marginalized in the process of childraising. Men, if invited at all, attend ante-natal classes as a women's partner, not in their own right as a future parent. Even in 'advanced' countries, men only have a right to attend the birth of their own child if the female partner does not object. They have no legal right to organise the abortion of an unwanted child, or put an unwanted child up for adoption. It took until 2004 (in the UK) for men to have any paternity leave rights at all. In countries where they have rights, they confer men either a small entitlement to paid time off, or make their entitlement the gift of the woman in the relationship. This legal framework can be compared to a period of history when men controlled women, and husbands were able to control their wife's involvement in paid work (Rowbottom, 1973). The trend has been to dismantle men's power bases while reinforcing and growing women's (Farrell, 1994).

Recent studies reveal how much importance women attach to men's work in selecting their sexual partners. Molloy's (2003) study of 2,500 couples found that 40% of married women *changed* their job to increase their chances of finding a suitable husband. Smith (2005) found that over 90% of 15-year old girls would not consider marrying a man who earns less than themselves. It is, therefore, worth theorising that these choices derive from women's understanding of their own power, and that these behaviours are a product of patriarchy rather than matriarchy.

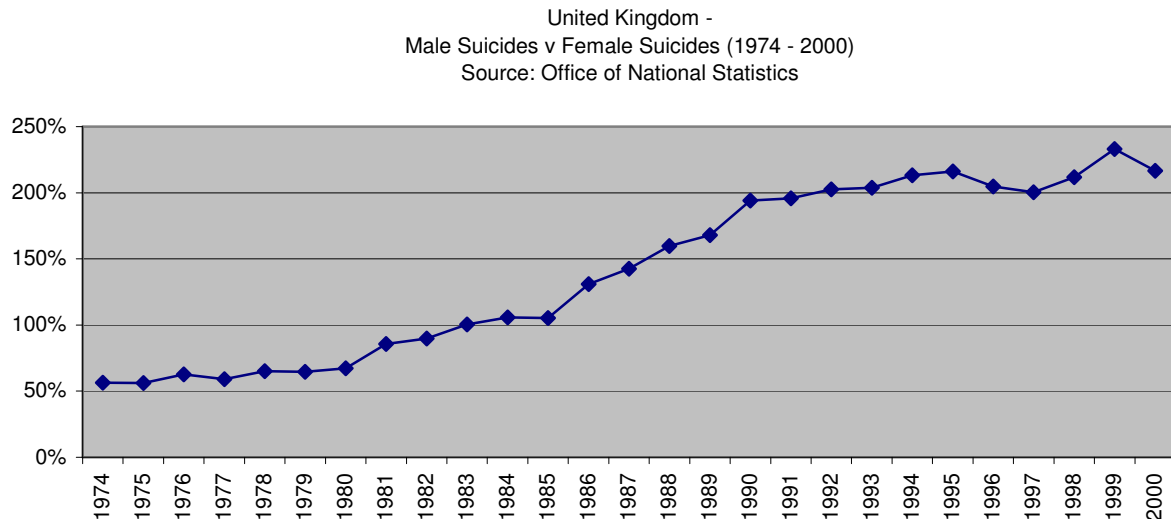
Does this represent a failure to raise young women's aspirations? Molloy (2003), Smith (2005) and Hakim (2006) all concur that women, whatever their level of education, pursue the goal of establishing a long-term relationship (typically oriented towards marriage) earlier in their lives than men. While educational aspirations have definitely risen, it is not clear that career aspirations automatically or necessarily follow.

Further contradictions that Attraction Theory can help to explain are the processes whereby men are proactively excluded from professions like midwifery<sup>12</sup>, nursing and primary school teaching (Farrell, 2005: Chapter 11). Men seeking work with young children or women, or showing them affection, are regularly suspected of being paedophiles or sexual harassers (Farrell, 2001) with the result that policy-makers build in biases against recruiting men to particular professions, or allocating them certain types of work.

