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Ongoing training at work and equal opportunities for women: a Franco-British comparison of the insurance industry

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ONGOING TRAINING AT WORK AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN: A FRANCO-BRITISH COMPARISON OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

SUBMITTED BY CATHERINE FLETCHER

FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BATH

2001

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CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE ON TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE:

3.1 Introduction 44
3.2 National context: legislation on ongoing training in Britain 45
3.3 Major issues regarding labour force segregation and access to training in Britain 47
3.4 Horizontal segregation and access to training for women entering the labour market 50
3.5 Reinsertion and the labour market: access to training for women returning to the employment market 52
3.6 Access for women in full-time work in Britain 54
3.7 Access for women in part-time work in Britain 55
3.8 Content of training courses 56
3.9 Attitudes of women towards training 57
3.10 Conclusions on ongoing training in Britain 59
3.11 The French system: la formation professionnelle continue 61
3.12 Legislative framework in France 64
3.13 Recommendations to improve the level of equal opportunities within the legislative framework in France 66
3.14 Literature in France 67
3.15 Horizontal segregation in employment in France 68
3.16 Major issues in the study of gendered work in France 70
3.17 Access to training for women returning to the employment market in France 72
3.18 Access to training for women in full-time work in France 72
3.19 Studies on part-time work in France 75
3.20 Attitudes of French and British women 77
3.21 Working patterns of French and British mothers 78
3.22 Conclusions 80

CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

4.1 Introduction 81
4.2 Quantitative data on Great Britain 81
4.3 Part-time work in Great Britain 84
4.4 State policy on equal opportunities in Great Britain 85
4.5 Constraints within the private sector 88
4.6 Empirical data on ongoing training in France 89
4.7 Entry qualification and segregation of the labour market in France 93
4.8 State policy on equal opportunities in France 95
4.9 Conclusions on empirical studies in France 100
4.10 Conclusions 101
# APPENDICES

- **Appendix A: Questionnaire A**  
  Page 250
- **Appendix B: Questionnaire B**  
  Page 253
- **Appendix C: Company training strategy**  
  Page 257
- **Appendix D: List of interviewees for stage 2 of fieldwork**  
  Page 259
- **Appendix E: Sample interview notes for stage 2 of fieldwork**  
  Page 261
- **Appendix F: Sample notes on company 2 for stage 3 of fieldwork**  
  Page 263
- **Appendix G: Summary of measures in the Génisson report.**  
  Page 276

-282
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ABSTRACT

The level of equal opportunities in accessing training at work is revealing of employers' attitudes, individual preferences and the dynamic relationship between the state, the economy and the family.

The thesis explores the main theoretical positions seeking to explain gender inequality which include classical economic analysis of individual choices and sociological analysis of structural constraints. However, neither of these approaches is entirely satisfactory and crossnational analysis is used to examine ongoing training and equal opportunities for women within a state-levy system in France and a British voluntarist model. Universalistic assumptions are rejected in favour of examination of the societal context which frames the work/life balance and gender contract.

Raw data on training may indicate a quantitative improvement in access for women since the mid 1990s but this has not been translated into a qualitative improvement and there are wide variations between and within industries. While equal opportunities may be at a more advanced stage of policy elaboration at European Union level, concrete effects on women's advancement are disappointing.

The thesis examines gender inequality in the insurance industry, which is highly segregated along gender lines both horizontally, and vertically and shows that a high level of industry training culture does not necessarily equate with equality of opportunity. Fieldwork undertaken for this study, based on interviews with training managers and questionnaires from employees, shows cross-national similarities according to gender rather than differences according to national context. The main findings are that the women surveyed are more committed to training at work than men, despite less support from employers and more family-linked constraints. Employer attitudes are arguably the most important factor in promoting equal opportunities in training at work. Under both national ongoing training systems in Britain and France, the case for equal opportunities is given low priority, despite national government policy rhetoric.
INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twenty-first century there are more women than ever before in the labour market in Europe. Despite the large numbers of young women succeeding in education and obtaining better qualifications than their male counterparts, their long-term prospects in the workplace are not equally promising. Women are present in a restricted number of professions and within those professions they are rarely members of the elite at the top of the pyramid. According to some, this is because women are unable or unwilling to compete with men, (Becker 1985, Hakim 1995) while according to others this highlights the inegalitarian structure of the labour market which discriminates in favour of men (Dex 1988, Maruani 1989, Laufer 1992).

Gender segregation of employment is an important and persistent characteristic of western industrial societies. According to Rubery, Fagan and Maier (1996) policies to moderate or reduce segregation are significant for three main reasons. Firstly, there is a commitment to equal treatment of men and women in the labour market in most western economies, and gender segregation of employment may be a symptom and a cause of continuing gender inequalities. Secondly, understanding the processes that result in persistent gender segregation yields important insights into the overall operation of labour market systems. Thirdly, gender segregation of employment raises questions about how efficiency and equity in labour markets is defined.

SEGREGATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET

The labour market is divided along gender lines, where many sectors of employment have predominantly male or a predominantly female workforce. Examples of this are the
construction industry and the engineering profession which employ a large number of men but very few women and the nursing profession which employs large numbers of women and few men. 80% of women workers are concentrated in the tertiary sector, particularly in poorly paid areas such as hotel work, childcare, retail and health. French studies refer to this phenomenon of horizontal segregation as the absence of "mixité de l'emploi" which leads to job stereotyping as being typically female or typically male. This in turn has implications for career choices made by boys and girls and can be linked to pay inequality with typically male jobs often attracting having higher salaries. Problems have also arisen regarding pay claims for work of equal value in industries where it is often found that in certain areas the work done by men and women is often different and therefore difficult to compare. Women are also victims of vertical segregation since a pyramid power structure is in evidence in many areas where women make up the majority of workers at the base but are less and less present at the senior levels of the hierarchy. This means that women collectively do not have the same level of power as male gatekeepers within organisations and have less access to decision making.

A variety of hypotheses have been advanced to explain vertical and horizontal segregation. Neo-classical economists explain these phenomena in terms of volition and individual decision making on the part of the job seekers, which are largely independent of labour market systems and processes. This means that the individual is seen as having a choice about his or her decision to enter the labour market which is itself seen as neutral, since gender stereotyping which would work against able candidates for jobs or promotion would be counterproductive and possibly damaging to the firm. An alternative economic perspective regards job seekers' preferences as largely endogenous to the labour market since the current household division of labour where women have more responsibilities for household and child care is in part a response to the gendered labour market in which women can expect a lower return to working than men (Humphries and Roberts 1995). The choices regarding division of labour between the public and private spheres are therefore influenced by the level of salary women and men can earn. According to the latter perspective women's decisions over training and jobs are influenced both by social expectations regarding the domestic division of labour and by their assessment of the realistic employment opportunities available in specific labour market segments. Constraints imposed by the labour market on women's options are reflected in women's expressed preferences for particular types of jobs and employment careers. This means that women rather than men currently have to "choose" jobs and careers which can be
combined with domestic responsibilities. This approach has much in common with gender stratification approaches used within sociology that highlight constraining and exclusionary factors.

Rees (1995) lists the large number of studies of labour market segregation on the European level in recent years, including manuals on the vexed question of how to measure segregation (Siltanen et al 1994), macro studies charting patterns of segregation in the EU (Rubery and Fagan 1993a), theoretical works debating the merits of competing explanations (Walby 1990), analyses of the effects of EU legislation (Duncan 1996, Hoskyns 1996, Rossilli 1997) and empirical projects in individual Member States. However, as Rees (1995:8) states: "Despite the burgeoning literature on gender segregation in the labour market and on gender in the sociology of education, the field of training and its relationship to the reproduction of gender segregation remains relatively under-theorised."

1.3 RESEARCH GAP REGARDING ONGOING TRAINING FOR WOMEN AT WORK

Chicha (1995) notes that relatively little attention has been given to ongoing training for women within firms in Europe but that it is now recognised as an important topic because of the imperatives of international competitiveness to use available human resources to their maximum. Previous research in the area of human resources has focused on measures such as the management of diversity within the firm rather than addressing the wider question of reconciliation of work and family life, and firms have arguably been more concerned with overhauling the more visible elements of recruitment and selection practices rather than analysing wider structural issues within society. Chicha believes that training is an essential element for professional mobility to enable women to leave the ghettos of employment where they have been confined. It has the added bonus of closing the salary gap between men and women since experience and qualifications gained through training constitute one of the principal criteria for advancement at work and can lead to salary increases of between 10% and 30%. Other reasons suggested for the research gap are that the task seems too arduous since statistics are often not aggregated according to gender and certain areas such as the dynamics and strategies of actors within the training process have been ignored.
This study focuses on ongoing training within firms which has, firstly, an economically efficient role from the firm’s point of view in maximising the usefulness of its workers and secondly, from the worker’s point of view, provides an element which can improve a worker's job prospects by giving him or her additional skills to add to the job portfolio. The issue of ongoing training in the workplace, also referred to as CVT (continuous vocational training) highlights the tensions surrounding the level of investment made by the employer in the employee and the extent to which the employee is encouraged to advance within the company hierarchy. It is therefore a crucial point at which the level of access by different groups to an important fringe benefit highlights the value given to them by employers, and by extension the commitment of these employers to equal opportunities. Barriers to this benefit have important implications for an individual’s career trajectory.

As will be seen in the literature review in chapter three of this study, there have been many studies which examine women’s situation in the labour market in different countries. The most important focus has arguably been pay inequalities linked firstly, to the different treatment of women and men in the labour market and, secondly, to the existence of vertical and horizontal segregation which reduce women’s chances of attaining equal pay. There have been few studies which attempt to link women’s access to training and the structural constraints underlying the wider question of domestic parity which governs women’s availability for paid work and training. This study attempts to compare and contrast issues governing access to training in France and Britain from the perspective of both paid and unpaid work since labour market issues are underpinned by the prevailing social norms governing division of labour according to gender. By highlighting similarities and differences it is hoped that the impact of national training systems on gender equality will become clear. The focus of this study is primarily empirical since data disaggregated by gender are not readily available for comparison but the need for theoretical explanations for such similarities and differences is acknowledged.

The legislative framework, different in France and Britain, plays an important role in establishing priorities and regulating employer behaviour through incentives and sanctions. Allocation of training to different groups within society, such as those who are unskilled and those who are returning to the labour market, are of particular interest to governments who have a political interest in reducing unemployment. This study deals with those who are
already in employment and governments tend to give this group a lower priority since there is less political capital attached to measures affecting workers than those regarding the unemployed. However, the legislative framework regarding equal opportunities at work, including access to ongoing training, is a measure of the commitment of government and society to a democratic ideal. It would be unusual to find a government which did not pay lip service to the ethic of egalitarianism in the workplace but the gap between rhetoric and reality needs to be examined.

Equality of access may not lead to equality of outcome. Policy to reduce gender inequality is more complex than standard approaches of positive or affirmative action or equal pay legislation may suggest. Rubery, Fagan and Maier (1996) recommend that evaluation of policy measures should involve a more holistic approach which identifies changes in the structure of jobs as well as changes in the composition of the workforce. It may therefore be more appropriate to regard the labour market as having interlocking gender and occupational hierarchies such that at each level of skill and qualification we find women in a lower-paid or lower status position than men. For Cockburn (1991) the long agenda regarding gender equality within current labour market structures does not simply involve the promotion of women within these structures but involves the transformation of the gendered and hierarchical structure of the labour market.

1.4
THE DYNAMIC SOCIETAL MODEL

The wider rationale regarding women's employment and the balance between paid work and family commitments, often referred to as the work/family life balance, must therefore also be taken into consideration. The dynamic societal model proposed by O'Reilly (1994) shows how the state, the family and the economy act upon each other. The economy is influenced by the state since governments can make decisions which impact on the labour market such as equality policies and family policies including funding of child care. It is also affected by societal issues such as gender norms in the division of work, the impact of organised labour and current levels of education and training, and changes in these areas have an impact on both the state and the economy. This can be seen more clearly if a specific example such as Sweden is contrasted with Britain, where the state and the labour market combine to produce high
levels of part-time female workers in Britain whereas in Sweden the norm is for full-time female workers to be supported. The economy in turn interacts with the state and the family so that changes in one area, such as the desire to change the norms regarding division of domestic labour, can lead to greater female participation in the workforce. The family itself interacts with both the economy and the state through division of domestic work between men and women, family income and emotional ties. This dynamic model emphasises how changes in one area will have a knock-on effect in other areas and how difficult it is to isolate one variable which is embedded within a societal context since many factors have to be considered. A similar dynamic model is proposed at the end of the present chapter to explain the forces which influence training culture in the workplace.

1.5
NATIONAL AND SUPRANATIONAL CONTEXT

The issue of equal opportunities for men and women in having access to CVT may be dealt with in different ways within national legislative frameworks: there may also be differences between companies in different countries which can be ascribed to national and cultural factors. This study focuses on the input from national legislation in France and Britain and company culture in the companies surveyed, although there is inevitably a dynamic relationship between the two. Gregory and Windebank (2000) warn against making universalist assumptions about women's work situation from single nation studies without recognising the national specificity of their findings, and identifying difference which is put down to contrasting policy environments. For them, the key question is to discover the relative importance of policy in shaping women's economic position through cross-national analysis.

A further layer is created by the existence of European legislation since this supranational level has increasingly greater input into legislation at work. All of these influences act in a dynamic way on employer and employee attitudes at work. The question remains as to whether the existence of training programmes and networks funded by the European Social Fund such as FORCE or IRIS can do more than co-ordinate debate in different countries, or whether the European Union can be a force for shaping training policy in different countries.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Whilst bearing in mind that it is difficult to give simple answers to questions which are affected by a number of factors at national and international level, it is useful to define the research questions that this study aims to answer. Firstly, do women and men have equal access to continuous vocational training in the workplace? If not, what are the constraints limiting equality of access and the strategies to ensure equal opportunities? Secondly, is there a different level of access to training in Great Britain compared with France? Can any differences be explained by the national legislative framework? What impact does European legislation have? Thirdly, can policies be identified at national, supranational or company levels which may lead to desirable outcomes regarding improved access to training for women at work?

These questions should be accompanied by several provisos. Firstly, differences may be due to political, social and economic factors within nations but this does not mean that we should lose sight of the universality of gender inequality or believe that specific policy measures can solve the problem of gender equality (Rubery 1992). Secondly, statements made at macro-level may hide major differences and there may be significant factors such as age, stage of life cycle, marital status, region, ethnicity, and/or level of qualification. However, some policies regarding continuing vocational training may be better for women than others and it is important not to undervalue the importance of identifying good practice.

CONSTRAINTS REGARDING ACCESS TO TRAINING

Equal access to training can only exist if barriers are minimised. It is useful to divide these into demand-side barriers, limiting women's input, and supply-side barriers, regulated by employers. Both sides of the equation are inevitably influenced by cultural factors, whether consciously or unconsciously.
DEMAND-SIDE BARRIERS.

Firstly, barriers may be material: women may not be able to afford the time or the money that is often needed for investment in training. Within families women still tend to bear the burden of the double shift in having more housework and childcare responsibilities than men. As women on the whole are not as well paid as men, any costs that have to be borne by the employee may represent a larger proportion of salary. Childcare costs are more often borne by women who rarely have partners who are an easy source of unpaid childcare. This issue is constructed as a “women’s problem” regarding the right to participate in the workplace rather than the wider problem of equalising care responsibilities in the home (Gregory and Windebank 2000, Liff 1997). Mobility for women is often limited by fears for personal safety in travelling to locations if attendance at evening classes is required. In a family with two cars women usually have the older, less reliable means of transport, which can add to worry about safety.

Secondly, barriers may be psychological. Women may be lacking in confidence to apply for training and may need more encouragement than men to do so in a hostile work environment (Sommerlad and Sanderson 1998). Women may be sceptical about the level of equal opportunities within their workplace and therefore sceptical about the value of training in providing advancement within the company.

Thirdly, barriers may be due to socialisation. According to Fuchs Epstein (1981) social factors and conditions direct women away from the public sphere towards family-centred priorities. Impediments to participation in public life are created by time and role strains that flow from women’s sex role-associated duties. Women’s early socialisation is an impediment to their assumption of demanding and rewarding careers.

Fourthly, women may simply choose to do other things. This may be because of socialisation, as above, leading to the existence of a woman’s culture which is separate and apart from that of men. This perspective suggests that women’s culture excludes the economic, political, and professional worlds that form the focus of male culture. Or women may make choices which do not give primacy to advancement within the workplace and do so as an informed adult
choice. The controversy raised by the views of Hakim (1996) on this subject will be explored in greater detail in the second chapter of this study.

Women may be seen by some as having equal levels of attachment to the labour force as men. Others, however, consider that low-paid jobs with little chance of advancement do not generate commitment and since women are over-represented in this category, it would not be surprising if their labour force attachment was affected. It can be argued that women prioritise other issues such as family and personal relationships and may be more aware of the quality of life rather than the career ladder. From the employers' point of view, the "quit rate" may be the most important element to be considered. Employers are obviously less likely to invest in training staff that they do not expect to retain but this does not deal with the fact that women's expectations may be changing fairly rapidly and employers' expectations are not. The unequal treatment of women who clearly state that they do not want children seems to bear out the notion of women being treated as if they were ruled by their biology, and that at some time they will change their minds about becoming pregnant and will request a career break which will be costly to the employer.

The link between gender and structure of working time cannot be ignored since women form the vast majority of the part-time workforce. This study considers the part-time female labour force and the access given to women within this category to continuing vocational training as only one of the elements concerning the role of gender in access to training. Human capital theory holds that women have less human capital than men because they spend more time out of the workforce rearing children. They are also said to choose jobs which require less education and training than men partly because they believe that they will spend fewer years in the labour market obtaining a return on the time spent on training. Employers may prefer to train male workers as they believe that, in the absence of a strong model of paternal leave, they will follow a continuous working pattern, while women are considered to be more likely to take career breaks.

While some women may "choose" part-time work to fit in with childcare, there can be no doubt that any notion of choice is framed by state input into affordable childcare. British politicians who argue in favour of flexibility to lower overheads for firms and keep Britain more competitive often claim that the job market is fashioned by demands from workers for
part-time work rather than on the employer supply-side, which is a highly contestable assertion. As will later be discussed, women's perception of choices available condition their level of satisfaction with their working hours. Research by Fournier (1997) links level of qualification to whether part-time work is chosen or imposed, with women with higher level qualifications more often choosing to work full-time but with 2 out of 3 who do work part-time state that they have chosen to do so. Figures given show that 31% of those women without qualifications work part-time as opposed to 18% of those with higher education diplomas. Work by Dex (1988) shows that when questioned, the overwhelming majority of women in her study expressed satisfaction with working part-time. More recent work by Hakim (1996) states that women make choices to do work which are markedly different from men's choices and one of these concerns part-time work. The controversy surrounding some of Hakim's views on this subject is dealt with in chapter 2. When discussing social problems resulting from the increase in the part-time female workforce, in line with employers' preferences, it should not be forgotten that the problem is often framed in terms of the effect on the undermining of the old model of full-time male employment rather than because women in these jobs do not have the same rights or training opportunities as their counterparts in full-time employment. Rees (1995) sees this leading to a situation of moral panic as traditional roles are subverted.

1.9
SUPPLY-SIDE FEATURES

Firstly, there may be institutionalised patriarchy within society and within the company culture. There may be unequal gender power relations where women do not have decision-making roles due to lack of opportunity structures. There may be attitudes, overt or covert, towards women who are perceived as not fulfilling a traditional female role. There may be an absence of female role models or champions to mitigate an environment which is hostile to the advancement of women. Trades unions may perpetuate this situation by not valuing issues which are important to women and by continuing to give precedence to the demands of male workers. The labour market is not a gender-blind context to which women bring a set of socially-conditioned attitudes but is influenced by the practices of management, unions, male workers and women themselves (Sinclair 1991, Cockburn 1986, Game and Pringle 1984).
If there is absence of equal access for women to continuous vocational training in private companies this may be due to many causes. It may be blocked by parties who have no interest in changing the current situation of inequality. These gatekeepers include employers and training officers who may discriminate, wilfully or unwittingly, against women at work. Male employees who receive increased benefits in the current situation are also interested parties. The situation will also be influenced by women's aspirations and choices, bearing in mind that these operate under many societal constraints such as responsibility for childcare, the fact that women make up the overwhelming majority of part-time employees and internalised messages about women's role in society. There may be discrimination within systems at work which are tolerated by the law and by the State. The existence of patriarchy and societal effects are inextricably linked. None of the above are immune to messages given regarding male and female roles within and without the world of work. Cockburn (1983, 1985) Delphy (1984) Hartmann (1979, 1981) Walby (1986,1990), and many other writers have noted the combined force of patriarchy and capitalism and their effects on gender segregation in the labour market. The theoretical discussions surrounding this question will be examined in chapter 2. This study examines the role of continuing vocational training against a backdrop of tradition and power relations which can at no time be ignored and takes the existence of a patriarchal society as an important framing factor. Inequality of opportunity based on gender is, moreover, only part of a wider system of discrimination based on class, ethnicity, age and disability.

Secondly, there may be barriers caused by legislation: the commitment of a society and its government to equal opportunities may lead to the presence or absence of measures which have real force such as those which oblige recalcitrant employers to create a level playing field. Legislation which endeavours to ensure that equal opportunities are dealt with as an important issue may be present at the national or European level. Legal statutes and pronouncements on rights to training may well be of little use unless coupled with measures to ensure equality, possibly needing sanctions to enforce this. However, many experts in the field of equal opportunities believe that a softly-softly approach is necessary to avoid a backlash which would make implementation of equal opportunities even more difficult (Rees 1998). Differing viewpoints will be compared and contrasted throughout this study, particularly with reference to the importance of mainstreaming equal opportunities which is dealt with in detail in chapter 5. However, tradition and the existence of the competitive market means that there
has to be a commercial reason for employers to seek change, particularly in the private sector.

Thirdly, employers may view women as being less efficient recipients of training in terms of investing their time and money in individuals who may leave the firm to raise a family. This view gives males the competitive edge in the labour market since biology dictates that they cannot bear children and societal norms dictate that fathers are not normally perceived as the prime nurturer within the family.

There are a number of reasons why employers have traditionally believed that women are less motivated to succeed at work but the situation has changed rapidly over the last few decades of the twentieth century. Human capital theory has traditionally held that women have a lower than average level of skill as a result of a lower level of education and initial training. This is an important issue which needs to be examined in detail. Firstly, taking qualifications as a proxy for skills is problematic, particularly with older workers, since it ignores skills acquired through experience. Secondly, the definition of skill has also been linked historically with the ability of dominant groups to prize qualities held by them, including the situation of male-dominated trades unions undervaluing abilities labelled as female talents which did not need rewarding, since they were seen as being innate. With these provisos in mind, it is however true that the level of qualifications of the female population leaving school has gone up dramatically in both Britain and France over the last twenty years. The previous explanation of women's inferior position in the labour market, linked in the past to poorer level of qualifications which disadvantaged them in the workplace, is becoming less valid since women now make up the majority of students in higher education in both Britain and France.

1.10
QUALIFICATIONS AND PAID EMPLOYMENT

However, even if the level of initial qualifications held by women entering the labour market has improved, the type of qualifications held by these women is often different from those held by their male counterparts. Horizontal segregation, where girls obtain qualifications in general arts subjects in large numbers and are still under-represented in the areas of science and technology, is prevalent in the spheres of initial education and training. As Maruani (1991)
and others have shown, qualifications are not gender neutral and are products of the value
given to them by a gendered society. Insertion into the labour market does not take place at the
same level for men and for women since there are differences in the classification of
qualifications.

While the level of diploma obtained in initial training has an important levelling effect on
entrance level for women within the work hierarchy, it does not do away with discrimination
against women. At the same time, men benefit to an extent which is disproportionate to their
level of qualification. A French report by the CEREQ (Summer 1997) shows that young men
holding the BTS or DUT (technical university qualifications obtained after 2 years study) were
massively classified in intermediate occupations while their female counterparts were more
often found at a lower level, in the category of "employées", with a gap of over 30% due to
gender. The gap narrowed to 14% in favour of men when comparing whether those who had
been to the prestigious Grande Ecole were classified as intermediary professions or
management.

The situation is similar for qualifications obtained at work after insertion into the labour
market, where women's qualification levels have risen in the last few decades. Data analysed
by Robinson (1996) from the 1994 Labour Force survey shows that a significantly higher
proportion of women in employment in Britain have been awarded National Vocational
Qualifications (2.1% compared with 1.6% of men.) However this reflects the horizontally
segmented workforce since qualifications held are concentrated in clerical, retail, care and
hairdressing. Vertical segregation is reflected in the much lower proportion of women than
men gaining qualifications at level 3 with a gap of 3.47% in the clerical sector, and an even
greater gap of 8.69% for sales and 18.56% for manufacturing. (Felstead 1996).

While level of qualification appears to have a levelling effect on gender inequality, work by
Silvera (1997) shows that paradoxically, the opposite is true for pay equality. At the lower
levels of the hierarchy, women white-collar workers earn on average 8% less than men in the
same category, while at the top end of the scale male managers earn up to 35% more than their
female counterparts. She notes that one factor in reducing this disparity is the strength of
collective negotiation which varies from country to country, with Britain being an example of
weak collective negotiation. The position of the "comité d'entreprise" within the French firm is
much stronger than the equivalent workers representatives organisation within British firms. They have a particular input into training issues as they must be consulted on the content of the training plan for the firm. They are therefore in an important position to influence training policy and have some input into implementing equal opportunities at this level. However, other authors such as Rubery (Rubery and Fagan 1994) have highlighted the way that collective negotiation can institutionalise discrimination. A 1997 report by the Institute for Employment Studies found that this discrimination continues within appraisal systems at work, with men with similar results from appraisal being more likely to be offered training than women with an equally good appraisal record.

As will be seen, studies have shown that the type of qualification has different consequences for women’s and men’s careers (Crompton and Sanderson 1986, Hantrais and Walters 1994). Occupational qualifications such as pharmacy and optics allow their holders to pursue a discontinuous work pattern without a drop in occupational status, while industry-specific qualifications such as those found in banking and insurance are used to signal an individual’s loyal and continuous service to the organisation. Women are therefore more likely to suffer discrimination if they hold the second type of qualification and have a career break because of family responsibilities.

1.11
EQUAL ACCESS TO TRAINING: DESIRABLE OR FEASIBLE?

The question must be posed as to whether equal opportunities for women in having access to CVT is desirable or feasible. The response to this is twofold. Firstly there is the human rights argument: it is not acceptable in a democratic society for discrimination to be applied solely due to gender and the State should ensure that its laws reflect this. Secondly there is the commercial argument: training is an investment in the workforce and employers are wasting talent by having the female workforce held back from increasing their value to the company, particularly where they are present in large numbers in the service sector. The first response is the domain of the State which has an interest in promoting democratic laws, but many companies would maintain that they see this as an important ethical value. Rees (1995) sees training as both an economic policy and a social policy. If there were equal access to training
for women this would not necessarily result in increased promotion and increased power for women within companies. There are other variables such as appraisal and selection procedures which would need to be overhauled to ensure this. Awareness needs to be raised that selection procedures are not value free and therefore not gender blind. Investment in part-time employees is lower by employers even in France where they have the same rights to training.

1.12

COMPARISON OF SYSTEMS IN THIS STUDY

This study is a cross-national study which aims to examine the importance of gender as a variable in securing access to continuing vocational training in Britain and in France. Its prime focus is to examine whether the voluntarist training system (in Great Britain) or the interventionist state levy system (in France) provides the better model for equal opportunities for women. It is also part of the declared purpose of the European Union to provide a social dimension which encourages workers as well as businesses and governments to feel they have a stake in the project of European integration. It would therefore be expected that there would be some input at the European level to secure equal access to training for women.

My M.A. thesis developed an interest in continuing vocational training in companies after a period working within the French system in 1977. This study was a comparison of continuing vocational training in Britain, France and Spain. Conclusions relevant for this study were that despite its rigidities, the levy-based French system was a better model of training provision than the voluntarist piecemeal British example. Further conclusions were that training is a highly sensitive political issue which has historically been linked to the ideology of the party in power. Continuing vocational training does not provide immediate political payoffs since its aim is to improve the skills of the existing workforce rather than lowering unemployment figures. If regular, steady long-term investment is needed to maintain a highly trained workforce, this is unlikely to take place under a voluntarist model such the British one.
1.13
INFLUENCES ON TRAINING CULTURE

Little research has been done on how a training culture comes into existence and the factors which influence it. State legislation at national and supranational level, combined with historical tradition influenced by government policy, play an important role and can be characterised by the level of state intervention. The events of May 1968 led to the state intervening in training matters in France and the creation of the Formation Continue in 1971 to satisfy workers' demands, whereas there has been no such state intervention in Britain since industry training boards disappeared in the 1970s. Similarly, the existence of the "comité d'entreprise" in French firms gives greater participation to workers in France on labour matters including training.

The industry within which training takes place is influenced by skills shortages, often linked to the implementation of new technology, and the place of trades unions in defending the interests of organised labour. The size of the company within the industry or sector and whether it is in the public or private sector is another important factor. Finally, attitudes of training managers and employees will influence beliefs in the importance of training. Employers' beliefs in the importance of training and development programmes as part of the package to recruit and retain staff will shape strategy and maximise or minimise the importance of a training culture. Employees' confidence or scepticism about the existence of a training culture will influence their beliefs in the support of the firm to provide opportunities for training and personal development with transferable skills rather than specific induction training to simply equip them to do their job and which is purely in the interests of the firm. All these factors interact with one other in a dynamic way to produce a situation where training is one of the core values of the firm and seen as an important element of the company culture. The influence of training champions at local level to encourage confidence that employees' training needs are being met may be an important factor.

To examine the place of equal opportunities for women within this model, the dynamic societal model proposed by O'Reilly (1994) is useful in showing the influence of the family, the economy and the state as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Training, with education, is one of the elements which affects the economy along with the impact of organised labour and the
division of work. The division of domestic work between men and women in the family and
the re-negotiation of the gender/work contract interacts with both the economy and the state,
while the state through its ideology, its social protection and its different forms of regulation
influences both the economy and the family. The availability of women for training
opportunities is linked to the dominant model of the family where women are perceived to be
primarily responsible for childcare and this influences employer and employee attitudes.

1.14
EMPIRICAL WORK IN THIS STUDY

Data at macro level are arguably less useful for cross-national comparisons than data at sector
or industry level since the former hide a wide variety of situations. This study focuses on the
service sector as it is the fastest growing in developed economies and is the sector where new
technology has most impact on working practices and where women are the majority of
employees. Much has been written about the restructuring of work, the core and peripheral
workforce and the increase in part-time work and short-term contracts. Women are
disproportionately affected by these issues but are now more likely to get jobs in the service
sector while male full-time employment is bearing the brunt of change. In this sector the
phenomenon of women's improved qualifications not being translated into better insertion into
the labour market in terms of job classification is even more prevalent. The French CEREQ
report (1997) states that in the service sector, even with a comparable diploma from the
Grande Ecole, there is a disparity of 26% between the sexes when classified as intermediate
occupations or manager. The situation is progressively more unequal according to the level of
diploma at entry into the workforce, with a 60% gap in favour of men being assigned a
superior grade amongst those with A-level equivalent qualifications such as the vocational
Baccalauréat, CAP (vocational aptitude certificate at sub A-level) or BEP (vocational studies
certificate).

This study aims to examine the differences in attitudes to training for women in France and
Britain through the example of the insurance industry. The insurance industry was chosen
because it neither provides a traditional career route for women (as does secretarial work) nor
is it an industry from which women have traditionally been excluded (as is the construction
industry). It is vertically segregated in that it shows a clear over-representation of women at the
bottom of the pyramid on the administrative side with an under-representation of women in managerial positions in administration. It is horizontally segregated since in sales divisions the absence of women is even more noticeable at all levels. Studies have been carried out on the professions of banking, accountancy pharmacy and law (Crompton, Sanderson, Le Feuvre and Walters 1990) but these were general overviews which mentioned training in passing and are therefore of limited relevance to this study.

It was expected that there would be differences due to equal opportunities provision varying between the two countries. The existence of a government ministry for women's rights in France would be expected to have some impact even though this has been modified over the years until it has now practically disappeared. Some writers, such as Laufer (1986, 1992) and Junter-Loiseau (1993), have stressed the importance of considering training at work as just one part of an equal opportunities framework, underlining the need for profound changes in society to combat the present patriarchal model where it is only women's employment which is affected by a career break for childcare purposes whereas men's career patterns remain largely unchanged by family circumstances.

1.15
STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into three parts. The first part deals with theoretical issues (chapter 1-5). Chapter 2 evaluates contributions made by feminist research and cross-national analysis. Chapter 3 deals with the wide literature on women and training in Britain and France, while chapter 4 deals with empirical studies on women and training in Britain and France, and examines current government policy in the field of equal opportunities. Chapter 5 examines the role and impact of training policy and equal opportunities at the European Union level.

The second part deals with the new empirical work which forms the case study. Chapter 6 deals with previous research on the insurance industry which gives details of the context in which the empirical work was carried out. Chapter 7 explains the choice of methodology and presents the primary data. Chapter 8 analyses the new empirical data and gives conclusions on the fieldwork carried out in France and Britain.
The third part, the final chapter 9, gives some overall concluding remarks and evaluates how theory meets practice.

1.16
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown how the issue of access to ongoing training for women is embedded within the wider issue of gender segregation at work. The hypotheses which seek to explain vertical and horizontal segregation were discussed. There is a lack of studies on the issue of ongoing training for women at work as other issues have taken precedence and the task itself is complicated by the lack of previous studies and the absence of data disaggregated by gender. The dynamic societal model of how the family the state and the economy act upon each other was discussed and a similar model of how training must be considered in its societal context was proposed. Supply-side barriers such as employer attitudes and demand-side barriers such as choices and constraints of employees governing access to training were listed and the feasibility and desirability of such access was examined. The cross-national nature of this study will highlight similarities and differences in approaches in France and Britain. Reasons for the choice of the insurance industry as a case study were explained. The division of the study into three parts and into the following eight chapters was then explained.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND HOW THIS INFORMED METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with a wide variety of theoretical work as the issue of equal opportunities for women in two countries inevitably draws upon work in a number of different fields. Theoretical frameworks are arguably necessary in order to move from subjective analysis towards providing an objective analytical account and to construct a generalised rational explanation for observed phenomena. This approach would not however be accepted by some feminists who believe that theoretical and analytical material is part of the masculinisation of feeling which is not more reliable than subjective experience. However, according to Rubery (1996) research can help identify how institutions and regulations can modify or reduce gender inequality.

As this study deals with the comparison of treatment of men and women at work and attempts to do this by comparing the situation in two nation states, there are inevitably several layers to be examined. The central issue of equal opportunities will first be examined and then the cross-national comparison of the phenomena identified will be considered. The research question at the centre of this study i.e. the nature of discrimination in the workplace regarding access to training for women, will inevitably draw on theories associated with the fields of economics, sociology, and organisational behaviour.

Feminist research has shown renewed interest in the question of discrimination itself over the last few decades. For Harding (1997) it is the questions that are asked, and perhaps even more importantly, the questions which are not asked which are interesting in themselves. For her the nature of the questions posed highlight the definition by academia of what are deemed to be worthy questions for study. These in turn determine to what extent the total picture being examined is adequate and are as important in themselves as are any answers that can be discovered. The nature and extent of discrimination is now being revisited with an increased
awareness of the heterogeneity of the female population. Harding also stresses that women come only in different classes, races and cultures: there is no "woman" and no "woman's experience". This position is in contrast to the master narratives which were accepted in academia, up until the last decades of the twentieth century where social science research often took as its subject of inquiry a male figure as representing the whole of human experience. This situation produced results which were at best "our" history (i.e. men and women) or at more reductive level "his" (i.e. men's) history, although this was never made explicit. It could therefore be contended that through feminist research, there has been a paradigm shift where simply including women affects the boundaries of subjects whereas previously the central issues of all subjects were held to be gender-blind.

To move on to traditional subject disciplines, it can be seen in general that whereas sociological theory is concerned primarily with social class and social stratification to explain social inequality, economists are more interested in earnings and income inequality. Although the two areas are obviously linked when examining gender and equal opportunities in the workplace, it is only through collaborative research groups that the links tend to be made explicit. Interdisciplinarity can provide a great opportunity for synergy, and for re-examination of a question using different research traditions\footnote{It should be noted that interdisciplinarity is a concept which is much more familiar in British than in French universities where subject disciplines such as Women's Studies, European Studies and Cultural Studies are not part of the intellectual landscape. The three existing chairs in feminist studies in French universities created in the eighties were awarded within traditional disciplines of social law, history and philosophy. However, the lack of interdisciplinarity in France due to preference for the perceived rigour of the single discipline specialism means that groups which prize the interdisciplinary team approach such as MAGE (Gender and the Labour Market) within the prestigious state funded national research centre CNRS are attracting much attention in academic circles and have found many opportunities for synergy.}. In this way, theory in one area which has traditionally been regarded as one subject discipline can use the perspective of another discipline to shed new light on a question.
2.2

FEMINIST RESEARCH

One of the goals of feminist research is to analyse discrimination which affects women in society. How this is to be done is more problematic, but theories of how patriarchy operates are particularly useful. Kemp (1997) argues that it is difficult to find a satisfactory answer to questions about a distinctive feminist method, as discussions of method (techniques for gathering evidence) and methodology (a theory and analysis of how research should proceed) have been intertwined with each other and with epistemological issues (issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategy) in both the traditional and feminist discourses. "Method" is often used to refer to all of the above three aspects of research and consequently it is not clear what one should be looking for when trying to identify a distinctive "feminist method of research". She contrasts this with methodology which is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed. However, it must be remembered that feminist applications of theories do not necessarily produce complete and undistorted accounts of gender and of women's activities.

There are four areas of particular interest for the study of access to training within the theoretical work carried out on gender and the labour market. They can usefully be divided into, firstly, the systems argument which analyses the relationship between gender and capitalism from the way that labour is supplied to the market, and, secondly, the arguments relating to the motivations of actors within the systems which concentrate on the demand side of the labour force. These can usefully be subdivided into the biological argument, the rational choice argument and the female heterogeneity argument.

2.3

PATRIARCHY AND CAPITALISM: THE SYSTEMS ARGUMENT

Current feminist research into the influences of patriarchy on the labour market are of particular interest to this study. Marxist feminists held capitalism and patriarchy to be separate if interrelated systems. Beechey (1978, 1982) and Bruegel (1982) had argued that women formed a reserve army of labour for capital and entered or were ejected from the labour market according to the demands of capital which they saw as a gender neutral concept.
Cockburn (1983) also discussed the exploitation of women's labour in the workplace as a part of capitalist production which was taken to be gender neutral.

The dual systems approach challenged the analysis provided by Marxist Feminism since it did not explain how patriarchal relations had existed before the arrival of capitalism (Walby 1990). According to this analysis women belonged to men first and capital second. Since patriarchy predated capitalism it had to accommodate it by paying a family wage. Rather than being ideological in character and limited to the family, as Marxist Feminism contended, it saw patriarchy as being grounded in a material base, as is capitalism. Hartmann (1979, 1981) stressed the role of autonomous patriarchal relations in the production of gendered inequalities within the labour market, and suggested that with the development of capitalism, the labour market had become the major social site in which the material base of patriarchy was secured, through male control of female labour, by excluding women from access to jobs that pay living wages. Job segregation by sex, upheld by male-dominated trade unions and guilds, was seen as the primary mechanism in a capitalist society that maintained the superiority of men over women because it enforces lower wages onto women in the labour market. In a society where heterosexual marriage is the dominant social structure, low wages encourage women to marry, keep them dependent on a male wage-earner and this gives them little alternative but to carry out unpaid domestic work within the family. Having responsibility for domestic work means that women are prevented from acquiring the training they would need to get better jobs in the labour market (Walby, 1990).

Walby (1990:20) defined patriarchy as an interrelated social structure and practices through which men dominate and oppress women, both in paid employment with public patriarchy based on structures such as institutions, and private patriarchy in the home. She stressed the role of trade unions in excluding women from paid employment by using occupational segregation as an exclusionary mechanism. Hartmann's definition is similar since for her, patriarchy is a form of male organisation to further their interests against those of women, especially to control women's wage work. For both Walby and Hartmann, capitalism and patriarchy are theoretically separate but interacting, with Walby seeing the two as conflicting more often than does Hartmann. Walby considers that there has been a shift from excluding women from the public arena to segregating and subordinating women in the public sphere.
Hartmann's analysis highlights the model of the living wage being defined as the amount considered necessary for a man to keep his family whereas a woman's wage is seen as pin-money. However this model is severely subverted in Britain today with the huge increase in part-time work in the service sector giving jobs, albeit still poorly paid and usually part-time, to women, while full-time male unemployment is linked to the shrinking manufacturing sector.

Later work (Acker 1989) stressed that the labour market was not simply a distinct capitalist structure but was an intrinsically gendered formation. Adkins (1992b) criticised Cockburn's explanations of the social structuring of sexuality and gender in the labour market as limited and over-voluntaristic since they exclude the importance of gendered work relations and relations of appropriation in the structuring of both coercive and non-coercive heterosexuality in terms of men's power. For Adkins, work relations are one of the elements constituting heterosexual relations. In her study of gendered work at a hotel and a leisure park she found that engaging in sexual interactions with men was seen as the norm for female workers, and was a situation structured by male power. Although resistance was possible, it carried a high social cost leading to hostility from men in power or dismissal.

Rees (1998) suggests that the complexity of the relationship between capital and patriarchy is manifested in gender contracts. She states that the Parsonian male breadwinner/female homemaker model needs to be replaced with a new gender contract that allows for greater equality between men and women, which means completely rethinking how the gender contract is underpinned in systems and structure coupled with an overhaul of legislation.

2.4
LIBERAL FEMINISM

Gregory and Windebank (2000) contrast the universalistic explanations provided above with particularistic explanations provided by liberal-feminist explanations which take for granted the pre-existing notion of cultural differences between men and women and do not seek to explain them, but rather seek to provide practical solutions for the problems exposed. As we shall see in chapters three and four, much of the literature on training and equal opportunities falls into this category since it is concerned with the practical details of policy rather than the more abstract ideas discussed by practitioners of high theory. Improving access to training and
promotion is one of the variables which may reduce discrimination against women in the labour market. Gregory and Windebank criticise this liberal feminist approach as shallow feminism, since it does not analyse the structures which underpin the status quo regarding women's unequal position regarding paid work in the labour market or unpaid work in the home. They compare it to the microeconomics approach, examined below, since it leans towards individual-oriented explanations of women's work patterns.