The direction of change in western cultures, therefore, has simultaneously increased pressure on men to work and earn more than women (by advancing women's rights as parents and divorcees), while also placing higher expectations on men to engage in childcare (by encouraging women into work). There are two expectations that spring from this analysis. Firstly, we would expect men to continue their search for higher earning careers (if they can) or increasingly turn to crime (if they cannot). Secondly, we would expect additional stresses to be reflected in key social indicators.

Clear empirical support for the second of these expectations comes from UK suicide statistics that reveal a widening gender gap. Figure 5 shows the trend in male suicides compared to women since the introduction of sex equality legislation.

**Figure 5 – Increase in Male to Female Suicides (1974-2000)**



While suicides as a whole are down, suicides for men continued to rise until 2004 and remain stubbornly between a 3:1 and 4:1 ratio across the UK and Republic of Ireland (Samaritans, 2007:17)<sup>13</sup> and 4:1 in the US (Farrell & Sterba, 2008). This is recognised in Attraction Theory by acknowledging an underclass of men who dominate the homeless statistics, without work or romantic prospects, devoid of hope (see Farrell, 1994).

By defining social power in a way that bridges the spectrum of work-life issues, it is possible to interpret the academic literature in new ways. For example, there is the paradox that in a patriarchal society, women are more satisfied at work than men (see Asadullah & Fernandez, 2006). By recognising that women dominate some forms of power, we can understand that some jobs empower women (through the promotion of interpersonal contact and emotional well-being) and that they will not trade these for different jobs that do nothing to increase their attractiveness. Men, on the other hand, will trade these forms of power because higher pay increases their attractiveness.

Farrell's view of power also posits that women now have greater power over internal rewards, interpersonal contact and sexual fulfilment (compare DePaulo et al, 1996; Hyde, 2005) while men's power derives from wealth creation, external rewards and social recognition (Farrell, 2005; Doherty and Manfredi, 2006). The balancing and trading of power for mutual gain (through marriage or sexual relationships) has, to the author's knowledge, never been adequately theorized in organisation development.

Lastly, the theory of power provides an intellectual lens through which contradictory claims can be reconciled. It can be true both that women are perceived to be less powerful at work (Doherty and Stead, 1998; Doherty and Manfredi, 2006; TUC, 2006, ITUC, 2007) at the same time that men are perceived to be less powerful in intimate and family relationships (Farrell, 2000, 2001; Ridley-Duff, 2007; Strauss, 2008).

Attraction Theory assumes there is a recursive relationship between social and economic rationality that impacts on entrepreneurial activity (Ridley-Duff, 2008). In terms of career development, the choice to work or parent influences *both* partners in a relationship (by restricting or pressuring 'the other' to make choices that are complementary). In terms of entrepreneurship, Attraction Theory predicts that women

and men will pursue entrepreneurial practices in which their (sexual) power bases provide an advantage. It can be expected that there will be higher concentrations of women entrepreneurs establishing businesses linked to human reproduction (sexual services, child-bearing, child-raising, parenting skills, marriage services, early years teaching, relationship counselling, consumer products related to health, beauty and fashion). Conversely, Attraction Theory would predicts that there will be higher concentrations of male entrepreneurs in high growth, high risk industries that emphasise strength, bravery and heroism (heavy industry, construction, security services, engineering, emergency services, arms trading, war). In both cases, men and women with less (sexual) power will become marginalized, forced to accept lower quality jobs, illegal trading, or a life on welfare benefits.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to test Attraction Theory, some studies and reports are offered to illustrate its theoretical relevance. Firstly, the GEM UK 2004 study (Harding and Cowling, 2004:11) found that women have a relatively high representation in starting and running social enterprises:

*Interestingly, women are almost as likely as men to be social entrepreneurs as men, and in some regions are more likely to be social entrepreneurs than men. This is in stark contrast to mainstream entrepreneurial activity where men are twice as likely to be setting up a business than a woman.*

In the area of sexual desire and pleasure, we need look no further than the emergence of a female-dominated executive group at Playboy (Levy, 2005), the rise of the Ann Summers network of shops which has grown exponentially over the last 10 years (BBC, 2007), the growth and spread of large sex worker co-operatives in India (Times of India, 2008) and the bequest of Paul Raymond to his granddaughter (FirstPost, 2008).

Further evidence comes from other studies published as part of the GEM programme. The GEM 2007 Report on Women and Entrepreneurship (Allen et al. 2007) shows the strong presence of women entrepreneurs in the consumer sector. Unfortunately, there is no direct gender analysis so the following graph is constructed by comparing data from Figure 8 (page 21) of the 2006 GEM Global Monitor and Figure 2 (page 22) of the GEM 2007 Report on Women’s Entrepreneurship.

**Figure 6 – Entrepreneurial Representation by Gender and Sector**

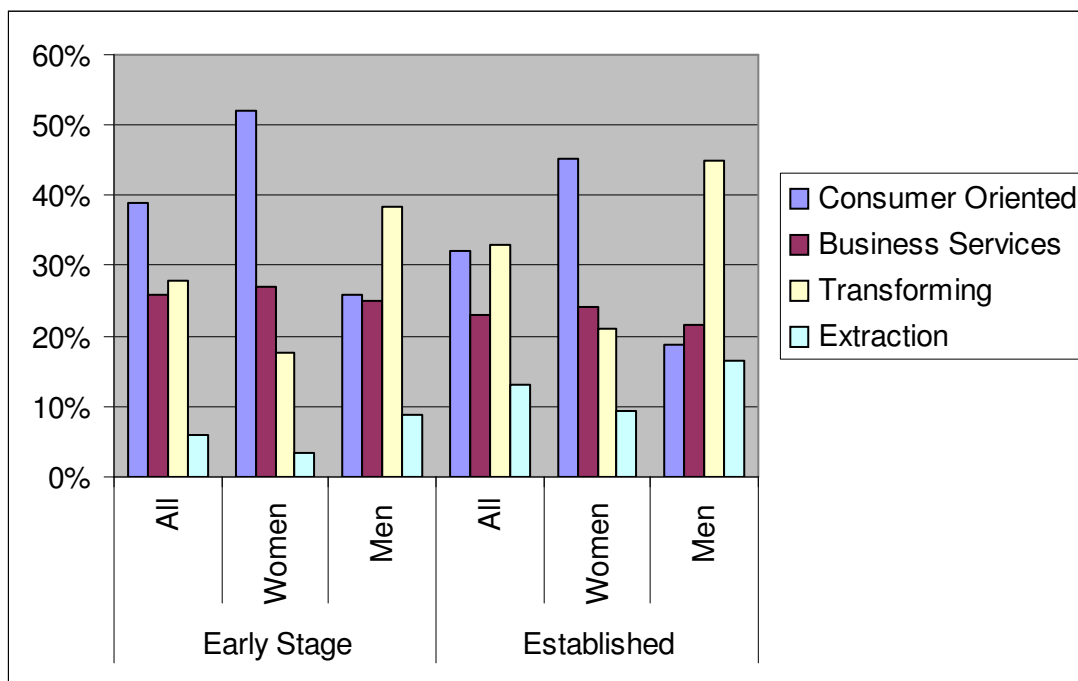


Figure 6 shows that women's entrepreneurship in consumer-oriented businesses outstrips men's in both early stage and established enterprises. Male entrepreneurship outstrips women's in extraction (mining) and transforming (manufacturing). Moreover, as entrepreneurial activity shifts from the task-oriented world of extraction and manufacturing, to the relationship-oriented world of business services and consumer retailing, so there is a shift from male to female entrepreneurs. As consumption is strongly linked to the family context, this brief analysis offers support for the theoretical perspectives in Figures 3 and 4.

Attraction Theory, therefore, meets the challenge of a recent Special Edition of *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice* (see Bruin et al, 2007) by elaborating the societal contexts in which men's and women's entrepreneurship and career choices occur. Gender roles are continually produced and reproduced for their usefulness in attracting people, and for their utility in meeting parental responsibilities. Men are socialised into occupations and business-development early in the supply chain (most strongly linked to the extraction and manufacture of goods) that are then delivered by women-led business later in the supply chain (i.e. those that support and encourage consumption).