2.5
THE BIOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Goldberg (1973, 1993) used an approach based on psychology to stress the impact of physiology of male behaviour. For him there was a universal preference for male dominance in personal and sexual relationships which, at its most basic level, constitutes an invisible barrier colouring work relationships and, at a more developed level, influenced role expectations and behaviour patterns in the workplace. This did not mean that men are more able or competent but that biology predisposes them to seek promotion and that they are more prepared to make sacrifices to achieve this by foregoing other activities and benefits. In this way he stressed that men's work affiliation was higher than women's because of the importance placed on paid employment in society and maintained that any role which acquires high status in the form of high earnings will attract more men than women. Besides being a biologically determinist analysis which does not allow for dynamic change in role expectations over generations, Goldberg's case is undermined by the fact that intra-group variation (i.e. differences between men) regarding work affiliation was found to be as great as differences between men and women. This raises the thorny question of whether it is valid to treat women as a homogeneous group when different results may be found if heterogeneity of women's affiliation to the labour market is postulated. The controversy aroused by Hakim's work (1995, 1996) bears witness to strongly held views on this subject, (Arber, Ginn et al, 1995) as will be seen later in this chapter.

2.6
THE RATIONAL CHOICE ARGUMENT

The newly developing field of feminist economics continues the analysis of the labour market
as essentially gendered by refuting the traditional economic viewpoint that human capital theory can be applied to analyses of propensity to train without regard to gender. The microeconomic argument advanced by Becker (1981, 1991) viewed women's specialisation in unpaid household labour as a mutually beneficial division of labour since the household as a whole was better off if the higher wage earner remained in the labour market. However, in this scenario, women's "choice" is affected by the low wages offered for work seen as typically done by women in a horizontally segregated labour market. Becker's analysis does not take into account the fact that this division of benefits within the household is linked to gendered power structures. With the rise in the number of women in households where they earn more than their male partners, there is rarely a decision made by the male partners to take on more household tasks which would be logical according to Becker's rational choice theory.

Women are to be found more often than men in jobs which have a high turnover, particularly part-time and short contract jobs. The notion of choice in these circumstances is complex, for as Bruegel (1996) points out, it is possible to follow human capital theorists in arguing that women choose occupations in which high turnover is not penalised: but equally the same data can be used to argue that employers select women for occupations where high turnover is not costly. Either way higher turnover amongst women workers is not inherent, but the result of an interaction between occupation and gender. For the purposes of this study, the perception of availability for training which employers and managers have of female workers can be linked to assumptions that they often make that in the majority of cases women have lower work affiliation than male employees.

Hatt (1997) criticises neo-classical economic theory in general and human capital theory in this case for being gender-blind. Both disregard women's activity in the home as non-productive from a market point of view, and human capital theory rests upon the assumption that full-time household responsibilities will lead to a deterioration of those skill levels already acquired through training. She points out that negotiation, time management and prioritisation of tasks are all important skills for those occupying management positions and are also skills for successful parenting, but employers' perception of skills reflects the socially constructed belief that only labour market activity confers skills and therefore these aspects are not rewarded. Although truly competitive markets would make equal opportunity legislation unnecessary since not choosing the best woman or man for the job or for training and promotion would
lead to competitive disadvantage, markets are not perfect and some firms have significant
market power to control their prices, which may be higher due to imperfect recruitment
policies, without losing market share. Men in positions to hire personnel or select employees
for training courses may prefer to select other men through prejudice or tradition, especially
where women are in a small minority and there may be fears that workplace romances and
rivalries could disrupt production. Married men may be perceived as having higher labour
force attachment and women may be judged in biological terms as workers who may cause
disruption by leaving the workplace to have children. She notes that statistical discrimination
occurs when all women are assumed to be interested in childbearing and defined by their
biology even though there may be a large number of atypical cases. Finally, low-skill part-
time workers are easy to replace whereas highly qualified women who have invested more in
their own training are more valuable to employers and employers are more likely to have
family-friendly policies designed not to lose skilled female employees.

2.7
THE FEMALE HETEROGENEITY ARGUMENT

Hakim (1995, 1996) continues the emphasis on agency which was a central part of Becker's
approach. She stresses female heterogeneity which is a result of choices made, reflecting not
just different but conflicting and often ambivalent tastes and preferences between two
qualitatively different life courses. She maintains that women make informed choices as
responsible adults rather than being victims, and that some women choose to be home-centred
with work a secondary activity, therefore uncommitted to work, while others are committed to
work and choose to be career-centred with domestic activities a secondary consideration. She
refers to feminist myths about women's employment (1995), meaning that there are fallacies
that are widely accepted concerning the subject of women and the labour market. According to
Hakim the main myth surrounds rising female employment in Britain, since false claims are
made that the expansion of part-time work will be a catalyst for social and economic change.
After barbed exchanges with a group of eleven academics in the British Journal of Sociology
(Ginn et al 1995, Hakim 1995) Hakim maintained that part-time work does not change a
women's primary self-identity as a housewife, does not change her bargaining power and
weight in decision-making and does not change her role in the household. She stresses that
changes in attitudes are partial and moving at different speeds in different social groups so that
women's primary self-identity as a housewife, does not change her bargaining power and
weight in decision-making and does not change her role in the household. She stresses that
changes in attitudes are partial and moving at different speeds in different social groups so that
there is now a heterogeneous and polarising population of adult women. Hakim stresses the
role of personal choice of women and gives less weight to effects of discrimination.

One of the main methodological criticisms of Hakim's view of women's supposedly lower
work orientation comes from Bruegel (1995) who states that Hakim is reading preferences into
outcomes without considering how circumstances frame preferences. This is a long-standing
criticism made by sociologists of neo-classical economists. Cross-national research may
further challenge Hakim's assumptions that preferences rather than circumstances and
constraints dictate outcomes.

2.8
CROSS-NATIONAL RESEARCH

The second layer of complexity surrounding this study is that it attempts to compare the
phenomenon of gender discrimination within the workplace across two nation states in order
to determine whether it is possible to highlight elements of good practice which may influence
policy debates in the future. The theoretical literature in this area is comparatively recent and
also makes use of interdisciplinarity in many cases. The field of organisational behaviour has
made an important contribution to the theoretical underpinnings of this area of research, as has
industrial sociology. There is a growing body of literature on cross-national comparisons in
Britain and the United States but the field is a newer one in France where, as already noted,
researchers are defined very much by a traditional discipline such as sociology, history, law or
economics.

This can be linked to Galtung's three intellectual styles within the western world Saxonic,
Teutonic and Gallic, referred to by Berting (1987) which illustrates that Anglo-Saxon
researchers tend to prefer empirical studies whereas the Gallic style is to prefer theory building
and philosophical considerations. These different intellectual styles may lead to researchers
from different research traditions distrusting each other's methodology, and with the added
difficulty of linguistic and cultural differences there are often many difficulties in international
comparative research which uses teams from different nationalities.

This is not to say that cross-national research does not have its own rigorous methodology which is informed by different traditions and different disciplines. Hantrais (1990) stresses that the methodology adopted in cross-national comparative research is no different from that used to make intra-national comparisons and that used for other areas of sociological research which can be descriptive, evaluative and analytical.

2.9
THE UNIVERSALIST APPROACH

Cross-national research draws partly on organisation theory, which in the sixties and seventies was influenced by the universalist thesis. This considered organisations to be distinct from societal processes and institutions and tended to emphasise convergent and culture-free elements of organisation in society and in business. The universalist position, believing that a scientifically determinable "one best way" to organise any set of operations must always exist which can be traced back to the ideas of Max Weber and F. Winslow Taylor in the 1940s. From the 1950s a more subtle form of organisational universalism was espoused where technology was seen as an important factor in determining authority structures which then influenced worker attitudes.

Scheuch (1990) stresses that the problem of identifying cross-cultural difference is not new since it was first mentioned by Galton in 1889. "Galton's problem" is the issue of whether a given culture can be thought of as "causing" something, or whether the something is instead the result of diffusion across cultures. He lists important internationally comparative projects in the fifties which he praises for their ingenuity, including the UNESCO projects such as comparison of rates of political participation led by Stein Rokkan, which had identified the problems surrounding equivalence of terminology and highlighted the importance of functional equivalence. He notes that the more general and sustained advances in expertise can be traced back to the 1930s to work done by commercial survey organisations which developed interviewing techniques, panels and the use of systematic observational techniques.

In the 1970s the major problem was seen to be not the collection of data but skills in analysis
broadening the base of observations, rather than any breakthrough in general theory.

The notion that there was one best way to organise a business structure which research could uncover was influenced by research in linguistics in the late sixties and seventies by Chomsky's theory of a universal grammar. Universalism stresses the interdependence of structural dimensions which relegates organisational actors to a residual explanatory importance or ignores them altogether. Comments by Oyen (1990:4) refer to the search for the one best way which underpins universalism as being for some the ultimate goal of cross-national research: "The only logical terminal point for such world-wide comparisons - and terminal it may be - is the discovery of all-embracing "social laws " which either bend towards still higher levels of abstraction or portray fundamental humanistic behaviour in such a way that we are forced to ask whether the results should rather be interpreted as a result of basic biological needs."

A universalist theory which could underpin this study would be the theory that there is one best system to minimise gender inequality in the workplace and that this system would be the best system for all societies. The pitfalls of this notion will soon become apparent.

2.10
THE CULTURALIST APPROACH

Universalism was criticised partly because it did not take account of actors within the theoretical analysis. Rose (1985) explains that a culturalist approach includes actors since it sees them as having internalised a culture which they all share by virtue of their membership in a wider national society and this therefore explains reactions to control systems and even the prejudices of organisational designers themselves. The work of Michel Crozier on French bureaucratic practice (1963) is an example of this but has been criticised for assuming a degree of coherence and consistency in cultural elements and excluding other variables. His links between the Frenchness of French bureaucratic practice and the existence of given institutions whose origin can be traced to historic influences are likened by Rose (1985) to Scott's use of tradition as an explanatory variable in her study of steelworkers in 1956. Rose goes on to state that culturalist explanations of societal variations may be valid but only when other sociological techniques have been used for incorporating social actors into their analysis.
In 1974 Brossard and Maurice set out the specification for a self-consciously societal approach based upon carefully focused investigations with the research design typically adopting matched samples of work organisations in different countries. Their critique of previous methodological techniques was accompanied by a series of empirical studies embodying a conspicuous effort to formulate novel and testable hypotheses. In their view the preoccupation with the universal should be supplanted by a new respect for the investigation of the "societal effect" defined as relatively permanent systemic features specific to named historical societies. They discarded the analytical distinction between the organisation and its environment and focused on phenomena within a society such as interaction of people at work, work characteristics of jobs, systems of recruitment, education, training, remuneration and industrial relations. They stressed the dynamic relationship between actors and society and highlighted qualitative differences.

The societal effect approach is a systemic analysis of social action which emphasises the interconnections between different social spheres such as manufacturing, industrial relations, education, and, particularly relevant for the purposes of this study, training: it recognises that constellations of such interconnections can only be explored by considering historical and ecological factors. In their comparison of societal differences in organizing manufacturing units in France, Britain and Germany the Aix group recommend the use of closely matched pair comparison. They also favour open-ended interviews instead of a more rigorous questionnaire to follow a grounded approach without presuming that response patterns were known sufficiently to warrant questions and response categories predetermined in detail (Maurice, Sorge and Warner 1980).

The Aix group believed that organisations help to shape societal values-systems. The system of control of activities in an organisation cannot be created exactly as organisational controllers wish but it does reflect an effort to impose certain structures which have both intended and unintended effects upon the perspectives, expectations and values of actors. They stressed the importance of training as one element in shaping the complexity of control systems and stated that a low skill workforce usually requires a more elaborate and more
rationalised set of work tasks, and more systemic supervision. They also stated that skills and qualifications could be created internally, customised to organisational needs while pursuing policies designed to increase staff loyalty or by trying to influence the production of a pool of suitable recruits by external institutions concerned with education and training.

Their 1972 Franco-German study had as its purpose to determine how skills and qualifications were distributed in pairs of firms in manufacturing industries and how pay structures mirrored the resulting configurations. Societal effects were found in this study: in France there was a more hierarchical structure with greater dispersion of salary-levels while the German structure was flatter with narrower gaps. In a later study in 1977 they contrasted the German apprenticeship system, which allowed greater mobility between firms, with the French system, which was biased towards abstract principles, to explain how firms in France have had to organise their own training programmes, which inevitably stress only the aspects of technical competence most valued by the employer. They noted the lack of a professionalistic training logic which leads to unevenly built competence based on the peculiarities of the employer's organisation of the firm. They also found that French managers are less mobile than German ones while French manual workers are more mobile, despite the fact that French manual workers have less "polyvalence" (are less multiskilled) than German manual workers.

It is particularly relevant for this study that they note that selection for promotion by the supervisor comes before training, so that the supervisor is the main gatekeeper regarding access to training within the firm. They see the criteria for promotion in the French firms studied as being determined partly by seniority and partly by presumed loyalty to the firm, with age of length of service being taken as a warrant of acceptance of adequate occupational socialisation as well as of acceptance of the firm's values. All of these elements would indicate the tendency to select and train known quantities: those workers who best fit the image of the good worker who would almost certainly be male, given the female workers higher probability of having left the job for a short period in her twenties or thirties due to family responsibilities.

Hantrais (1996) defines the societal approach as one where the researcher sets out to identify the specificity of social forms and institutional structures in different societies to look for explanations of differences by referring to the wider social context. She emphasises the increasing importance of this approach which is seen as increasingly valuable by researchers.
because of the increasing need for international collaboration where the societal context provides a framework. She contrasts it with convergence theory where researchers look for universal trends, particularly in comparisons of advanced industrial societies.

Rubery (1996) finds the societal approach particularly useful for the analysis of gender inequality in the labour market, although it is not without its pitfalls. It takes into account cultural values and can be used to analyse household organisation. Since labour markets have to be understood within a broad societal perspective, the industrial system, the legal and the regulatory system and the social reproduction system are of particular interest. Household organisations are inevitably linked to cultural assumptions regarding appropriate gender roles and skills and the extent to which the notion of the male breadwinner is accepted in a society will have consequences for women's family and domestic responsibilities and consequently on working time patterns and on levels of pay.

Societies may have different degrees of gender segregation influenced by social and welfare systems and the extent to which these modify or reinforce the notion of the male breadwinner. For the purposes of this study, childcare provision and material support for workers who wish to take up training are of particular relevance. Labour market regulations may modify or reinforce gender divergence in working time or pay levels. Patterns of industrial organisations may promote or reduce gender segregation by industry, occupation or organisation, although this does not mean that industries occupations or organisations with a high level of female labour will necessarily fall into the category of those which reduce gender segregation. Claims to be "good" employers for women, such as those made by an insurance industry spokesman at the Select Committee in 1999 need to be carefully evaluated. Similarly, there may be a high level of encouragement of workers to take up training and development opportunities within an organisation which has a strong training culture without there being awareness of equal opportunities policies which would ensure that the status quo is not simply being perpetuated which provides men with greater access. Unless there is clear monitoring of who receives training within an organisation, labour market policies may be assumed to be gender blind and the problem of unequal access for women to training may not be addressed.

Rubery highlights the complexity of measures which aim to reduce gender inequality and warns that the socio-economic context is vital and simply importing policies from one society
and grafting them on to another may have unwanted and undesirable consequences. Secondly, a societal based approach emphasises differences between countries but neglects differences in the interests and fortunes of women in nation states. The problem with focussing on the harmony between the situation of current gender relations and arrangements prevalent in society is that this emphasises compatibility between current arrangements and current social values and minimises inequalities which systems place on women everywhere. The theoretical premises underlying policy development at supranational level are further examined in chapter 5 of this study on training and the European Union.

2.12 CRITICISMS OF THE SOCIETAL APPROACH AS USED BY THE AIX GROUP

Rose (1985) criticises the fact that employees in plants were not systematically interviewed and that perspectives of actors themselves cannot be examined from their own verbatim reports since they are not included. He suggests that knowledge is needed about the desired material and moral utilities that employee groups seek from a union or from their employing enterprise and how far they consider these needs to be met at any one time before any confident judgement can be made about the legitimacy attributed to the influence or control which such organisations have over them. Rose maintained that the analysis of the Aix group did not allow for individual action and did not include analysis of changes which took place. This is particularly important since the voice of the actors was held to be important by the Aix group. The choice of macro level variables can also be criticised since legislation on the firm and employment must constitute one of the most important variables and yet is not referred to. Another major criticism relevant for this study is that the analysis did not include gender as a variable in the acquisition of qualifications. Neither did it take into account the influence of technology or the local labour market. This is clearly relevant for this study as training needs should of course be included in this area since employee expectations and demands on the firm for the opportunity to improve their skills and gain advancement form part of the legitimacy which they attribute to the employer-employee relationship.

Another criticism made by Rose regarding location in time is that material was out-of-date when published and background material relating to the years of growth pre 1973 was linked to fieldwork undertaken post 1973. Fieldwork undertaken for this study took place between
1996 and 1997 and the two areas were therefore studied as closely as possible in time. Location in populations is equally open to criticism since the Aix group constantly acknowledge the limited representativeness of their organisation samples while making larger claims about the organisation relationship in the two countries. This study is equally open to criticism of a sample showing limited representation but makes much less sweeping claims about the organisational relationship underpinning the case study.

Rose praises the wish of the Aix study to remain objective rather than make partisan policy recommendations but it is interesting to note that approval for some features such as worker participation in Germany can be read between the lines. It could be argued that one of the goals of cross-national research is to identify best practice and therefore make policy recommendations. However Rose's criticism can be linked to a the conceptual difference made by Scheuch (1990) between a study such as the Aix study (which was intending to establish a theoretical link between a series of variables and lead to a generalisable statement), rather than a case-study of unique properties leading to a concrete set of recommendations, (as is the case with the cross-national comparison of ongoing vocational training outlined in this study).

Scheuch (1990) makes the point that the country under study may show marked differences between different regions and cites the case of Finland where the northern rural part showed very different characteristics to other Scandinavian countries whereas the southern more developed part showed the same results. He notes that in Eurobarometer surveys carried out by the European Commission since the seventies, variances in attitudinal data can be bigger within countries than between countries and therefore references to countries cannot be taken as explanations. He comments (1990:30) "In such pluralistic societies, survey research can usually be treated as observation under differing conditions and not as a test of the meanings and effects of a culture, of a society or of a polity." The appropriate unit of study may therefore possibly be a region of a country rather than the nation state.

For the purposes of this study, the most relevant criticism is that as Mary (1998) states, women are absent from comparisons used in the societal approach in the 1970s and early 1980s since these approaches concentrated on the dominant figure within the field of industrial sociology which was the male employee in heavy industry. Introducing women into such
analysis calls into question the societal nature of specific instances where only the masculine half of society was previously examined.

2.13
CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISONS IN THE FIELD OF GENDER AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Much research has been carried out on women and the labour market in France and Great Britain. Major issues include structure of part-time work, patterns of working time and female strategies. As previously mentioned, there seems to be a traditional British preference for studies involving exploration through empirical work such as comparing employment histories, whereas in France there is less reliance on empirical data description in favour of the examination of concepts and categories and where theoretical explanation is given a higher profile. The different approaches are now being reconciled in the number of works involving French and British academics working together.

One example of this is the Franco-British Comparison of Family and Employment Careers (Hantrais, 1989) which also shows the difference in areas of interest. In this collection of articles, Barrère-Maurisson comments on concepts, categories and nomenclatures in international comparisons, Daune-Richard writes on classification and Nicole-Drancourt examines conceptual equivalence. The British authors such as Beechey and Roy, Glover and Dale are more concerned with problems involved in empirical methodology.

One of the strengths of cross-national comparisons is that it draws on at least 2 different national intellectual traditions with grounded empirical work balancing theoretical work which may never get to the applied stage. However this may at times lead to frustration as it can appear that more questions are being asked than answered. As Letablier states on problems of comparability from a French perspective (1989, p.32)

"The comparative approach, which is forever moving towards the search for interdependence, relationships and interactions, ends up raising more questions than it answers, and consequently leaves the impression of incompleteness which stems from exaggerating contextual differences."
Women's expectations of the role of the state and of the employer plays an important part. Hantrais (1989) states that in France the state is considered to have the duty to look after children while women are at work, whereas in Britain no assistance is expected from the state. This reflects the way in which the situation as presented in public policy is internalised in the two countries and it may go some way to explaining why French women are convinced that it is possible to reconcile family and professional life, whereas British women are more likely to express their pessimism about the prospects in Britain. However, later research (Gregory and Windesbank, 2000) indicates that French women may be carrying a heavier double burden of childcare and professional work outside the home. Since the state provides childcare which might otherwise oblige male partners to modify their availability for work, French women have arguably been less able to share responsibility for childcare than in Britain where lack of state support means the family has to make individual childcare arrangements, often involving male partners and family members.

2.14 PROBLEMS OF SECONDARY SOURCES

Lane (1990) critically examines the advantages and disadvantages of using international social science data archives for meaningful comparative research since data find their way into archives according to selective procedures, which then condition what is visible for further analysis. This can obviously be changed in the future by introducing theoretical considerations to influence the composition of data, but the contents of present archives are influential in determining the direction of comparative studies using secondary data. For the purposes of this study it is important to note that it is only recently that the European Union has started to produce statistics which are disaggregated by gender and that many private companies simply do not keep such information.

Desrosières (1996) argues that the specificity of the historical traditions of data collection in each country means that the harmonisation of collection, coding and classification of data is never more than partially attainable. Occupational classifications are themselves the product of social political and economic factors which are particular to each country. Glover (1996) gives the example of the Standard Occupational Classification where nursing, a heavily female-dominated job, merits only one occupational title, despite its many sub-categories,
whereas engineering, where women are under-represented, has ten. She also points out that secondary analysts use data that have often been commissioned by governments, with the result that the questions asked and the resulting variables are likely to be related to a specific historically located conception of what is feasible and acceptable. There is therefore a certain tension between the two layers of research in this study since epistemological issues arising from secondary analysis, such as what counts as knowledge from the perspective of a patriarchal society or from a feminist perspective, are far-reaching and may indeed be exacerbated in cross-national research.

2.15 PROBLEMS OF TERMINOLOGY

The concept of gender is taken to be clearly defined, unlike the concept of class, while realising that as Daune-Richard (1989) states" gender is always a variable which disrupts or at least changes "specifications" in the operation of productive and class relationships". It is true, however, that among feminist theorists there is by no means consensus on such (apparently) elementary questions as the following, listed by Flax (1997): "What is gender ? How is it related to anatomical sexual differences? How are gender relations constituted and sustained ? How do gender relations relate to other sorts of social relations such as class or race ? Do gender relations have a history (or many)? What causes gender relations to change over time ? What are the relationships between heterosexuality , homosexuality and gender relations ? Are there only two genders? What are the relationships between forms of male dominance and gender relations? Could/would gender relations wither away in egalitarian societies? Is there anything distinctively male or female in modes of thought and social relations? If there is, are these distinctions innate and/or socially constituted ? Are gendered distinctions socially useful and/or necessary? If so,, what are the consequences for the feminist goal of attaining gender justice." Flax goes on to state "the single most important advance in feminist theory is that the existence of gender relations has been problematised. Gender can no longer be treated as a simple natural fact".

For the purposes of this study, theoretical discussion about the definition of gender, while interesting, is not empirically useful. However, as we have already seen, the fact that statistics are often gender-blind (i.e. not disaggregated by gender) reflects the lack of interest until very
recently of governments and employers in the issue of equal opportunities. Terminology regarding gender has changed over time with the original translation by Le Feuvre (1989) as "rapports sociaux de sexe" now being replaced by the English influenced "genre" as used by the group formed in 1994 to carry out research into gender and the labour market in France which called itself MAGE which stands for Marché du Travail et Genre.

Ongoing vocational training may not be defined in the same way by different countries. It is usually taken to mean formal or semi-formal training where instruction is delivered for part of the time either by a local expert or by an expert sent from the head office of a company or an outside specialist. The Formation Continue has a precise legal definition in French and has to be recorded as part of the levy system on companies. The importance given to training in each country is part of the societal context and is influenced by many factors, as mentioned in the previous chapter. However, there may be problems even with data that have supposedly been harmonised as Dale and Glover (1990) found that the European Labour Force Survey data did not closely match different national definitions of training. A finding that French women received less on-the-job training than British women was seen to be the product of different definitions, rather than a true substantive difference. It is therefore important that underlying categories can be reexamined to check for validity even with data that has been accepted as harmonised. It should also be noted that a state levy system such as the French Formation Continue will have legal definitions of what is training and what attracts funding from sectoral funding organisations whereas the lack of such a definition under the voluntaristic British system means that definitions of what constitutes training may be more elastic and vary from firm to firm.

Severe problems of terminology may occur in cross-national research where terms are not always transferable from one culture to another. However, in this case the concept of continuing vocational training within the workplace is a transferable term which causes no major problems of comprehension and has been defined by the European Commission, although as mentioned above, it is important to check that like is being compared with like.

Finding surveys and secondary analysis of data was more problematic as the topic of equal opportunities and training for women is more often dealt with in the context of training for employment or return to employment rather than access to training and mobility for those
Finding surveys and secondary analysis of data was more problematic as the topic of equal opportunities and training for women is more often dealt with in the context of training for employment or return to employment rather than access to training and mobility for those already in work. However, the study by the FORCE bureau within the European Commission appears to give comparable data on gender and access to continuing vocational training at the European level, using the same definitions and provides a good starting point. It is significant that the publication of the FORCE study was delayed due to problems of verifying data given by each country. As we have seen, the problem is immediately obvious when contrasting the state-levy system in France where returns must legally be filed on amount of training delivered, and the voluntaristic system in Britain where amount of training delivered is not documented in such a rigorous way and may well be inflated to serve the needs of the company. Until recently women were invisible within national data and one of the problems of the British fieldwork was that figures were not automatically kept to show what percentage of training was received by male and female workers.

2.16
HYPOTHESES ON WHICH THIS STUDY IS BASED

The hypotheses for this study are as follows. Firstly, a patriarchal society where women have primary responsibility for childcare and men have traditionally been responsible for work outside the home will lead to men and women being treated differently at work. This includes choices made about work and structure of work (i.e. full-time or part-time work) and access to training and development. Secondly, treatment may be mitigated by State legislation or European legislation. Thirdly, state infrastructure (training system, childcare infrastructure, development of equal opportunities culture) in Britain or France may have an impact on equality of access to training at work. Fourthly, it may be possible to highlight best practice by comparing two different types of infrastructure. These hypotheses will be revisited in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

2.17
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has reviewed theoretical approaches most relevant for this study. In the first part,
the importance of feminist research was highlighted and the relative importance given by some theorists to patriarchy and capitalism was weighed up. Universalistic explanations as provided by these approaches were contrasted with liberal feminist analysis. The relevance of the biological argument, the rational choice argument and the female heterogeneity argument to literature surrounding equal opportunities for women at work was examined. Feminist analysis has stressed the importance of gender as a category which was for a long time ignored in academic research, and has highlighted similarities in material problems faced by women everywhere.

In the second part, the importance of the existing literature on cross-national research was critically examined, including the universalist approach, the culturalist approach and the societal approach. It is disappointing for the purposes of this study that no further work has been done by the Aix group in financial or service industries and is limited to the shrinking sector of manufacturing. A major criticism of work carried out by the Aix group is that their approach exaggerated both the internal coherence of national systems and the differences between societies. A second major criticism of the Aix school was that their research ignored the importance of gender and took male workers to be the norm for all workers. However, it is now useful to develop societal analysis further and use the institutionally informed relativist approach which founders of the societal effect advocated to create a framework for examining gender and employment issues in two different countries. The extent to which theory meets practice in the examination of equal opportunities for women and ongoing training at work in Britain and France will be discussed in the last chapter of this study.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE ON TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of training opportunities for women is a complex issue and must be considered within its socio-economic context in each country. Initial training can be viewed as a branch of educational policy, often with the label of Vocational Education and Training (VET) while the area covered by human resource management within businesses is usually called ongoing training or Continuous Vocational Training (CVT). It is the second category which is the prime focus for this study, although initial training obviously provides the base on which training in the workplace later builds. Both aspects are influenced by government economic policy, industrial policy and social policy and the issue of training has a highly political component, which may be affected by changes in government policy at national level or policy at the wider European level or again at regional and local level. The ethics of training, whom to train and who has access to training and the issues of equality of opportunity, empowerment and promotion that may be linked to it are all highly emotive issues. As stated in the introduction, there are democratic arguments and commercial arguments in favour of equality of opportunity and it is rare to find organisations where lip service is not paid to one or both arguments, even if the reality is not commensurate with the organisational beliefs expressed.

Conflict between different interest groups based on gender, race ethnicity and age shapes the social context in which training takes place, and the policy context is shaped by long-term prospects such as demographics and the needs of the labour market. According to the Aix-en-Provence school of industrial sociology the issue should be situated in the broadest context possible to appreciate all the factors which impinge upon it. It is useful to take a multidisciplinary approach to the issue of training opportunities for women since so many areas shape the context within which it takes place. Relevant literature can be found within the academic disciplines of sociology, economics, history and law as well as the multidisciplinary fields of women's studies, business studies and European studies.
This chapter deals with continuing vocational training provision within companies for employees in France and Britain. After a description of legislative frameworks of both countries, the literature on training and equal opportunities in both countries is discussed with the aim of highlighting the problems identified by experts within the literature on gender and work. The empirical evidence on gender and training is compared and contrasted in chapter 4 with an overview of how problems are addressed by policies and programmes at national level within France and Britain.

A training culture where equal opportunities clearly exists in terms of equal access for men and women to training programmes would be deemed to be successful, as it would demonstrate that the playing field at that stage is adequately level. However, it does not necessarily follow that even equal opportunities on the level of access to training would automatically translate into reduction of vertical segregation and an equal numbers of women and men present at upper levels of the hierarchy. Further studies are needed to identify which other elements besides training are determinants of promotion.

While attempting to compare like with like, it will be seen that the complexity of the legal framework of French training provision is not matched by the voluntarist arrangements in Britain. This leads to a situation where there is much greater statistical documentation of French provision since the law requires it. As will also be seen, areas of interest in literature surrounding training and equal opportunities differ greatly between the two countries. Where such studies exist, cross-national studies have been used to bring out comparative points.

3.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT: LEGISLATION ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN BRITAIN

In Britain there existed a form of state-levy system at industry board level in the 1960s and 1970s which raised funds for ongoing training. While this was subject to the usual criticisms of inefficiency since firms had to contribute to a central organisation rather than spending this money on funding their own training programmes directly, many critics deplored the abolition of this system which took place at the end of the 1970s with the election of the Conservative
government. For Hutton (1991) this was part and parcel of the attitude towards choice and voluntarism of the Conservative government. He commented "Employers do not invest resources in human capital that can walk out of the door, especially as the recession deepens and the most urgent strategic requirement is survival." Since the 1980s training in Britain has been of an increasingly piecemeal nature. The system of Training and Education Councils set up by the Conservative government in the 1980s and based on a voluntarist liberal concept of co-operation between TECs and companies to encourage training was deemed by the majority of experts to be a failure. Lack of regulation led to accusations of financial mismanagement as well as concern about the quality of training provided. Some attempt was made in 1991 to establish National Targets for Education and Training on the recommendation of the Confederation of British Industry and this was followed in 1995 by emphasis on tackling regional and gender differences in attainment (NACETT, 1995).

According to a European Business Survey carried out by the company Grant Thornton in 1994 only 7% of British firms were planning to carry out training in 1994, compared to the European average of 10%. One in five, double the European average, said that this was because they did not perceive a need for training. Lack of government support was only given as a limiting factor by 14% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), suggesting an entrenched reluctance to invest in training. It would not be surprising that equal opportunities and maximisation of the human resources of the female workforce were not given high priority when the overall picture of the situation regarding ongoing training in Britain is so gloomy.

When the Labour Party was in opposition in 1994, Robin Cook (Guardian,1994) claimed that deregulation of the labour market in Britain had proved synonymous with deskilling, as a casualised low wage workforce has emerged as a badly trained workforce. He did not mention women as a specific group but jobs are currently being lost in the manufacturing industries which were carried out by full-time male employees and the service sector is still expanding by taking on part-time female workers. He bemoaned the fact that Britain's only medal at the Skills Olympics was in hairdressing, which is, incidentally, a female dominated profession where many of the high-profile top hairdressers are male, whereas Taiwan won eighteen medals. However, despite the election of the Labour government in May 1997, there was no mention of any move towards obliging firms to account for their expenditure on
training employees. The reference to a state-levy system in the Labour manifesto was dropped in 1996.

Finegold (1988) asked why modern policy-makers and other economic actors are not moved to improve matters where a situation of low skills prevails. His analysis draws on game theory to explain why, when alternative outcomes are possible, rational actors may behave so as to preserve an outcome which is sub-optimal from the point of view of society in the country as a whole. Thus under certain conditions it can be perfectly rational for a manager to pursue a low-skills strategy. Some managers are likely to opt for low levels of training since they are under pressure to produce short-term results. Individuals are also restricted by short-term constraints and lack of security. When governments also feel constrained to take short-term perspectives, the outcome of the "game" played by the three actors (government, firms and workers) is what Finegold terms "a low-skills equilibrium". It could be argued that workers, both male and female, in Britain are suffering the effects of this low-skills equilibrium because of the lack of government intervention to increase the amount of training carried out by firms.

Many studies of ongoing vocational training do not focus on differing treatment of men and women but on the level of qualifications of the workforce and the general problem of the quality and provision of training which hinders labour productivity and weakens Britain's performance (Felstead 1997). There is a well-documented analysis of the failure of training in Britain which condemns voluntarism particularly in a European context. (Auer 1992, Fletcher 1995, Finegold and Soskice 1988, Prais et al 1989, Shackleton 1992, Steedman 1987). Other studies at the beginning of the 1990s focused on the need for training as the Single European Market became more important (Amin 1990) without highlighting the particular problems faced by women.

3.3
MAJOR ISSUES REGARDING LABOUR FORCE SEGREGATION AND ACCESS TO TRAINING IN BRITAIN

There is a large body of British literature dealing with access to training for women which gives a historical overview of women's position in the job market. These studies tend to highlight discrimination against women as shown by their low representation in important
positions of power and wage differentials which operate against women. (Mincer 1985,
with women's role as primary caregivers in a family situation, whether with children or
dependent relatives and consequent constraints on working time. Availability for paid work is
clearly linked to childcare provision, as will be shown.

Rees (1992) highlights the variety of exclusionary mechanisms which restrict women's access
to training and promotion, such as the "old boy" network, the gendered discourse of
managerial potential and the insistence of unbroken work records for promotion. Gender
segregation is reproduced at key points of recruitment, training and work organisation. She
argues that various forces work against women in the employment market, one of which is
patriarchy. She sees the state as one element of the forces of patriarchy, but considers the
ideology of the family to be the influential factor in shaping both individuals' choices and
employers' recruitment and human resource strategies. The state supports this ideology in
continuing to make provisions based on a model which does not apply to the majority of
families: bread-winner husband, wife at home, two school-age children. This develops
arguments put forward by Walby (1990) that patriarchy and capitalism combine to produce
gender segregation in the labour market. However, Walters and Dex (1992) suggest that this is
a simplistic argument as the state is not clearly a simple patriarchal force as is sometimes
argued, and that the state does not work systematically in all countries. They therefore cast
doubt on the accuracy of what they refer to as current versions of the dual systems of
patriarchy and its operation through capitalism, as discussed in chapter 2.

There is a large body of literature concerning the reinforcement of class and gender relations
following the introduction of new technology (Cockburn 1983, 1986, 1991, Lane 1988,
Crompton and Sanderson 1990, Wajcman 1991). Lane (1988) has shown the importance of
gender in determining what counts as a higher level skill in clerical work, finding that there is a
correlation between women's work and skills which are given a low value. This mirrors
research carried out in France by Margaret Maruani (1989, 1991) which will later be
discussed. The social construction of high-level IT work is increasingly exclusively masculine,
with lack of training opportunities for women acting as a barrier between low-level work and
high-level work characterised by increased credentialism.
Cockburn (1981) uses a materialist analysis to examine the way that male power takes on particular forms under capitalism, citing the example of the introduction of new technology into the newspaper industry. She found that employers and unions had combined to systematically exclude women from training opportunities which would have advanced their careers. Later work by Cockburn (1991) shows that the workplace equality movement is essentially contradictory since on the one hand sex equality is a demand women make on their own behalf, including the right to training and prospects, while on the other hand it is a policy introduced into organisations by owners and managers on behalf of women. She stresses that this is for organisational ends rather than concern for social justice and is done to improve recruitment and retention of women whose qualities are perceived as necessary to the organisation, or because the management of these organisations are concerned about their public image. Firms may therefore have an interest in appearing family-friendly which is not linked to altruism but to commercial concerns. One of these may be concern to attract workers for whom this is an important issue. Examples of this can be seen in the banking sector where workplace creches were instituted in order to encourage trained staff to return as soon as possible after maternity leave, but this has not yet become an important issue in the insurance sector, as will be seen.

Some research leads to optimistic conclusions, if employers are motivated by the need to recruit and retain women employees in period of labour shortage. Rees (1992) finds that a small number of employers are in favour of the concept of the family friendly firm, and that women are increasingly becoming empowered by forming their own networks.

Cockburn (1990) distinguishes between "égalité des chances" (equality of opportunity) and "égalité des faits" (equality of outcomes) stressing the importance of the second since women's past history and present circumstances prevent them taking up the opportunities offered and competing on equal terms in the use of them. She therefore advocates positive action particularly in the area of paid maternity leave and special training programmes. Article 4 of the UN Convention of 1979 supports positive action for women but the extent of permitted discrimination is extremely small amounting to little more than sex specific training for a particular occupation or workplace in which one sex can be shown to be under-represented. Cockburn considers women to be defined as the maternal sex, whether or not they have or want to have children and therefore defined in domesticity.
3.4
HORIZONTAL SEGREGATION AND ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR WOMEN ENTERING THE LABOUR MARKET.

This is clearly linked to patterns of education which still result in female students being directed towards, or choosing to follow, non-technical and non-science based subjects. This is referred to in France as absence of "la mixité" and is linked to a horizontally segregated labour force. Apprenticeship systems are still constructed with the idea of a typical male student in mind and female students have to break the barrier of gender stereotyping as well as employers' resistance to change. Rubery and Smith (1995) state that training programmes for young people have tended to reinforce and not reduce sex segregation. This reinforcement comes both from the preferences of trainees and from the set of financial incentives in place for training providers. Since funding is linked to successful completion rates and obtaining employment, training providers have a financial incentive not to risk training women (or men) for non-traditional jobs where obtaining employment may be more difficult.

Gender segregation in education has been well documented (Raffe 1988, Skeggs 1989, Abbott and Wallace 1990). The 1970s and 1980s saw the introduction of initiatives to break down sex-stereotypical choices such as the Girls into Science and Technology Project (GIST), the Girls and Occupational Choice Project (GAOC), the Equal Opportunities Commission/Engineering Council's Women into Science and Engineering (WISE), the Schools Council Reducing Differentials Project and the Girls and Technical Education project (GATE). Rees (1992) considers that the impact of these initiatives has been marginal, since for many girls their choices are severely constrained by the manifestations of class and patriarchal relations in the structure of local labour-market opportunities, the attitudes of local employers, teachers and careers officers, parental and peer group pressures and knowledge of occupations appropriate to gender, class and race. She considers that while special initiatives are designed to open girls' eyes to opportunities in male-dominated fields, they are unlikely to attract them of their own accord, since they accentuate the fundamental contradiction between women's role in work and the home.

Initiatives have been found to be more effective in changing attitudes rather than behaviour. People will pay lip service to notions of equality of opportunity but there may be little or no
change in patterns of selection and recruitment, including selection for training and grooming for management. The capacity of schemes to counteract socialising agents behind option and career choices is obviously very limited. The gap between aspirations and expectations means that girls are conscious of the limits of gender and class in making what they consider to be appropriate choices (Holland 1987). This has clear implications for career choices made by girls and women who may be put off from entering what is perceived to be a male-dominated profession, although this can change over time as a critical mass of women is reached. However, the fear of encountering hostility or being seen as unfeminine should not be underestimated when such career choices are made by females. Some studies show that the significance of cultural difficulties for women in working with engineering were found to be greater than problems of the work itself (Newton and Brocklesby 1982).

The vast majority of training programmes attended by women are in professions that are seen as typically female: secretarial work, hairdressing, nursing and the caring professions. Schemes to train women for new technology are often higher level secretarial courses whereas women-only courses in training for new technology are often cut due to lack of funding, such as the Master's programme in Information Systems run by the University of the West of England which closed in 1993 after only one cohort successfully completed the course. Wickam (1985) focuses on the deterrents to young females which stop them undertaking training in male-dominated professions. These include lack of qualifications in the right subjects taken at school, but also social deterrents where young females fear that their image will suffer if they enter a typically male-dominated profession and fear of isolation. A critical mass of women is needed to mitigate these fears.

Since women often lack the assertive skills valued in the workplace it is difficult to estimate how much they may be disadvantaged by lack of confidence which leads to unwillingness to apply for training if there is any on offer. Many training advisers make a strong case in favour of women-only training programmes to overcome initial difficulties. Acceptance of the need for positive action tends to be more widespread in the public sector whereas private employers are often loathe to antagonise male employees by providing special course for women even where it is clear that women are under-represented in managerial positions.
In the 1980s the Training Agency, as the Manpower Services Commission before it, did not prioritise training for women returners. WOW, Wider Opportunities for Women, comprising short courses with training and work placements, received 0.01% of all funding on training in the early 1980s (Dept of Employment 1990, Table B3.1). The Training Agency's major report on Training in Britain paid scant attention to the issue of women returners (Training Agency, 1989a and 1989b). Payne (1990) states that policy in the 1980s encouraged financing of training of the long-term unemployed with Employment Training programmes, which gave better access to men who were more likely to qualify to be part of this group according to government criteria. She advocates the system set up during the 1970s under a Labour government where courses were provided without means testing for any woman who wished to return to work after an absence from the labour market, and for older women who wanted to enter the labour market for the first time. She argues that this produced high quality training as against the Conservative government's model of lower quality Employment Training which replaced it in the 1980s.

Encouragement of self-funded training also discriminates against women as the poorer gender. Employers are likely to discriminate against women whose record is not proven, so that only government training will give women the opportunity to move out of a low skilled job into a better one with a different employer. Ageism, where workers over 35 are considered to be less suitable for training, obviously discriminates disproportionately against women returners. It may even be easier to obtain qualifications which enable entry further up the hierarchy rather than trying to move up within a hierarchy by obtaining internal training and as we shall see, this has implications for self-funding of training programmes where employer funding is not available.