### **Conclusions**

In theories of the firm, the influence of family and community is almost completely ignored (but see Ben-Porath, 1980; Turnbull, 1994; Ridley-Duff, 2005b). In light of recent research into the contexts of women's entrepreneurship (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Welter et al. 2006), the intersection between family, employment choice and entrepreneurial activity deserves a much higher profile. If women are more satisfied in their working lives (Asadullah & Fernandez, 2006) and their work-life balance (Hakim, 2006), they are unlikely to embrace high risk occupations and lifestyles that bring the highest incomes, particularly where this results in the loss of forms of power over which they currently have control, and which make little contribution to their (sexual) attractiveness.

The material in this paper, therefore, invites a re-examination of Friedan's prediction that the "second stage" of gender equality is likely to be led by men dissatisfied by long-hours at work and exclusion from family life (Friedan, 1980). Men are currently sandwiched between the interests of two competing groups of women: those who desire to work and those who desire to raise children. In this position, the resistance to equal opportunity policy highlighted by Cockburn (2001) needs to be seen in a changed light. Resistance may stem from the perception that one group of women (with career aspirations) seeks to advantage itself through equality discourses at the expense of another group of women (with child raising aspirations). As both pursue their own "equality" agendas, it would help if more men articulated the impact of being marginalized in gender-theory, policy and political debates.

The advantage to women entrepreneurs, and career-focussed women, from men able to play a leading role within (or near) the home is self-evident. If this is to happen, two major barriers need to be overcome. Firstly, the well-documented negative stereotyping of men (particularly fathers seeking access to their children) in the media, courts, politics and workplace has to end promptly (see Farrell, 1988, 1994, 2000, 2001). Following a report by Mintel (2002), this is being addressed in advertising. There is still a long way to go in government policy, publishing and other mass media. Secondly, Attraction Theory illustrates why gender equality depends on women and men selecting partners who are successful at home as often as those who are successful at work. This presents the greater of the two challenges as it involves the abandonment of romantic fantasies that sustain whole industries, and which draw on thousands of years of oral and written history, literature and art. Nevertheless, for those sincerely wishing to pursue this agenda, the following five cultural and legal obstacles (from a men's equality perspective) need addressing before further progress toward equal pay is likely to occur.

Firstly, while men are selected as sexual partners for their potential as earners and protectors, the pressure will remain to take more risky jobs and set up businesses with higher financial returns (Goldberg, 2000; Krantz, 2002; Ridley-Duff, 2007). Secondly, while social institutions (and society generally) are unwilling to recognise and provide equal financial and legal support to men as fathers, there will always be a social dynamic that *generates* pay inequality and a division of entrepreneurial labour on the basis of sex (Smith, 2005; Farrell, 2005). Thirdly, while men are denied equal rights to paid parental leave (at rates that are the same as women's, and with legal protections that are the same as women's), *couples* will continue to believe it is 'common sense' for the man to intensify work commitments while the woman takes the primary caring role (Farrell, 2001). Fourthly, while men are denied equal rights not to raise a child (they can neither abort an unwanted child, or unilaterally give up an unwanted child to an adoption service), they will be pursued by child support agencies for financial support even where they cannot provide it and did not consent to having children (Wilkinson, 1998, 1999; Farrell, 2001). Lastly, until there is a presumption of joint-custody for all children after divorce, fathers will continue to have higher spending obligations in cases of family breakdown (Farrell, 2001).

With the advance of feminism, it has been possible to undertake the first phase of an equality agenda by problematizing both the discourses and interconnections between men and women as they engage in debates about the division of labour in the household and workplace. The second stage requires a further evolution in our thinking. Firstly, there needs to be further research focussing on women's growing power over cultural norms that constrain the way men can engage in interpersonal relationships and work. Secondly, there needs to be collective recognition that occupational and entrepreneurial choices reveal the extent to which women now have control over consumption, emotional and sexual rewards. Embracing these issues in academic and policy debate will require considerable courage because they go against the wisdoms that have prevailed for the last 40 years. Nevertheless, this paper establishes the grounds for taking this new step towards both pay and gender equality. Attraction Theory provides a new theoretical framework within which the connections between work, entrepreneurship and sexual relations can be discussed, without abandoning the goals of the "long agenda" set out by Cockburn (2001).