As well as employers perceiving female employees to be less reliable in remaining in the workforce than male employees, trainers in the field may have lower expectations of women returners. John Parker, a trainer from Scotland, commented at a conference at Leicester University on training, on September 3/4th 1994, that women tended not to go where
unemployed adults (sic) go, and therefore were more difficult to attract. His view was that training for work was only one of the choices open to women and this meant that when faced with unattractive or difficult tasks women drop out of training courses and go back to their other job of childcare. It is of course possible that women attending courses which are geared towards male returners who have been made redundant may not have the same needs and may need to break through attitudinal barriers on the part of some trainers who have no investment in equal opportunities. It may well be more difficult to place well-qualified women returners in middle management jobs where sexism and ageism are prevalent.

Studies on women returners tend to show similar results: they tend to have a low level of confidence, they need childcare provision, they have poor access to resources and are disadvantaged by impoverished information and poor access to networks which are necessary to secure well-paid secure jobs. (Wickham 1986).

Rubery et al (1998) note that in the UK women face a double problem since they have less chance of receiving training than men and if they do receive training, the tradition of informal and non-credentialised training in the UK means that it is not transferable to other jobs. If a British woman interrupts her employment, she is therefore vulnerable to downgrading.

The European Social Fund uses guidelines for funding courses based on estimations of percentages of trainees who are likely to be successful in finding employment at the end of the course. This often discriminates against women returners since courses are often a stepping stone in the process of confidence building rather than being narrowly vocational. Fewer women than men qualify for aid to the long-term unemployed since they are more likely to be unregistered. Britain’s poor record in funding training for those already in work was highlighted at the beginning of the 1990s by the insistence of the European Social Fund that funding should not only be spent on training the unemployed as Britain had been doing, but that projects concerning training for those already in work should be added. The withholding of funds by the ESF until Britain could demonstrate that investment was being made in both types of training demonstrates that sanctions were needed to achieve this.
ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN FULL-TIME WORK IN BRITAIN.

This is an area where equal opportunities are often denied to women, particularly in the private sector where equal opportunities monitoring is not given the same priority as in the state sector. There is a huge gap in the literature on training in this area, possibly because figures disaggregated by gender are not always available. As noted in Chapter 1 the production of statistics is subject to political decisions about what should be visible and the lack of statistics which are disaggregated by gender underline the lack of importance given to this subject until recently.

Since the French Formation Continue system requires that such figures be kept whereas the voluntarist British system has no such demands, the availability of statistics in this area is inevitably unbalanced in favour of the French system. There have been few studies of access to training and equal opportunities for those women already employed although in the 1990s this issue started to receive more attention. This is obviously of prime importance in assessing the reasons why so few women climb the managerial ladder.

Inequality of training provision is highlighted in many works but as discussed in chapter 2, class is seen by some as a more important variable than gender. Cockburn (1991) links discrimination against women to the patriarchal nature of capitalism and extends this to include discrimination on grounds of race, class and disability. She is in favour of the enabling of many voices in negotiation as opposed to the will of the majority being given precedence.

However, awareness of the importance of gender in training and employment is given recognition in recent studies such as Gallie and White (1993) where the demographic time bomb of fewer young people arriving on the job market is linked to recognition of the importance of women in the ever-expanding service sector.

Training increases with employment stability. This point is made by Rainbird (1990), who believes that the economic climate in Britain where employers see workers as short-term employees, coupled with reduction in workers' rights, is not conducive to encouraging
investment in training. Failure to train may be linked to a quicker turnover of staff as in some countries there is greater labour market mobility than others. Median figures for the 1993 OECD study were 7.7% years tenure in France, 4.4 years tenure in Britain and 3 years in the U.S. This suggests that Britain is closer to the American model of labour mobility coupled with lack of training rather than the European model. These are however gross figures making no allowance for profession or gender. The OECD study also showed that countries with longer-term employment relationships are also the countries with better records on in-work training. In France 30% of employees received training, whereas in the U.S.A. only 17% of employees were trained.

At the beginning of the 1990s there was arguably a new emphasis on training as a labour retention strategy in areas such as catering (Rees and Fielder 1992). General training such as customer relations and Total Quality Management schemes to improve the skills of the workforce may benefit women disproportionately, as they are more likely to be among the unskilled and semi-skilled sections of the population. However, lack of confidence of women workers may limit the number of women coming forwards if promotion is always based on a "hands-up" strategy. The most popular strategy for three quarters of employers still seems to be more effective competition for the shrinking numbers of young people (NEDO/TA 1989). Women will tend to benefit if employers change their strategies due to demographic factors and concentrate on changing the type of worker recruited and training up existing employees. Clerical workers, of which the majority are women, could benefit in this way.

3.7 ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN PART-TIME WORK IN BRITAIN.

Since women make up the overwhelming majority of part-time workers, in Great Britain as in France, different treatment of part-time and full-time workers constitutes a particularly clear case of discrimination against women. This study does not have the scope to deal with such a wide-ranging issue in depth but it is useful to examine some of the implications for training. Rights to redundancy, childcare support, and other areas are reduced for part-time workers, as is access to training and therefore promotion. While the rights for part-time workers may have improved since the adoption of the European Social Chapter by the Labour government at the end of the 1990s, part-time workers are often regarded as employers as being more transient
than full-time staff and are often not informed of training opportunities.

The increase in part-time female employment is expected to continue, growing by 500,000 by the year 2000 according to a 1994 report by the Equal Opportunities Commission, with the male labour force set to decline by 300,000. This means that full-time blue-collar jobs are being replaced by part-time jobs, often involving minimal skill input and low wages. Women are more likely than men to be trapped in "Mcjobs" where training is not available. Frequent references to flexibility in new working practices mask the negative consequences of insecurity of employment which can be as distressing as unemployment itself, particularly where income is unpredictable (Burchill, OUP, 1994).

The importance of gender in the issue of flexibility is examined by Beechey and Perkins (1987), Gregory (1987) O'Reilly (1994) and Walby (1989). However, it is significant that the issue of gender and the part-time workforce is often discussed in relation to employers' preferences for female employees in the service sector and the consequent lack of employment for men in this area. That is to say the problem is posed in terms of the problem for the male workforce in these jobs being unavailable to them rather than the often disadvantaged status of the female workforce.

3.8 CONTENT OF TRAINING COURSES

There are a number of works which advise on the construction and implementation of training courses for women (Willis and Daisley 1992, Morris 1993, Wilson 1995). Recommendations centre on the need for confidence building, preferably in all-female groups and with a female tutor, childcare provision, recognition of skills and achievements not always valued by employers and image projection. This last element appears to be a growth industry, with companies such as Colour Me Beautiful trading on the disproportionate importance given to women's appearance in the workplace. Colwill and Vinnicombe (1991:47) provide a 12 point summary of recommendations, but add the proviso that training programmes specifically designed for women in management do not provide the complete answer to the problems women managers face at work and are only a starting-point, albeit a cathartic one. They stress that training programmes are most effective when supported by good family, organisational
and social arrangements which take into account the issues raised by women having careers.

3.9
ATTITUDES OF WOMEN TOWARDS TRAINING

One of the reasons popularly advanced for women's absence from higher management positions is unwillingness to invest in improving their suitability for such positions by gaining more qualifications. This is linked to rational choice theory as discussed at length in Chapter 2, but we see here some of the applied studies which examine this question. It is a vital issue when examining training managers' perceptions since managers may consciously or unconsciously discriminate against women if they believe that women are less interested in training and development than men as they often have childcare responsibilities and therefore are less available.

Payne (1990) shows in her evaluation study of women returning to the workforce who benefited from a TOPS/OJTS scheme that women are not a less reliable source of labour than men and found jobs more quickly than men, with more women improving their earnings after training than men. Dex (1988) in a study on women's attitudes to work bases her analysis on the 1980 Women and Employment survey as well as on results from the British Social Attitude Surveys. She concludes that the old stereotypes are clearly inappropriate, and that this is not just because women have changed over time in their attitudes towards work but because there are considerable variations between women, not just by age and life cycle, but according to their experience, education and prospects. Dex found that the more controls one can exert on the comparison, the more similarities between the gender groups emerge. The increase in part-time work is not dependant on supply-side choices made by women but is rather a demand-led phenomenon due to employer preference. This may tend to increase as the current employment model in Europe tends towards a reduction in the stable core workforce and an increase in the periphery of part-time and short-term contract work.

Asplund (1990) found in interviews with women managers that women want to do "something interesting" whereas men want a career. Women in middle management were also more likely than men to explain their promotion in terms of chance rather than concerted effort on their part. Women were more inclined to mention psychological factors linked to career
motivation such as "developing myself" and "developing my inner resources". Men saw power and status as their prime motivation whereas women put salary before status, after which they mentioned social value (working together with other people and being able to develop others) as a major motivating factor. She found that women are career orientated to the same degree as men but they experience more hindrances and problems and get less support from male bosses. However, in organisations where the culture is effective and truly goal-oriented, women do have the same opportunities as men. The results of interviews of women by Asplund suggested that women cannot get the kind of training that leads to promotion, they start off in jobs which do not lead to promotion and bosses take less notice of women. These women referred to factors connected with the job and personnel policy whereas the men, on the other hand, looked for psychological explanations in the personal situation or the mentality of the women, such as lack of support from their families, unwillingness to take risks, and not really wanting promotion. Women had greater faith in education and formal competence than men, being more likely to acquire extra qualifications at evening class, whereas men acquired the same type of knowledge by a residential course or by self tuition. She suggests that companies are loath to provide training for employees over 35, which discriminates against women returners. Some of these issues are taken up in fieldwork for this study in chapter 7.

As already discussed from a theoretical perspective in chapter 2, Cockburn raises the question of whether many women prioritise what she calls "a social orientation over a narrow task orientation" (1990:71). She sees this as a quest for a healthy balance between work and life and refusal to espouse values in a macho business culture where long hours at the office are seen to be the prerequisite for promotion. The arguments put forward by Hakim (1991, 1995) and explored in greater detail in chapter 2 are that working women may be classified into two qualitatively different types: the uncommitted, who choose flexible employment in order to prioritise their family commitments and the committed who opt for full-time employment. The uncommitted may be satisfied with their work despite low pay and other intrinsic factors of the job if factors such as convenience and flexible hours are most important to them. The committed women decide early in their work-life trajectories that paid employment will be more important to them.

Beck (1992) has the same perception of individual choices being made by women within a masculinist rather than a neutral or woman-friendly culture. He argues that in the late
twentieth century there has been a greater abandonment of fixed identities as women enter paid work although these choices are still circumscribed by a masculinist work culture. The equality agenda of emancipatory politics is now seen as overtaken by the reflexive project of the self in a post-traditional order. To put it more simply, women weigh up the pros and cons of decisions given the reality of the workplace which may be unwelcoming to them. To be successful at work they have to behave as surrogate men and have unbroken work histories which is incompatible with childcare, particularly in Britain where there is no systematic childcare provision provided by the state as in France.

3.10 CONCLUSIONS ON CONTINUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN GREAT BRITAIN

The issue of equal opportunities for women concerning access to training to work has only recently started to receive special attention. Britain's poor levels of qualifications as demonstrated by its lowly position in the world skills league and the issue of training for the unemployed are both given far greater prominence in Britain than the issue of ongoing training for those already in work, and courses have only recently been set up to target women returning to the workforce. Previously the vast majority of training courses were typically aimed at male workers in the manufacturing sector.

Notions of qualifications and job definition are not gender blind. Historically, women's work has been downgraded and linked to innate talents based on gender rather than skills which were valued and kept within the male professional sphere. Many studies have been carried out of the way in which women's participation in the labour market has been affected by traditionally having responsibilities for childcare and how this role as childcarer has conflicted with equal opportunities at work. (Bridgwood and Savage 1993, Dex et al 1995). Although in Britain childcare is regarded a private issue rather than the public responsibility of the state and therefore little formal assistance has been given to working mothers, numbers of women in part-time and full-time work rose massively in the last decade of the twentieth century. Part-time women workers in Britain are doubly disadvantaged since they do not have the same rights to training as full-time workers and are seen as having lower levels of work affiliation than full-time workers. As discussed under supply-side features in chapter 1 dealing with constraints on women at work, employer perception of the commitment of women at work is
important in determining access to training since identifying part-time work with lack of commitment to a job will mean that the employer is unwilling to invest in training that category of worker. Patriarchal attitudes of employers and legislators about the place of women in society and their role as present or potential future childcare providers within the family reflect legislation which upholds tradition and the status quo.

It should be borne in mind that the lack of state-funded childcare in Britain may well mean that full-time work is not an option for many women who are the primary source of childcare provision and given the higher proportion of male than female unemployment in Britain, there are contradictions surrounding any government measures which give women greater access to full-time employment by facilitating their entry into the job market. Measures introduced by the Blair government such as the Working Families Tax Credit (1999) may enable more money to become available for the low-paid and this is likely to particularly benefit women. However, such measures cannot compensate for a tradition within which the state has abnegated responsibility for childcare, as will later be discussed. The low base from which the government had to start is shown by Toynbee and Walker (2001) who state that by June 2000 there were still only 256 not-for-profit nurseries, all with shaky funding which needed to be renewed on a rolling basis, while the private sector nurseries were unaffordable for many mothers. By early 2001 there was still only one place for every seven children under the age of eight, including the private sector. An unwelcome consequence of increased job opportunities in an expanding economy was that even the availability of childminders decreased, dropping by 8% in 1999, as they left low-paid work to seek better financial rewards.

When evaluating the importance of demand-side barriers, or women's choices, which was highlighted in chapter 1, these may be psychological, or due to socialisation or based on individual choices but they are arguably first and foremost influenced by material circumstances. In the current situation, state provision or lack of provision has a huge impact on the structure of childcare and this determines the place of women with families within the economy and the gender/employment contract seen as the norm within that society. This can be linked to the dynamic societal model proposed by O'Reilly (1995) in chapter 1 where state, the family and the economy interact with each other.

The state and the economy have an impact on the existence of a training culture and the level
of equal opportunities within that culture is influenced by these two as well as the position of women within the family. In Britain, as we have seen, over recent years there has been a move away from State intervention towards greater liberalism and voluntarism, so that any input by the State into organisations such as training boards in the 1960s and 1970s became weakened in the 1980s and 1990s by the move towards emphasis on competition and the free market under successive Conservative governments.

There is little literature on ongoing training for women in Britain and even the concept of this is not as clear as the notion of rights to training in France, where part-time workers have the same rights as full-time workers. European legislation has had little impact on the lives of women at work except for the small number who benefit from projects funded by the European Social Fund to help them return to work. The European dimension is discussed at greater length in chapter five of this study.

3.11
THE FRENCH SYSTEM: LA FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE CONTINUE

The socio-economic context of ongoing training in France is characterised by the state-levy system which brings with it a complex legal framework. All companies with more than ten employees are obliged to participate in training its staff and must fill in a form (No.24-83) showing that it has spent a minimum of 1.5% of the wages bill on training, either by providing training courses itself or by paying the sum to the OPCA (Organisme Paritaire Collecteur Agrée) (Funding body which collects training funds, divided into different bodies for different industries.) Its origins are to be found in the aftermath of the social upheaval of May 1968 in France but as many experts have commented, equality for women was not one of the priorities of the events of that period.

The role of the Formation Continue in France, set up by the law of July 16th 1971, was originally a radical one: to enable all workers, both male and female, who did not have the opportunity to continue their education to improve their position in society by giving them access to training at work. The law was the product of inter-sectoral agreements among the social partners and, possibly due to the relatively high input from employees, enshrined the objective of lifelong education for all as well as the objective of improved economic
efficiency. However, any reference to education of workers is not differentiated by gender and it could be argued that without any extra measures to encourage female workers to train, the status quo where agreements were made between employers and male dominated trades unions was unlikely to benefit female workers. Even if the notion of lifelong education for all is a commendable one, it was not until 1983 that measures to implement equality were introduced and, as will be seen, their effectiveness can be called into question.

Méhaut (1996) highlights the changes since 1971 and states that the present day situation has changed because obtaining protection against unemployment is what now underlies workers' motivation in receiving training. Some career paths are still clearly mapped out, such as progress from technician to engineer, whereas other training may provide an individual with a greater level of transferable skills which may not lead to promotion but which may guard against unemployment. The growth of the tertiary sector has made it more difficult to classify workers than when there were clear demarcation lines in manufacturing jobs. Méhaut points out that those that change jobs frequently are those that have least access to training beyond induction training.

As France has increased investment in training for young people and for the unemployed, funding for the Formation Continue has inevitably suffered and numbers of trainees have decreased tenfold in 20 years. Méhaut's report is concerned with class mobility rather than the issue of gender but he does point out that the increase in working women has not led to changes in lifestyles. This means that women have significantly less free time than men since they still bear the main responsibilities within the family and may therefore be discouraged from taking courses offered through the Formation Continue.

Méhaut sees the European tradition of life-long learning which for him is linked to voluntarism, as providing a different focus to the notion of workers advancing themselves through the Formation Continue which is part of the French dirigiste statist tradition of government intervention in the education of the individual. Adopting a European model rather than continuing with the French model would mean moving closer towards the British model of the individual and the firm having responsibility for learning rather than the State, although he points out that there are many possible positions which are midway between the two. He also advocates new forms of certification so that there can be connections between
initial training carried out at school and training carried out later at work. This seems to recommend National Vocational Qualifications as being a useful model to follow.

When in power, the right wing parties in France have criticised the system but only made minor changes to it. The original 1971 law setting up the Formation Continue system was brought in under a right-wing Gaullist government with a broad social reform remit and later changes were introduced in the 1980s with the intention of enhancing the original provision. Criticisms of the inefficiencies and wastefulness of the Formation Continue led to a 1994 report of 168 pages being submitted by a Parliamentary Commission, led by Claude Goasguen of the centre-right UDF, to the Gaullist Philippe Séguin in 1994. The Commission concluded that the system had reached its limits and it highlighted irregularities which were often only just within the law and had led to financial evaporation through every pore of the system (Dupuy, 1994). Dupuy quotes cases in the hotel industry where offices were built for 66 million francs and charged to training expenses, and where advertising of certain professions were paid for out of the training budget rather than by the professional organisations themselves. The main criticism, however, related to the blocking of training funds to provide for possible future downsizing of the workforce. Trade unions were particularly strongly criticised for feathering their own nests. This report recommended the complete restructuring of the sector, finance of organisations which would oversee the funding of training in each industry and increasing the regionalisation of decision making with a group at state level checking that procedures were implemented correctly. Organisations were later set up such as FONGECIF Bretagne which now controls training decisions on the Congé Individuel de Formation (Individual training Leave) for the insurance industry in Brittany.

A greater threat to the system came in a report submitted on October 4th 1996 by Michel de Virville, General Secretary of Renault to the Gaullist Ministre du Travail et des Affaires Sociales, Jacques Barrot. The system was criticised for its lack of clarity and management rigour and its complexity. It was seen as lacking credibility since it no longer provided an alternative way of acquiring qualifications which had not been obtained through initial education and training at school, and was used by firms to give extra training to those who had already benefited from the education system rather than those at the bottom of the hierarchy. The following figures were given: three out of five employees never go on any training courses, one employee in five does not have a grasp of basic skills and the individual training
plan only concerned a very small minority of workers per year (just over 30,000). This criticism of the inequalities of the system could have been a starting point for a strengthening of equal opportunities policies but the report only mentions in passing without comment that men are the principal beneficiaries of training and make up 63% of the numbers.

The recommendations of the report were that employees should be encouraged to invest in their own training along with the firm, that interest-free loans should be set up along with a national system of qualifications to define skill levels. This would have been a move away from the tradition of free training within the Formation Continue towards many of the ideas put forward in Britain. However the report was never implemented due to a change of government in France in June 1997 when Martine Aubry took over the post of Ministre du Travail. M. Léonard, the director of human resources interviewed for this study in company F, commented dryly that it was unlikely that the daughter would undo the work of the father (interview, June 8th 1997), referring to the fact that Martine Aubry’s father Jacques Delors was one of the principal architects of the Formation Continue in 1971.

3.12
LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK IN FRANCE

Dubar (1996) is optimistic about the 1983 law which made it compulsory to have negotiations between management and unions concerning women’s inequality in the workplace and believes it is this that has marginally improved the access rate to training for women between 1981 and 1991. He gives a figure of 35% access to training for men and 32% access for women in 1993.

His optimism is not shared by many who criticise the law of July 13th 1983 and its additions on July 10 1989, for having no real teeth. In every firm with over 50 employees the director has an obligation to present a written report to the "comité d'entreprise" or equivalent representatives of the workforce on the general situation of equality between men and women in the firm, and more specifically equality of promotion. This report then goes to the "inspecteur du travail". The 1983 law also allowed for the possibility of temporary positive discrimination to allow practice to catch up with theory. However if any case was taken to court, it was to be decided by a judge in the Cour de Cassation (high-level appeal court) and
was subject to analysis of what was reasonably possible.

The 1989 additions meant that trade unions were obliged to take into account the treatment of women in the workplace when negotiating. This was signed by the unions on November 23rd 1989. However, Toutain (1992) agrees with Laufer (1990) that these agreements have not been translated into concrete action as had been hoped. In her opinion the firm only wants to identify training and promotion prospects for its female workforce if it needs to review its human resources policy and is not really influenced by the law. State sector firms have shown more goodwill as they see themselves as the locomotive pulling the train in terms of social action.

Laufer goes on to say (1998) that in spite of the positive legal framework provided by the law of December 31st 1991, there are loopholes since the employer is not required to pay employees for 25% of training time on training programmes of over 300 hours which could discriminate against women who have less free time than men due to family responsibilities. Moreover, certain categories of women are particularly under-represented in training. This is due to several factors: the over-representation of women in small firms where training policies are less developed, the greater number of women in the category of unskilled administrative worker where the access to training is poor, and the difficulties women have in taking up training opportunities due to family responsibilities. Laufer suggests that solutions are to be found in positive action strategies, desegregating training programmes and jobs and facilitating reconciliation of work and family responsibilities.

However, the question of equal access to benefits is often not even on the agenda. The representative of the Service des droits des femmes for the region of Brittany (Interview February 1997), stated that in the public sector, the question of equality was often not even posed because the public sector is run on a system of open competitive exams which is theoretically supposed to provide every candidate with an equal chance. She stated "Le secteur public se considère par nature pur et neutre" (the public sector considers itself to be pure and neutral by nature).

Ongoing vocational training for women is still not given a high priority in France despite the legal statutes which cover the Formation Continue. The thrust of successive governments'
policies focuses on training for the young unemployed rather than redressing the historical imbalance to provide equal opportunities for women. Young women are increasingly better qualified than young men but do not have improved access to work or training. Policies to deal with needs to provide apprenticeship contracts have as their model the male apprentice in a craft job and women are excluded from many training opportunities in this area as there is a high level of horizontal segregation of the labour market.

3.13
RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

A legal framework is obviously preferable to no provision in law but it could be argued that firms that have profits and shareholders to think of are inevitably not going to be altruistic in terms of equality provision and will only act if it can be shown that valuable human resources are being wasted by not tapping into the potential of female workers. Toutain (1992) also agrees with this as she states that firms are motivated by economic efficiency rather than by any real concern for equality. She sees the equality plans as having a marginal effect even if in some cases they have raised awareness of equality issues.

Toutain also points out that seven people look after the equality provisions at the national level in France and these policies are not efficient or effective as they work "selon un mode artisanal" (applied in an amateurish way). Only a small percentage of women were concerned (5-10% in small and medium companies, 1.5 - 3% in large companies) and many were disappointed with the effect that their participation had. She makes several concrete proposals to increase the effectiveness of the equality plan in firms. Firstly, there should be harmonisation of the way reports are written so they are easier to read, secondly, plans should be produced every two years to measure their effects, rather than yearly; thirdly the "plan d'égalité" (equality plan) should be incorporated into the "bilan social" (general overview of the firm's strategy and the consequences for workers such as possible redundancies in the future) with figures disaggregated by gender; fourthly, statistics should be made available on a regional level and for each branch of industry; lastly, a national co-ordinator should be nominated at the level of "inspecteur du travail" to look at this issue. More recent policy initiatives recommended by the Génisson report on professional equality in September 1999
are discussed in detail at the end of chapter four of this thesis.

3.14
LITERATURE IN FRANCE

During the 1980s and early 1990s a body of theoretical work was carried out on the relationship between work and training. This includes work by Tanguy (1986), Paul (1989) and Vernières (1993). The section by Vernières on "L'insertion professionnelle" (labour market entry) is primarily concerned with the entry of young people into the labour market and as is typical of work in this area does not focus on women as a particular group. Neither of the two major information centres on research into training in France, the CEREQ, relocated from Paris to Marseilles and the Centre INFFO in La Défense in Paris, have many references on equal opportunities for women within the ongoing training system.

There are still remarkably few studies of training for women in France. There is of course a wide literature on related issues in the field of women and work which have received a great deal of attention. Those relevant for this study include the gendered nature of education (Duru-Bellat, 1990, 1991), gender and qualifications (Daune-Richard 1989, 1993), the sexual division of work (Hirata 1997), gendered jobs (Sofer 1990) and equality at work (Lanquetin 1995). As mentioned by Christine Fournier at CEREQ, (interview 1994) the lack of previous research means that any study undertaken into ongoing training and equal opportunities for women has less previous research to use as a base than, for example, research into training for young people which attracts far more interest in France both from politicians and from researchers. As will be seen in chapter four, figures from national government sources and European sources show clearly that women are not treated equitably in the labour market and that despite having slightly better average results than their male counterparts at the baccalauréat exam when they leave school, they find it more difficult to get well-paid secure work and earn much lower average salaries than men.

Multidisciplinary research became popular later in France than in Britain and it can be argued that subject boundaries were seen as much more important than they are in British academic circles. This has been rectified in the area of women and work since 1995 with the creation of the research group MAGE (Marché du Travail et Genre) (Labour Market and Gender) which
was set up by the CNRS under the leadership of Margaret Maruani and financed jointly by the European Commission and the Service des droits des Femmes. Its declared intent in its policy document is to make up for the "French delay in terms of gender studies." Ongoing training is not dealt with in a discrete category but is touched upon within the area of training and education, while professional equality is covered by a separate sub-group. Christine Fournier, a researcher at the CEREQ, one of the contributors to this research group and a specialist on women and training in France, stated that this was an area which needed to be addressed but where the primary data was difficult to obtain, particularly on a local level (interview 1994).

3.15
HORIZONTAL SEGREGATION IN EMPLOYMENT IN FRANCE

Between 1982 and 1990 the number of women in work in France increased by a million, while the number of men decreased by 120,000. More than 850,000 women went into traditionally female professions such as the civil service, teaching and health. However, there has been a recent increase in the liberal professions, public sector managers (access to which is limited to holders of certain qualifications) administrative and commercial managers, engineers, and technical managers. Intermediary administrative and commercial posts in firms now include a higher percentage of women than the active population as a whole. When this is broken down women are found in increasing numbers in the categories of architects, chemists or data programmers and are almost completely absent from the building sector, metallurgy or mechanical sector, which are in fact shrinking sectors.

Half of the women receiving training in the INSEE 1995 survey were involved in teacher training, medico-social training and office computer training whereas under a quarter of the men surveyed followed these types of training programmes. The highest figure (23.2% of training) was in the area of computer applications to office work, with women benefiting more than men (29.1% as opposed to 18.8% of men). The second largest category of training: management, human relations and communication was more evenly distributed between men and women with 12.2% of women and 11.7% of men involved in this area.

A high level of training for women is linked to some professions where women are in the majority: nursing, social work, teaching or secretarial work. Nine out of ten people receiving
industrial and technical training were men. Whereas the biggest proportion of training for women was in the management category (29.1%), the smallest area of training involving women was industrial techniques (2.3% of women as opposed to 26% of men.)

Different choices made in school subjects may narrow career choices later on and often have a gender divide. A large proportion (40%) of girls leaving school with a CAP or BEP (a vocational qualification, often taken by girls in secretarial work or administration) are in part-time employment after three years of working whereas only 5% of those who have a BTS or a DUT (a technician's qualification) work part-time. Women have specialised in the tertiary sector where the incidence of short-term contracts is higher than average.

Figures given by Laufer (1998) show that out of 455 professions, 47% of women are concentrated into 20 professions and in 316 women comprised less than 10% of the workforce, whereas only 26% of men are concentrated into the most populated professions for them. Gender-linked differences in preferences and expectations create different career paths for girls and boys and despite a general level of education which is higher than their male counterparts, girls in 1983 made up 9.4% of students taking the technical CAP and 81% taking the tertiary CAP. These figures are similar for the BEP: 10% in the technical stream and 82% in the tertiary stream. Feminisation has been evident in professional occupations in both the public and private sectors and within the categories of administrative and managerial workers, even if women are still rare in the top level jobs. Less qualified women, however are restricted to routine administrative jobs, sales and childcare.

Three quarters of people earning the minimum wage are women and men earn on average 35% more than women. At the other end of the scale, there is cause for cautious optimism since there has been an increase in the number of women entering the management category (Laufer 1990). Women who go into management have degrees (3 year minimum courses) and intermediary professions recruit from those who have done a short 2 year higher education qualification such as the DUT (Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie) or the baccalauréat for a small minority. Both categories find generally favourable conditions with permanent contracts, periods of unemployment which are short if they occur at all and good pay. Since specialised diplomas are still the most favoured, male entrants still tend to have the edge due to the tendency of girls to follow general arts degrees.
One clear pattern to be found in France as in Britain is that the gap between women and men becomes narrower the further one rises in the hierarchy of jobs. Access to ongoing vocational training is much more difficult to obtain for women at the bottom of the hierarchy than at the top. Level of activity, risk of unemployment, likelihood of temporary contract and access to training is linked to position within the hierarchy with the majority of female workers having experienced short-term and temporary contracts and where women without qualifications are ghettoised. Without a second chance policy to enable women at this level to obtain training they are defined by their school education where the difference between choices made by boys and girls are still extremely marked.

3.16

MAJOR ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF GENDERED WORK IN THE LITERATURE IN FRANCE

The study of segregation within the workforce in France has focused primarily on the horizontal segregation of different career paths taken by males and females within initial education and training and the link between vertical segregation in the workplace and qualifications and equal pay.

An influential study highlighting the gendered nature of qualifications and skills was carried out by Maruani (1991) who showed that the qualities linked to a job, the salary, the position in the socio-professional hierarchy and the status at work are all factors in definition of qualifications and the production or invention of a qualification. In defining a qualification, discriminations are created since decisions are made about which work is work for which qualifications are necessary and which are tasks for which a qualification is not necessary. She calls into question the fact that male work is often called a "métier" or skilled profession while many female jobs are seen as having no quality and are seen as using women's innate talents and therefore do not need remuneration.

She gives the example of a fictitious local newspaper where a strike takes place by women who are not being paid an equal salary as male co-workers although they maintain that their work is essentially equal. The female workers are ex-typists who type in text to computers and
correct their own work and male workers are former typesetters who type in or correct text. Their conditions of work are however very different. The women earn 2 to 3,000 francs a month less than the men. The women are judged on productivity while the men have freedom to organise their work without the constraints that the women have. The women have 20 minutes break per day whereas the men have 10 minutes per day. The women have set hours, the men can work flexitime. The women have a supervisor, the men do not. She then traces this difference to 15 years previously when computerisation was being introduced and women were taken on as keyboard operators and classified as unskilled even though they did very similar work to male typesetters. To ensure the demarcation between the two jobs the male typesetters went on strike to protest against the employment of keyboard operators and only settled the dispute after obtaining an agreement that the women would not be given the same type of work and would not work linked to a central computer. The only difference between the two machines was then that typesetters could adjust margins and keyboard workers could not. The work done by the men was called correcting text whereas the work done by the women was called checking text. Women were seen as doing a simpler job and were therefore expected to produce 380 lines an hour whereas men were expected to average 180 lines an hour. In this way the work done by men and women was linked to a historical background which no longer had any direct relevance to work being carried out, but which resulted in a hierarchy of qualifications which excluded women who were not formerly typesetters. This also reflects the reality of power relations which ensures that mobilisation is heavily controlled.

Maruani uses this fictional example to show how at every stage of modernisation of an industry small differences are created between male and female work so that a gap exists between qualified masculine skilled trades and women's unskilled work. She also uses the examples of the garment industry where sewing is women's work and considered to be unskilled whereas cutting is seen as men's work, and the electronics industry where women are seen as having better manual dexterity than men but are not rewarded for it since it is seen as a natural talent rather than a skill.

She also highlights the fact that qualification is not objective fact but the result of conflicts and negotiations between social groups and is the end product of social bargaining. This can be linked to work carried out by Cockburn (1983, 1986, 1995) which examines the influence of
male-dominated trade unions on equal opportunities. Unions in both countries can be seen to have a history of being preoccupied with issues affecting male workers in the manufacturing sector while issues affecting women who work in the service sector remain ignored.

3.17 ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR WOMEN RETURNING TO THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET

Work by the sociologist Evelyne Sullerot (1968, 1973) which was influential in the 1970s led to the creation of the training organisation Retravailler in 1974, formed with the aim of helping workers to return to the employment market after a long period of absence, usually women who had left the employment market for family reasons. In 1998 it was responsible for 2.6 million training hours mainly in specific skills training and support. Sullerot advocated methods based on group dynamics and using cognitive resources. Key areas are empathy with the returner, valorisation of experience, using individual resources and widening access to non-traditional sectors by re-examining stereotypes and providing support to women who returned to work in these sectors.

In 1999 Retravailler moved on from dealing primarily with the female aspect of the gender divide at work and aimed to re-examine gender stereotypes which affect men as well as women. This is arguably a feature of a new trend in policy developments which view the segregated workforce as a problem for both men and women. The new measures had four phases: needs analysis, setting up a plan to include professional life and social life, training and job search and lastly support for the client until they are established in their new job. At the same time Retravailler aims to influence key decision makers. Major constraints are identified as being not only childcare but also health problems and financial problems which can make re-entering the employment market difficult.

3.18 ACCESS TO TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN FULL-TIME WORK IN FRANCE.

Literature in this area tends to focus on the evaluation of specific policy initiatives such as equality plans and rights to individual training leave within the highly regulated structure of the
Formation Continue. According to Junter-Loiseau (1993), training is an essential factor in promoting disadvantaged groups such as women, and equal opportunity programmes should be integrated into the human resource management of the firm. However, she concludes that although training programmes are the most obvious and visible element of the attempt to create a climate of equal opportunity, they are not by themselves enough and a wider cultural change is needed so that women are more valued by the firm. This would mean equal opportunities training at all levels of an organisation with monitoring of management practices to ensure that men are not favoured for promotion.

Laufer states that firms are currently doing little more than recording inequality. They tend to use constraints in the labour market such as the present level of qualification of women workers and the demands of specific jobs as reasons for not changing the status quo. Laufer (1990) found that women were selected for promotion primarily on grounds of whether they fitted the company's ethos. A limited number of women were treated as tokens to demonstrate how enlightened the company was. Out of the 24 firms who had negotiated equal opportunity plans, 14 of them had made a contract with the State. She chose 5 firms where she carried out interviews with the human resources managers, the bosses of the women affected by the equal opportunity plans and the women themselves. She found that despite a law on professional equality passed on 13 July 1983, firms were resisting their obligations to give women their rights. They want to make better use of human resources so do have a pragmatic reason for improving equality of opportunity but this is seen as a "utilité" rather than a right or a principle. She found that women were disproportionately affected by economic depression and different working practices. She states that women are encouraged into the labour market during a period of economic expansion but during a period of recession there is a development of atypical forms of work which discriminate against women. It could be argued that this is not the case in Britain since it is male unemployment which is on the increase and women who benefit from new working practices to give them jobs, although admittedly these are often atypical since they are part-time jobs with few associated rights.

Laufer criticises the notion of professional equality being linked primarily to training rights and wants to see women's rights as a central part of human resource management in French companies. This would mean using criteria such as the organisation of work to assess a company's commitment to women's rights. She found that any notion of including family
responsibilities as well as professional responsibilities was only present in a minority of cases and feels this should also be integrated into any equal opportunity policy.

She recommends a social audit of the company, analysis of work conditions, analysis of training needs and an audit of future plans where restructuring of the workforce is involved. She follows a pessimistic analysis of the level of resistance in company hierarchies with a more optimistic vision of a zero sum game being transformed into an opportunity of improving policies at work to the benefit of all workers. She realises however that any idea of a consensus is utopic given the power relationships which surround the sexual division of work. She also gives figures of part-time work affecting women more than men and highlights the risks of marginalisation. Part-time work is only a choice for some of the women who work part-time while others may prefer to work full-time but are not given the opportunity to do so. Other work on the "plans d'égalité" in firms has found that they have had little impact on equal opportunities, particularly in firms in the private sector. (Junter-Loiseau 1989). Fieldwork for this study confirmed that the existence of these plans was virtually unknown within companies surveyed.

A report on individual training leave in Brittany for the FONGECIF (Junter-Loiseau 1993) showed that women were less likely to be successful in obtaining individual training leave than men and that unmarried women with no children were more likely to be successful than married women with children. According to the above study, in 1990 individual training leave was granted to a population of workers made up of 62.5% male workers and 37.5% of female workers. In 1992, 1294 men and 1085 women (45.6%) came to the FONGECIF for an interview. At the end of this interview 440 men (34% of the original number) continued with their application as opposed to 317 women (29.21% of the original number). The interview seemed to be the decisive barrier as 20.47% of the men who applied received finance as opposed to 19.9% of the women (a difference of only 0.57%). 216 of the original female applicants received funding as opposed to 265 of the men. (68.13% of female applicants and 60.2% of male applicants). This was not something deliberately engineered by the FONGECIF according to the report, but was linked to criteria of eligibility according to which applications were judged and decisions made by the administrators in the organisation. This is interesting as objectively the external criteria (size of firm, socio-professional category, level of training asked for) did not put them in a more favourable position. They worked in
relatively large firms, were employed in the tertiary sector and had a level of training which was slightly higher than the men who applied for funding.

Comments quoted from the administrators show that it is felt by some that women are seen as being less likely to succeed than men and could be a waste of resources. This extremely negative attitude would explain why a higher proportion of women are put off by the interview and only those determined to fight for their training project succeed. Further figures show that although more women than men improve their level of education and training at the end of their training leave (32.8% obtain an A-level equivalent qualification as opposed to 21% of men) they are less likely to change jobs. This often leads to women going back to the firm with great enthusiasm that new skills will be used, only to feel frustrated.

The overwhelming majority of the women interviewed felt the training to have been a very positive experience. Junter-Loiseau concluded that the personal gain was high for all the women whereas the professional gain was far from being optimal in relation to recognition of their acquired skills. However she does not underestimate the value of the experience to the women on a personal level:

"C'est vraisemblablement dans l'articulation entre le privé et le professionnel que se situe la spécificité de l'usage du CIF pour les femmes".
(It is probably in the link between the private and the professional that the particular importance of the Individual Training Leave is to be found for women).
Many women saw following such a course as the fulfilment of a dream, whereas the experience was not seen as potentially life-changing by men who underwent training courses.

3.19
STUDIES ON PART-TIME WORK IN FRANCE.

For Laufer (1990), if women have succeeded in remaining on the job market despite the unemployment crisis, it is precisely because they have occupied a central position in the transformation of the dominant model of full-time salaried employment. It is useful to consider the gendered nature of part-time work since, as we have seen, women make up the vast majority of part-time workers in France, as in Britain, although it must be remembered that they often work a long part-time contract of four days out of five to fit in with schools
being closed on Wednesdays, and they theoretically have the same rights to training as full-time workers.

It can be argued, as does Laufer in her later work (1998) that the issue of reconciliation of work and family life is intertwined with the achievement of equal opportunity and therefore the issue of the balance between work and private life is a crucial one. Since the vast majority of those who work part-time are women, this often results in men's time and women's time being re-organised on a different basis. If reconciliation of work and family life leads to equal sharing of both then this is an argument for greater equality. However, the lack of sharing in this area, as is currently the case since the part-time workforce is so heavily feminised, could lead to a justification for renewed differentiation between men and women. The part-time issue, or the reconciliation of work and family life, which was highlighted in chapter 1, therefore becomes an important framing factor.

Figures comparing women's participation in the labour force are fairly easy to obtain but pure percentages are not helpful in the case of part-time work unless hours worked are also given. In general terms it is clear that women are employed in greater numbers in Britain than in France but a much higher proportion of the female workforce are employed part-time in Britain than in France. Male unemployment is greater than female unemployment in Britain because of this part-time work, often in the service industries, for which women are often preferred. The situation is the reverse in France where women and young people are particularly affected. Part-time work in France is often a model of 4 out of 5 days at work, which means that women do not work on Wednesdays to fit in with the school structure where children attend on Saturday mornings but have Wednesdays free.

The situation of part-time work is obviously linked to state childcare provision which is much more widespread and cheaper in France than in Britain. There is however evidence that even women with adult children in Britain may still opt for part-time work because they have responsibilities for ageing parents once their children have grown up.

French women appear to be better protected by fiscal and family policies than their British counterparts. The British employer is encouraged by legislation to employ workers for less than sixteen hours and the workers correspondingly have fewer rights than French workers.
The French system still gives rights to the workers to benefit from training even if they are part-time, whereas Britain does not have the same systematic entitlement and moreover has a greater percentage of women workers employed for a low number of hours. One would therefore expect to find an even greater disparity between women receiving training in France and those in Britain than would be evident for a comparison between male workers in the two countries. That is to say that women are trapped in a vicious circle, with the fewer hours worked bringing fewer rights and less chance of obtaining training and qualifications to enable them to be promoted. There may also be a difference between "soft" training offered in confidence building and personal skills which women may benefit from disproportionately with more men benefiting from "hard" training which is linked to recognised qualifications and career progression.

3.20
ATTITUDES OF FRENCH AND BRITISH WOMEN

Crompton and Lefeuvre (1996) argue that individualistic explanations should not be allowed to obscure the continuing significance of employment and occupational structures in shaping patriarchal gender relations. They found more similarities than differences in their cross-national study of women in pharmacy and banking in France and Britain. Due to a natalist policy where the state provides a high level of childcare, French women's employment more closely parallels that of French men (an inverted U shape when mapped on a graph) whereas the activity profile of British women reflects their tendency to take an employment break for childrearing purposes (an M shape on a graph). Also approximately 40% of British women work part-time as compared to 20% of French women.