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## Notes

- 1 Although most research is focussed on women's inability to access certain positions, the issue now affects men in areas of publishing (including gender studies), nursing, modelling and media.
- 2 The National Organization of Women, established by Betty Friedan in the mid-1960s.
- 3 Lowndes (1996) contends that it matters less what a person says than that they make the effort to talk – it is the *act* of talking that is significant.
- 4 The "couple" generally stay engaged until some external circumstance intervenes. Lowndes (1996) calls this stage "echoing". However, in the light of Berne's analysis of games (Berne, 1964), such behaviour may be a sexual game of "Kiss off" or "Indignation" driven by a malicious intent.
- 5 Conducted over a decade, the study interviewed 2,500 recently married couples and tested findings in focus groups - 40% of women said they had changed jobs to find a marriage partner.

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- 6 Farrell (2000:194-195). Harlequin changed its romance formula after discovering that 70% of female readers had jobs. The result? A 20,000% increase in profitability over 10 years with nett revenues up from \$110,000 to \$21m and an 80% market share. Sources are provided.
- 7 This study shows that just over 60% of men/women were in committed relationships in the year 2000, the same percentage as a decade before. Despite media publicity promoting 'singledom' as a lifestyle, combining the number of unmarried and marriage couples shows that the number of people in "committed" relationships is unchanged. Homosexual encounters are a much lower percentage of all sexual activity than the percentage of people reporting they have had homosexual relationships. This is because people experiment with homosexuality while still practising heterosexuality most of the time.
- 8 The definition of 'celebrity' is not used in the popular sense, but in the sense that a person's desirability for human reproduction is so strong that others will provide financial and emotional support releasing them from the need to work.
- 9 In 2002, the author attended a lecture at Sheffield University in which the head of HSBC told the audience that the worst aspect of his job was that he spent half the year away from his family living out of a suitcase.
- 10 While there is a danger of reinforcing stereotypes here, it is acknowledged that fewer women marry men for their domestic skills, and fewer men marry women for their work skills. In practice, there is a complex matrix of factors that influence partner choice. Empirical data to support this view comes from Buss (2002) and Molloy (2003).
- 11 Table 4 (page 264) shows the results of a survey involving 13,601 participants using the Dominance scale from the Personal Relationships Profile developed originally by Hamby (1996). The results show women to be marginally more dominant across the whole sample. Findings in national contexts differed with women more dominant in: Iran, Taiwan, South Korea, Lithuania, Hong Kong, India, Mexico, South Africa, Romania, Guatemala, Singapore, Japan, Germany, Israel, Australia, Great Britain, Belgium, Malta, New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland, Netherlands and Sweden. Men were found to be dominant in only: Russia, China, Greece, Hungary, Venezuela, Brazil, United States. Results were statistically significant at the 99% level for Russia, Lithuania, Malta and Canada, and at the 95% level for Hungary and Venezuela. Results were cross-referenced with the United Nations Gender Empowerment Index to ensure the validity of the findings and research instrument used.
- 12 Based on [now lost] e-mail correspondence during a doctoral study with the editor of the UK Men's Movement Magazine. One case reported involved a male midwife who won compensation for unfair dismissal. It came to light during the case that there are now only 60 male midwives in a profession containing 57,000 workers.
- 13 Table, "Ratio of Male to Female Suicides in All UK Countries and the Republic of Ireland". The text of the article contradicts the data in the table. In the table, the gap widened substantially in Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (> 0.5), Scotland showed a 0.1 decrease while England was unchanged at 2.8:1. Despite this, the text claims that male suicides dropped, while female suicides increased.