However it is interesting to note that despite these differences at the national level, the individual work-life histories of the women interviewed are very similar. The 29 women pharmacists interviewed could be considered by employers to be uncommitted to a career as they commented that it was a career that could be combined easily with childcare. The 27 women bankers interviewed were aware that a career in finance would have to be a full-time continuous career in the unisex or masculine model. Data given by two comparable banks showed that 2.8% of female employees in the British bank had reached the equivalent level of cadre as compared to 5.3% of female employees in the French bank. However even the
French level of women reaching management positions seems very low when compared with the figure of 28% of French male employees. Crompton and Lefeuvre argue that progression within an organisational hierarchy is confined to those who follow a career within a masculine template and the underlying constraints and assumptions relating to the gender division of labour are not seriously called into question. Even when the overtly exclusionary practices are removed women will still occupy the relatively subordinate positions. To escape from this a number of case studies suggest that women are making choices to move to positions within companies where they are not expected to exercise power and authority over men but are well rewarded for their expertise in specialised areas such as computing or accounting. Savage (Savage and Witz 1992:147) states that "the increasing numbers of expert women in the labour market should not be seen as evidence that women are moving into positions of organisational authority and control but rather that as organisations restructure, there is increased room for women to be employed in specialised niches". This is echoed by Crompton and Le Feuvre when they show that the pharmacists expertise may be more easily organised flexibly than jobs incorporating the exercise of organisational power which require organisational learning.

The fieldwork for this study shows similar results as will be seen in chapter 7, since an internal report on women and management in British company number 2 found that out of the few women on senior manager grade, many of them had reached this grade through being specialists such as accountants or information technology specialists. Another route to escape discrimination in the workplace is to opt for self-employment, which is another important issue which space does not allow us to pursue here.

3.21
WORKING PATTERNS OF FRENCH AND BRITISH MOTHERS

Many studies show a difference between working patterns of French mothers and British mothers. (Guilbot 1987, Beechey 1989, Dex and Walters 1989, Procter and Radcliffe 1992, Walters and Dex 1992). A much higher percentage of British women withdraw from the labour market during peak child-rearing years between 25 and 34 and tend to return to part-time employment after this, whereas the pattern for women's employment in France starts from a lower base in their early twenties but continues to rise in their late twenties, showing a
much lower rate of withdrawal with a greater proportion remaining in full-time employment.

Dex and Walters (1990) focus on the comparative difficulties faced by French and British mothers at work and conclude that better childcare facilities in France, coupled with a reduction in working days rather than a reduction in hours worked every day creates a better environment for training possibilities leading to advancement for part-time workers. Rees (1992) considers that domestic responsibilities, coupled with lack of confidence of women returners are the major factors in the choice of part-time work.

Belloc (1986) found that more than 50% of part-time French workers were not satisfied with their working hours. A detailed study by Lehmann (1985) indicates that flexible working practices are instituted to suit employers' choices rather than women part-time workers' preferences. Research on women's satisfaction with part-time work in France has been less extensive than in Britain, often limited to small-scale studies (Kergoat 84, Corniou 84, Gregory 88) and do not deal with training opportunities for part-time workers as a specific concern. Gregory (1988) compares the history of flexible work patterns in France and Britain and concludes that despite a more favourable framework for employee interventions in the context of working hours in France, French women working part-time are less satisfied with their hours than their counterparts in Great Britain.

This echoes the argument used by some women in France that if they are unlikely to get a job, they may as well follow a career path in something which will be useful in the home such as sewing. (Quoted by Annie Junter-Loiseau, June 27th 1997 conference MAGE). This is based on a pessimistic analysis of chances of success in a situation of high unemployment, but has the same overtones of a limited choice being made by the individual.

It could be argued that in France although there is better access to affordable childcare, there is still the problem of the balance between work and family life, which is arguably a greater burden for French women. Gregory and Windebank (2000) note that French women's employment continuity and employment status are not affected so significantly by the presence of children as are those of British women, which could be taken as a key indicator of greater progress in gender relations. In addition to this, part-time work has less negative correlation with occupational status than in Britain and French women have had more success
in penetrating higher occupational groups. However, the smaller disparity in France between men and women's working hours means that French women suffer from a greater burden of unpaid work on top of their paid work, largely because they have less access than British women to informal support networks of non-employed women. Despite France having a longer history than Britain of women's participation in the formal labour market, available evidence suggests that the division of domestic and community work is perhaps more unequal in France than in Britain. (Gregory and Windebank, 2000:149). The importance of the burden of unpaid work in the sphere of private relations cannot be underestimated and is an area in which is inevitably difficult for the state to legislate. For this study the implications are that French women are arguably less available for any training which takes place on top of normal working hours than are British women.

3.22
CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has compared the legislative framework and the literature surrounding ongoing training for women in paid employment in Britain and France. While the failure of training in Britain is linked to its voluntarist status there are different problems in France linked to the rigidities of the state-levy system. Under both systems, equal opportunities for women to access to ongoing training has received little attention since other areas have been deemed more important by policy-makers. There is a wide literature in both countries surrounding gender segregation in education and the sexual division of paid employment but little specific literature on the subject of the training and mobility of women who have jobs. This is particularly true of Britain since there is no state intervention regulating practice in commercial companies. Other studies have focused on underlying issues of agency and structure which may act as framing factors such as attitudes of women towards paid work and the division of domestic labour which affects women's availability. The following chapter examines empirical data which is available on ongoing training for women in paid employment to establish the level and type of discrimination which may exist in the field of ongoing training and links this to state policy on equal opportunities.
CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN BRITAIN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly examines data on ongoing training within the workplace in Britain, and secondly discusses state policy initiatives to combat inequality at work in both countries. Data must be examined with caution since country-wide data disaggregated by gender may hide wide variations according to occupation and industry and the situation of workers within these. Data on the insurance sector in both France and Britain are examined in detail in chapter 6 and some of the points made in this chapter will be revisited in chapter 7 where fieldwork for this study is examined. With these provisos in mind, it is useful to consider the national picture regarding ongoing training at work.

4.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA

Studies in the early 1990s showed that women and men did not have the same chances of receiving training and that young women in particular suffered from discrimination. (Greenhalgh 1987, Green 1991, Booth 1991). Rubery and Smith (1995) warn that women have less access to on-the-job training than men, so that the chance of a single woman aged 20 receiving training has been estimated to be reduced by one-third compared to her male counterpart while the chance for a woman of the same age married with children is reduced by four-fifths.

However, more recent studies show that this situation may have been modified. Further work by Green (1995) on the effects of trades unions on training showed that gender has no significant effect on whether an individual receives job-related education or training or on how long the training lasted. Figures from the Summer 1995 Labour Force Survey show that the level of training activity for women was higher than that of men (14.4% of women reported participating in a job-related education or training activity in the previous four weeks as
compared to 13.3% of men) and that figures have followed a similar trend since 1988. Similar data can be seen to show the increase of women's participation in apprenticeships from 16% in 1984 to 22 per cent in 1991. The most recent figures available for autumn 1999 (Labour Force Survey February 2000 Table 24) show rates of 16.4% for women and 13.8% for men, which indicate that the gap in favour of women has increased since 1995.

While the raw figures may lead to a renewed optimism that equal opportunities in the field of access to training for women in Britain is being achieved, Metcalf (1997) warns that the data must be treated with caution. For example 12% of both men and women received training in spring 1994, but more men (59%) than women (54%) were offered training by their employer and turned it down. This shows that a higher proportion of women than men pursued training on their own initiative and suggests a higher value put on training by women than men. Data from the winter 1999/2000 Labour Force Survey indicates that nearly two-thirds of off-the job training is paid for by the trainees' employer or potential employer (see graph 1). Men fare better than women, with employers paying for 68.1% of their training as against 58.6% for women. More women trainees have their training paid for by themselves, their family or their relatives with 16.8% being funded this way as against 12.7% for men trainees. Another striking statistic from this survey is that men tended to be involved on training courses that were either less than one month in length or longer than three years, with women being more likely to take part in all other lengths of training course.

Metcalf (1997) concludes that a simple bivariate analysis in determining gender inequalities in access to training is too simplistic. However, after using a multivariate approach, she concludes that individual characteristics, such as personal or familial characteristics, only have a small influence on whether a person receives training, and that the attitudes of the employers themselves towards training are the most important factor. The role of employer attitude is examined in detail in chapter 7 of this study.

On first examination it appears that the level of training provided varies widely depending on the industry and occupation under examination, and that the effect is magnified for women (see graph 2). People in the Professional and Associate professional and Technical groups of occupations were nearly four times more likely to receive training than Plant and Machine Operatives (26.8% and 24.1% as against 6.9%) For women the difference was even more
marked with the proportions receiving training in these occupations being 31.7%, 28.1% and 6.3% respectively. Nearly one in four (23.7%) people who work in Public Administration and Defence industries received training in the autumn of 1999. In Construction and Manufacturing industries, however, the likelihood of having received training dropped to one in nine (11.3% and 11.4% respectively). The proportion of men and women actively involved in training were roughly the same across the industries, the main exceptions being Hotels and Restaurants where more men (16.7%) received more training than women (12.3%) and Construction or Transport, storage and communications where more women (15.00%) in both industry groups received training than men (10.8% and 10.9%) respectively.

Metcalf (1997) shows that while women as a group receive more training than men, this is simply due to differences in employment structure and patterns which result in a greater proportion of women than men being in industries and occupations which provide training, rather than women having greater access to training. For example the figures given above for the construction industry where women receive 15.0% of training as compared to 10.8% for men can be clarified by noting that women in the construction industry are concentrated in clerical jobs where training in new technology such as new computer systems is an ongoing necessity. The prevalence of women in sectors where training is provided is further compounded by an average shorter length of service for women and a higher proportion of women in temporary employment, which result in a greater need for induction and initial training linked to job requirements. Furthermore, the training is less likely to assist progression in the labour market and for women, family commitments and working part-time severely decreases the likelihood of participating in training. These qualitative differences are supported by Bynner (1997) who shows that the gap between highly qualified women and men is relatively small while the gender gap in participation in training is wider for those who have few qualifications and who left the labour market at a young age to have children and are therefore most disadvantaged. Furthermore, since training is often not transferable across industries it cannot address employment inequality by gender.
4.3
PART-TIME WORK IN GREAT BRITAIN

For Metcalf (1997) the problem of part-time employment in Britain reducing women's chances of training cannot be overestimated, since 45% of women employees are employed part-time. This may be due to employers' reluctance to train part-time workers, due to cost, beliefs about commitment to the job and difficulties arranging training at times when the employee is at work.

Dex (1988) used data from the Women in Employment 1980 survey to show that 89% of British women were voluntarily working part-time. Further research needs to be done to examine the role of employee choice and to what extent those working part-time are less interested in training or prefer to focus their interests elsewhere. Other research by Martin and Roberts (1973) showed that 94% of part-time working women in Great Britain were fairly satisfied or very satisfied with their hours. As we have seen, Hakim (1996) differentiates between choices made by women who are more committed to family life and less committed to work but the notion of choice of part-time work must be viewed within existing constraints imposed by availability of childcare, which is structured differently in Britain and France. This can be linked to O'Reilly's dynamic societal model, (1994) proposed in chapter 1 which stresses the interaction of the family, economy and the state.

O'Reilly (1992) quotes INSEE figures from the early 1990s which showed that in the financial sector 14% of employees worked part-time in Great Britain as opposed to 9.6% in France. Of these part-time workers in France, 80% choose to have Wednesdays free as their children are not at school and this represents a lack of flexibility for employers. In Great Britain, part-time workers are used to cover lunch-times, Mondays and Fridays. In France part-time workers have the same training and promotion possibilities as full-time workers whereas this is not so in Britain. Part-time work in France is used by the firm to reduce numbers of employees whereas in Britain where there is a greater shortage of qualified workers it is to tempt women back to work gradually after a break for childcare.

The choices and constraints surrounding part-time work are inevitably viewed differently according to party political perspective. This is clearly shown in comments made in the early
1990s about part-time workers in Britain by Conservative spokesmen such as Michael Forsyth and Michael Portillo who saw part-time employment as being a positive preference for many workers. The Labour shadow employment minister at the time, Ann Clwyd, expressed her dissatisfaction with this attitude in August 1994, stating that the choice of part-time work is supply-led and not a real choice on the part of workers who would prefer full-time jobs. The debate over flexible working practices continues but it especially affects women who work in the tertiary sector, particularly in client based services such as banking and retail.

4.4

STATE POLICY ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN GREAT BRITAIN

In Great Britain at the turn of the century the post-feminist softly-softly approach towards equal opportunities appears to be paramount, as voiced by both the Labour Party's women's unit and the Equal Opportunities Commission. According to the head of the Labour Party's women unit, Fiona Reynolds, post-feminism is the only way forward at the end of the 1990s. Appointed as the head of the 47 strong unit in 1998 to represent a break with "old-fashioned 70s style feminism" (Guardian June 1st 1999), Reynolds contrasted perceptions of the need for separatism in the seventies with policies which take it as axiomatic that women's interests must be projected as an integral part of the policy-making process. This echoes the concept of mainstreaming equal opportunities at a European level, which, as will be seen in Chapter 5, can lead to criticisms of weakness on the part of bodies which were set up to campaign more aggressively for the interests of disadvantaged groups. The inclusive slogan of the Labour Party's women's unit "Better for women, better for all" underlines the wish to promote its policies as gender-neutral and the fear of the backlash which is seen as being a possible consequence of too aggressive a promotion of women's interests.

It can be seen that staffing of the Labour Party's women unit underlines the low priority given to it by senior politicians. Harriet Harman was appointed as women's minister in 1998 only as an afterthought on top of her main job as health minister, and Joan Ruddock was expected to act as minister for women with no extra pay. Similarly, Baroness Jay was later given the job of minister for women and Leader of the House of Lords, Tessa Jowell was appointed women's minister on top of minister for health and Helen Liddell was expected to act as minister for women as well as minister for state for Scotland. The main point picked out by
the press after the launch of the women's unit in November 1998 was that famous media figures such as Emma Thompson and Geri Haliwell were to be asked to be role models for teenage girls to encourage them to achieve more. As well as stressing the importance of agency rather than material circumstances in expecting the changes to come from women's behaviour, this shows that the reasons for the necessity for a women's unit were not coherently argued. This highlights the point made by Yvonne Roberts in the Guardian on November 10th 1998: "Women in the nineties are still squeezed into an economic, social and welfare system that treats them as fifties unpaid housewives, secure for life in the arms of a husband who remains perpetually in work." It is the nature of work which has changed, rather than women's status within the workforce and the perceptions of women's lot is sometimes that they are better off, simply because they are more likely to be offered unstable part-time jobs than are men.

With a new head, Julie Mellor, installed at the Equal Opportunities Commission at the beginning of 1999, it was expected that links could be made between the EOC and the Women's unit, particularly the sharing of research resources. The previous head of the EOC from 1993-1998, Kamlesh Bahl, had been particularly criticised by the liberal press for being bland and for commenting that men were becoming as downtrodden as women since jobs which had traditionally been occupied by men were disappearing and employers preferred women for part-time jobs which were the majority of new jobs created.

This unwise comment attracted criticism from the right-wing press, which underlines Roberts' comment above that the reasons behind initiatives for greater equality of opportunity need to be more strongly argued. It also indicates that the potential for a backlash against any gains made should not be underestimated as can be seen from a vitriolic editorial in the Daily Telegraph on May 22nd 1998, which questioned: "Can this be the same Kamlesh Bahl and the same Equal Opportunities Commission that ceaselessly pump out propaganda about the unfair deal for women in part-time work? If, as the commission argues, both sexes suffer from the recent changes in the employment market, equality does not seem to be the issue. The role of the commission, having fought for and won equality for women is comparable to that of MI5 following the West's victory in the Cold War..... The EOC having achieved the goals set when it was established 20 years ago, knows that it cannot justify its £6 million budget without a change of emphasis.....It is hard to see why the commission should be given
taxpayers's money to push what is really a sublimated socialist agenda. It is an institution that now, more than ever, does harm rather than good and it should be scrapped."

While, for the Daily Telegraph, funding for the EOC is a waste of money, many perceive the low level of EOC funding to be indicative of the low priority given to equal opportunities. The EOC is given a smaller budget than the Campaign for Racial Equality (£6 million as opposed to £14.5 million) and the campaigns launched by the CRE have been considered by many to be far more effective in raising awareness of the issues it is campaigning to address. According to the head of the CRE, because of the weakness in the law, it is necessary to engage people with power and sell the benefits of equality without being able to enforce it. The EOC is in a similar position in having an important role in changing the perception of employers of the importance of equal opportunities for women. According to David Walker (Guardian 1999), the relationship between government and the equalities bodies does not come under strain if they simply assist people to mount cases which the courts and the tribunals then decide. It is rather when they start moving into propaganda and quasi-political action that their ambiguous relations with Whitehall and Westminster become important. However, he argues, the success of rights and equalities organisations can only be measured by the shift in public attitudes they engender rather than the number of court cases they take, since human rights are ultimately more a matter of persuasion and daily behaviour than legislative fiat or judicial laws. This can be included once more in the category of "winning hearts and minds" which leaves the onus for change on the individual and on society but with no coercion to effect change.

Statistics on equal pay prove clearly that the battle for equality has not yet been fought and won. It is true that the pay gap for full-time workers has narrowed over the last 20 years so that women who work full-time currently earn 84% of the average male salary, but those working part-time suffer far more pay discrimination since they receive 58% of the rate per hour of male full-timers. Furthermore, according to figures given by the Family Policy Studies Centre, a woman who takes time out from work to have two children will earn only 55% of the pay of those who remain childless. Another study conducted by the London School of Economics on behalf of the government's women's unit entitled "Women's Incomes over a Lifetime"(Guardian, p.5, February 21st 2000) showed that gender was the main reason for the difference in pay, and in the words of Baroness Jay "women are paying a heavy economic
price for just being female. They are experiencing a female forfeit." The study showed that women on average earn £250,000 less than men, with women who have middle level qualifications paying a higher price than those who have none at all.

Public consensus as revealed by women interviewed by the roadshow organised by the Labour Party's women's unit is that pregnancy, childcare and part-time work are the prime factors behind women's lower incomes and central government could help by subsidising more childcare and encouraging a new balance between work and home. However, the above report by the LSE shows that the prime cause of the gender gap is not earnings lost by time off having children but is rather women being concentrated in lower paid sectors of the job market and discrimination in pay against those doing the same work as men. For mid-skilled women (GCSE holders) the earnings penalty of £241,000 due to gender is higher than that incurred by having children (£140,000). While motherhood affects high-skilled women (graduate professionals) very little (loss of earnings of £19,000), the female forfeit of earnings lost compared to men in the equivalent position is still high at £143,000. The female forfeit for a woman with no qualifications was shown to be £197,000, which shows that mid-skilled women suffer comparatively more discrimination due to gender than do low-skilled women but this is outweighed by earnings of £285,000 lost by low-skilled mothers due to long absences from the labour market due to childcare and returning to work part-time. In short, motherhood affects the career trajectory of high-skilled workers much less than it does low-skilled workers, but the simple fact of being a woman worker negatively affects the earnings of all women and therefore not only their role within the household but also has implications for retirement.

4.5 CONSTRAINTS WITHIN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Elected governments have a duty to improve circumstances which govern women's ease of access to the labour market and there is an increasing awareness that enlightened companies have an interest in doing so as well. A report in the Independent on August 28th 1997 highlights difficulties faced by women in the insurance sector regarding rights to job-share. Janet Schofield, a marketing manager at the Zurich insurance company who had succeeded in establishing the right for female managers to job-share, commented that only a few senior
managers paid lip-service to the idea of equal opportunities and she had been told that if she wanted to work for the company she would have to work a seven day week. Figures given in the above article by Elizabeth Hodder, deputy chairwoman of the Equal Opportunities Commission pointed out that women made up 55 per cent of workers in non-manual jobs but still accounted for only 15 per cent of senior and middle managers. She stated "Intelligent employers already know that practices which encourage mothers to return to work maximise the return on their financial investment, keeping the skills and experience of senior staff and reducing re-training and turnover costs is good business sense". Figures given by Linda Taylor, the company's employee relations manager, were supposed to underline the strong commitment to equal opportunities as its workforce was almost exactly 50% male and 50% female. However with only 42 out of 315 managers being female (and 2 out of 11 senior directors) this does not even match the average national figure of 15 per cent given by the Equal Opportunities Commission and undermines any claim by this company to have a good record on equal opportunities.

The financial services division of the insurance industry in Britain comes in for particular criticism for having a "white male conservative (small and large c) stranglehold on financial services," according to Isabel Berwick (Independent on Sunday June 20th 1999). Berwick concludes that the impending shake-out of the financial services industry could bring the less obvious but equally desirable consequence of a change in the personnel of the industry to lessen male domination and include more women advisers.

4.6
EMPIRICAL DATA ON ONGOING TRAINING IN FRANCE

Although the gap between training received by men and women narrowed in the nineteen eighties, it still existed in 1988, when women in France represented 44% of the working population but only received 37% of training in 1988. (1990, INSEE Données Sociales,). Outside the state sector 23% of women received training as opposed to 27% of men. In 1987 one male employee in four received some training as compared with one out of five female employees. According to these figures, the situation improved for women at the end of the nineteen eighties: from making up a ratio of just under seven women for every ten men, female trainees now represent just under eight women for every ten men (69.6% as compared
to 100% of men in 1990, with 79.2% in 1988).

More recent figures given for France (CEREQ Bref December 1994) refer to 1990 where the proportion of employees having benefitted from training still showed a difference of 6% in favour of men (30% of men and 24% of women having received some training.) This inequality was seen to be linked with the difference in the size or sector of firms rather than linked to gender. Three times as many men benefited from training leave as women and those women who did get training leave were less likely to be promoted than their male counterparts. The report concludes that women have less chance of access into ongoing training at work and are therefore less likely to benefit from being given a "second chance".

The most recent figures available from the Centre de Recherche sur les Qualifications (http://www.cereq.fr/cereq/2483.html), based on employer returns for 1998 show an overall participation rate of 37.3% for female employees and 38.8% for male employees. This shows a narrowing of the gender gap since 1997 when the rates were 34.5% for women and 37.8% for men. The overall number of people benefiting from training courses had gone up by 3% since 1997 but the average length of training course had gone down. While these figures may be cause for cautious optimism that training is now being delivered more equally to men and women in France, as we have seen from the British figures, further research is needed to ascertain qualititative details which give a fuller picture.

Dubar (1996) draws a distinction between provision in the state sector and provision in the private sector in France. If the figures show an imbalance in favour of men in the state sector, the figures are much worse for the private sector where one out of seven women were given training opportunities as opposed to one out of five men. This is the same whatever the level of the women concerned: both male workers and male managers benefit from more training than women in equivalent jobs. The figures are better although still unequal for the state sector: women represented 25% of those receiving training in 1972, 29% in 1979, 35% in 1986, 39% in 1994. This inequality is particularly noticeable in training leading to promotion but less so where younger trainees of 16-18 are concerned. Girls are more often given "stages d'insertion" (entry level courses) whereas boys are given "stages de qualification" (courses leading to a qualification). Dubar stresses the important point that training is more often linked to upward mobility for men and is more often linked to unemployment or starting work after a break where women are concerned. He sees this as the accumulation of structural
mechanisms and women's and men's different work history which combine to give women unequal access to training.

Figures given on training vary greatly, with some sources claiming a slight advantage for men whereas others claim a much larger gap. Figures based on 1993 statistics collated in the FORCE report on continuing vocational training in Europe (Eurostat 1997) show that in France 46% of firms have training programmes available with 37% of employees having access and the average training hours per year being 48 per participant. In big firms access is wider than in SMEs with only 12% of firms with 10-49 employees being offered training. According to this report (CEREQ Bref N0 116, January 1996) men have only slightly better access to training than women in France, as is the case in every other country except Belgium.

However this is in marked contrast to figures given in the INSEE report for the year 1997 (INSEE 2000 table F0-18, shown as graph 3). As the graph shows, out of 3430,000 trainees, 65% were men and only 35% were women which shows a decrease in participation for women trainees from the previously quoted figure of 37% in 1988 despite a growth in the female workforce, where activity rates were 48.% for women and 63.3% for men in 1997. It is also in particular contrast to the figure given in the previous chapter in the de Virville 1996 report which stated that 63% of trainees were male, and with Chapman's (1992) assertion that women are 50% less likely to be trained than men because of their gender, even allowing for the variables of size of firm, sector of industry and position within the firm.

Most experts agree that it is partly women's position as low-paid unskilled workers which discriminates hugely against them, rather than their gender and that qualified women are not discriminated against as much as their less qualified sisters. Women managers fare well compared to their colleagues placed lower in the hierarchy. According to figures given by the INSEE report on women (1995), 33% of women managers in France received training in the 2 year period since January 1992 as opposed to 31.3% of male managers. A slight inversion of the figures can be seen if training received since the beginning of their careers is measured (59.9% of men as opposed to 55% of women managers). This confirms that women managers, at the top of the hierarchy are suffering less discrimination than those in intermediary positions or at the bottom of the hierarchy. Of the men and women who underwent training financed by their employer 6.4% were promoted after completing this
training. This is because most training tends to consist of short courses and is not automatically linked to promotion. According to INSEE (1994) more female managers than male managers were promoted at the end of the period of training (8.8% as opposed to 4.6%). The trend may well be for women to receive slightly more training than men at this level but the differences are slight and given the lower representation of women at the top of companies it would take several generations at this rate to change the nature of the male/female gender split in management. More ouvrières than ouvriers (female as opposed to male basic grade employees) were promoted after training: 10.1% as opposed to 8.6%. However, given the disparity in levels of training of male and female ouvriers, (10.7% of men and only 3.5% of women had received training since January 1992, 26.9% of men and 12.9% of women had received training since the beginning of their careers), this is obviously still not a sufficient level to correct the imbalance within the hierarchy. Women tend to be managers in human resources departments rather than in financial management which is a clearer career path for promotion to high level, underlining a degree of horizontal segregation in departments within most companies.

In France, as in Britain, position in the hierarchy of the workforce is an important factor with managers and technicians (who are predominantly male) getting the most training compared to their low percentage within the workforce and unskilled workers getting the least despite their high numerical presence, with service workers in an intermediate position. Differences can also be partly explained by the concentration of female workers in a small number of professions due to horizontal segregation of the labour market. These professions are often poor training providers. Another reason is the high number of women employed by small firms.

The CEREQ bulletin from July 1989 points out that training varies widely between sectors. A high level of training in a sector reduces the disparity between men and women concerning access to training in that sector. On the other hand sectors which tend to invest less than average in training have a more selective system of training with foremen and technicians, the majority of whom are men tending to benefit and women's promotion prospects being poorer. According to the CEREQ report the banking and insurance sector is amongst the best providers of training in both France and Britain along with the energy sector and transport materials manufacturers, whereas the construction clothing and hotel industries are the poorest.
In chapter 6 we shall see whether the status of the insurance sector as a sector providing a good level of training also means that the level of gender inequality is lower than elsewhere.

France is near the top of the European league table with 2.8% of the wages bill spent on training, but it could be argued that this may be inflated due to the legal obligation of firms to contribute to training. If we take the average spending per head, France is in the lead with 3944 fr per head followed by Luxembourg with 3447. 40% of French firms have a "plan de formation" whereas this drops to 25% in Belgium and Holland. Firms with more than fifty employees are obliged to submit a training plan and one out of five firms with fewer than fifty employees do so. The FORCE report (Eurostat 1995) establishes a wide definition of training to include work based training such as conferences, seminars, work rotation, quality circles and independent learning. With this wide definition Germany is clearly in the lead with 85% of firms carrying out training and France is in second place with 47%. Work based training is greatest in large firms (90%). Banking and insurance scores highly with 71% of firms carrying out training. Objectives include upgrading of skills (mainly new technology) and management of employment and mobility (mainly new recruits).

4.7 ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS AND SEGREGATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET IN FRANCE

The argument used by employers for many years that female employees tend to be less qualified than male employees is increasingly untrue, as the following figures show. The working population in France in 1990 showed an increase in the level of women's employment, higher employment in the tertiary sector and a higher level of qualifications (Fournier 1993). A higher share of women pass the baccalauréat and proceed to higher education than men but as the share of the population holding this qualification increases, any advantage that they have may reduce. Due to horizontal segregation in schools where certain subjects are seen as linked to gender, fewer women opt for the more prestigious baccalauréat in maths or science (Silvera 1995).

In 1990 two-thirds of workers had qualifications as opposed to half in 1981. The level of qualification required had increased by the beginning of the 1990s, particularly for jobs in
management. In many sectors there is a barrier linked to the possession or lack of qualifications which limits promotion prospects. Since 1982 there had been an increase of 44% of "cadres" in the tertiary sector and 23% in industry. The increase of qualifications within the tertiary sector was particularly noteworthy. (28% of personnel in the tertiary sector had no qualifications as opposed to 39% in industry.) Women with qualifications were benefiting from this trend but women with no qualifications were more exposed to unemployment than their male counterparts. Since, as we have seen in chapter 3 qualifications are not gender neutral, women's qualifications are often not given the same weight as men's qualifications. This point is reinforced by Laufer (1998) who states that women are treated differently not just according to their level of qualifications but also according to age, potential career plans, and their full-time or part-time status.

Fournier and Couppié (1994) stress that the dualism of the labour market became more evident during the 1980s. This is shown by a segmentation of the labour market which makes it more difficult to move between jobs and where the level of qualification shown by the type of diploma held is considered to be more important for girls than for boys who go more often into industrial jobs as "ouvriers". Their qualifications are more often recognised within the firm even if they are taken on as "ouvriers non-qualifiés. Competition is particularly strong in the "employées" category with vacancies being taken by those who have technical or commercial qualifications obtained after two years of study in higher education. For administrative posts there is competition between entrants who hold different tertiary qualifications with the higher qualification of the Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (post A level) now being demanded rather than the baccalauréat as previously was the case, and the holders of the baccalauréat taking jobs which formerly went to those having a CAP or a BEP (sub A-level). Within the service industry where the level of women's employment is also very high, younger women tend to be better qualified than their elders who have to base their competence on experience rather than qualifications and are experiencing difficulty in a situation where qualifications are seen to be a prerequisite. Figures given in the INSEE report on women's situation (1995) underline the improved qualifications of younger female workers. The gap over the period January 1992 to May 1993 between continuing vocational training for women (19.5%) and men (21.6%) is linked to the higher level of male employment and particularly the higher incidence of temporary or part-time contracts for women.
Legislation which would affect private companies is unlikely to be forthcoming in the laissez-
faire climate favoured by both the French and British governments at the beginning of the
twenty-first century. Restructuring of working time could mean that working arrangements
which suit women with family responsibilities may be discussed under the Robien law on the
35 hour week in France. It is possible that some companies may review their structures and
find job-sharing a way of creating more jobs in line with tax incentives provided by the Jospin
government in France. One of the priorities stressed by the French government in January
1999 was to highlight good practice in using the reduction of working time to create "contrats
d'égaleité." A similar issue to the low profile of the new women's unit in the Labour
government is evident in the lack of importance given to the women's rights ministry in France
which has all but disappeared from the Jospin government after a chequered career of being
subsumed within other ministries such as Health and Urban Affairs.

A French study commissioned by the Conseil Supérieur de l'égalité professionnelle, headed by
Nicole Péry, Secrétaire d'État aux droits des femmes et à la formation
professionnelle" (secretary of state for the rights of women and professional training), which is
now within the ministry dealing with education, health, training and "solidarité" provides a
clear indication of the obstacles faced by women in obtaining access to ongoing training at
work. (Fournier, CEREQ Bref No 160, January 2000) The most important of these are: the
calendar of professional life which is dominated by a male career model, lack of information
about the relevance of training provided, the obligation to be mobile when applying for
promotion, organisation of family life which has more constraints for women than for their
male partners.

The report stresses that is necessary to provide statistics disaggregated by gender and to
systematically take into account situations and needs of men and women in the framework of
studies on ongoing training which are undertaken using public funding. In order to improve
access to funding the following issues are highlighted. Firstly, it is necessary to develop and
diversify the information to different actors within the system of ongoing training. Secondly it
should be ensured that 10% of training hours given to employees with children should be
spent on personal development. Thirdly, the employer should be obliged to provide for any underlying expenses such as transport and child care and should encourage development of new types of training which allow for more flexibility and should integrate the place of training into the workplace.

In order to encourage professional equality it is necessary to simplify administrative procedures which aim to promote equality in the workplace such as the "contrat d'égalité professionnelle". Firstly, figures disaggregated by gender should be readily available when discussing negotiation on ongoing training, secondly, the situation of men and women should be taken into account when public money is used for training and thirdly, awareness of the issue should be increased amongst the social partners. Lastly, the validation of skills acquired should be carried out using a more diverse range of modes, the cost of implementing this should be investigated and there should be links made between different types of certification in order to enable employees to obtain promotion.

In a speech on January 2nd 1999 to open the Paris exhibition "La parité en marche" Péry commented on the poor representation of women within the Assemblée Nationale (French Parliament). After the legislative elections of June 1997 there were 63 female "députées" out of 577 elected representatives, or little more than 10%. Figures for the Senate were even worse, standing at 19 out of 321. She went on to make the following statements, ostensibly about the poor representation of women in politics but which are equally applicable to the absence of women in the upper echelons of management, where women make up only 7% within the top 5,000 companies in France:

1"(Parce que)... leur place marginale dans notre société ne peut être acceptée plus longtemps, enfin, parce que l'égalité formelle et effective entre les femmes et les hommes constitue un droit fondamental de l'être humain, le Premier Ministre a fait de l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes un des piliers de la rénovation de notre vie publique et de la modernisation de notre société. Tel est bien le pari que fait le Gouvernement: ouvrir un chantier ambitieux où la parité poserait les bases d'un nouveau contrat entre femmes et hommes'.'
As this statement shows, there is a new awareness of the importance of the gender contract which frames notions of acceptability and availability regarding women's participation in public life.

The subsequent adoption by the French Parliament on March 10th 1999 of the law on equality between women and men shows how quickly the issue of equal political representation for men and women in the French Parliament has been brought to the forefront of the political arena. However, two socialist "députés", Touraine and Roman (Libération, June 9th 1999) warned that passing laws is not enough and called for strict financial sanctions for those political parties which do not implement equality measures as quickly as possible, starting with choosing women candidates for winnable seats in the municipal elections in 2001. This has an immediate effect, as can be seen from the balanced list of candidates elected to the European Parliament on June 13th 1999 which meant that the proportion of French women Euro MPs went up from 29.2% in 1994 to 40.2%. For Touraine and Roman, sanctions are preferable to the softly-softly approach and the opportunity must be seized to force changes through the system. The following quote illustrates the solutions proposed to combat the constraints suffered by women within the political arena:

2 "La sanction financière est un puissant levier: le législateur pourra inciter à la réalisation de la parité par la modulation du financement public des partis, en fonction de la proportion de candidates dans des circonscriptions ou des sièges gagnables. La pénalisation paraît préférable à l’incitation ...... Pour être efficaces, les sanctions devront être lourdes ...... Il sera vain d’attendre l’émergence spontanée de femmes dans les structures locales des mouvements politiques. Les freins sont réels: le machisme ambiant, souvent insidieux, parfois violent, du milieu politique dissuade encore trop les engagements féminins, sans parler des horaires et de la fréquence des réunions."

While these statements are applied to equal opportunities within the political arena, they are arguably equally true of the commercial sphere. It is much more difficult, however to envisage

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2 (Financial sanctions represent a powerful lever: the legislator will be able to force through a situation of equality by changing the way that parties are financed by the state, depending on how many female candidates are put forward in winnable constituencies. Penalising them if they do not do so seems preferable to encouraging them to do this....To be effective sanctions must be heavy....It is pointless to wait for the spontaneous appearance of women within local structures of political movements. The constraints are very real: the atmosphere of machismo, which is sometimes insidious and sometimes aggressive, of the political sphere still discourages women from taking part, not to mention the timing and the frequency of meetings".

97
a system of sanctions against miscreant employers who do not have the same duty of commitment to democratic representation within their private companies and who are not dependant on public funding. On the subject of professional equality, the socialist government in France has made a clear policy statement (http://www.social.gouv.fr/htm/actu/34-990623.htm) which shows their intention to modify perceived rigidities of previous policy on equal opportunities. The report on professional inequality submitted to the prime minister on September 2nd 1999 by Catherine Génisson contained a 30 point action plan (see appendix). The main points covered equality of representation for women within trades unions, night work legislation to apply to men and women equally, measures to encourage equality when restructuring working time under the second law on the 5 hour week and increasing funding to women who wish to undertake day release courses or start their own businesses. The broader issues were also addressed of broadening career choices for women and giving men paid parental leave in order to involve them in the conciliation of working life and family responsibilities.

Points 11 to 13 of the Génisson report are of specific interest for this study. Point 11 recommends reinforcing the skills evaluation of each employee after ascertaining skills acquired and skills needed in the future. It recommends ensuring that the "bilan social" (report on the workers situation) regularly gives the number of employees who have had access to training over the last five years by category and sex. State aid should be given for training in line with companies' compliance with the above measure. Point 12 recommends the linking of the existing duty of the employer to fund training to an increased obligation to maintain and validate employees' skills. Point 13 advocates reinforcement of state provision for distance learning and support for initiatives of private organizations.

However, the Roudy law of July 13th 1983 had already covered similar ground but has had little effect. Yvette Roudy herself stated in an article in Le Monde (September 3rd 1999:10) that she had been naive in believing that financial incentives would be enough to persuade companies to adopt equality measures and that she now believed that stronger sanctions were necessary to ensure that the old law was applied rather than instituting new legal provisions. She stated that she had not been sufficiently aware of the indifference of the authorities or of the trades unions and the heads of companies and went on to say
"Le rapport Génisson plaide simplement pour une "démarche intégrée", pour que chaque fois qu'une loi est votée, l'on pense à l'égalité hommes-femmes. Mais pour cela il faut une véritable volonté gouvernementale, une vigilance permanente, un vrai ministère des droits des femmes. Depuis 1986, rien de cela n'existe plus.

Roudy therefore shares concern shown by many at European level that proposals which have much in common with mainstreaming equal opportunities will not have sufficient weight to effect change and that stronger measures are necessary.

This view is supported in the same article by Maya Surdut, head of the national collective for the rights of women who stated

"Il n'y a rien de contraignant pour le patronat. Tout est renvoyé au dialogue social alors qu'on connaît les rapports de force actuels et que l'on sait combien les revendications des femmes sont difficilement portées par les syndicats dans l'entreprise. Les trente propositions relèvent d'une démarche pointilliste alors que tout fait système et constituent une réponse insuffisante compte tenu de l'ampleur du problème.

There is a clear difference here between liberal measures providing incentives for change advocated by the Génisson report and more radical measures, possibly including financial sanctions, to coerce those in power to change. Basic solutions recommended by Surdut are as follows: firstly, there should be sanctions if the Roudy law is not applied. Secondly, a body should be created specifically to oversee this law. Thirdly a full-time women's rights ministry should be created which is independent from the employment ministry and has sufficient funding.

The main policy outcome from this report was the reactivation in October 1999 of the interministerial committee set up by Yvette Roudy, Minister for Women's Rights, in 1982. This committee had existed for nine years until 1991 but had a poor record on succeeding in

3 (The Génisson report is simply in favour of integrated measure so that every time a law is voted upon, the question of equality between men and women is considered. But for that, a real political will on the part of the government is necessary and having a real women's rights ministry. Since 1986, none of that has existed.)

4 (There are no constraints here for heads of companies. Everything is at the level of social dialogue whereas we know what the current power relationships are and we know how difficult it is for women's claims to be put forward by trades unions within the company. The 33 proposals are too concerned with details whereas it is the whole system that is the problem and they are an
implementing concrete changes. In the field of training, the contracts for professional equality which were set up by the "Loi Roudy" in 1983 were to be made more flexible and the objective of establishing 50 such contracts by the end of the year 2000 was set, with the cooperation of employers and the social partners. This shows the Jospin government's intention to move away from the heavily directive law of 1982 towards a softer approach since it was believed that rigidities in the law made it unpopular with employers. However, as we have seen, many including Roudy herself felt that employers would not act voluntarily to improve their record on equal opportunities and that more radical measures were necessary.

4.9
CONCLUSIONS ON EMPIRICAL STUDIES IN FRANCE

Given the existence of a well-established system of continuing vocational training in France and the piecemeal provision in Britain, one would expect to find programmes to systematically combat the discrimination against women in France rather than in Britain. However evidence on training programmes in France tends to suggest that women with high level qualifications such as a degree are more likely to receive an equitable share of training, whereas those women with fewest qualifications at the bottom of the hierarchy are deprived by poor training provision of a second chance to obtain qualifications valued in the labour market.

The issue of training for young women as a majority of the unemployed under 25 group is virtually never highlighted by French politicians. Apprenticeship schemes in France as in Britain tend to favour young men going into traditionally male preserves of manufacturing and industrial jobs. There is possibly a link with the threat of social unrest coming from disaffected young men, whereas the nightmare vision of young women causing riots because they do not have jobs is hardly at the forefront of the nation's consciousness.

Legislative measures such as the "plan d'égalité" and individual training leave have had little impact on firms, particularly in the private sector, where a high level of vertical segregation still exists. Recent discussions at the MAGE conference organised by the high profile Marché du Travail et Genre (Women and the Labour Market) research group within the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique on the value of "mainstreaming" or getting equal
opportunities onto the agenda at their biannual conference in November 1997 are optimistic in
the view that this will have some effect where legislation has not. However, there are
criticisms that similar measures recommended in the Génisson report are not radical enough to
affect the underlying system which reproduces inequality.

Horizontal segregation is still prevalent with female workers found in large numbers in certain
professions and hardly present in others, and it will take years of schemes to encourage entry
of female workers into male dominated professions to make a difference even if the political
will exists to change the situation.

The new global approach of a "démarche intégrée" towards equal opportunities has much in
common with mainstreaming at a European level since it calls for awareness of the necessity
to reinforce equal opportunities structures in all areas of public sector policy, with professional
equality being the first priority. The "Plan National pour l'Emploi" presented to the French
government on June 2nd 1999 stressed a global approach regarding access to initial training,
employment and the situation of women in companies. The main policy directions focus on
widening career choices for females in order to decrease horizontal segregation in the
workplace, including measures to increase awareness of teachers. However, all these measures
can only have a minor effect on private sector companies to encourage them to implement
equal opportunities policies and they are likely to do so only if there is a clear commercial
advantage. The most promising avenue to be followed is arguably the provision of financial
incentives by the government to private companies to encourage them to include an equal
opportunities plan when restructuring the 35 hour working week under the Loi Robien, but
even this may not be effective, as experience of the Roudy law as shown, and more radical
measures such as sanctions for non-compliance may be necessary.

4.10

CONCLUSIONS

Data on the access of women to ongoing training must be examined in qualitative as well as
quantitative terms. While the disparity between the total number of training hours allocated to
men and women in the workplace may have diminished, the quality of training received must
be examined. If training is divided into company specific training and training in transferable
skills, it can be seen that women often receive more induction training in company specific training but receive far less non-specific training which aids mobility. In both countries figures vary according to industry, occupation, size of firm and whether it is in the public or private sector. Access can also be linked to position in the hierarchy and well-qualified women receive more equitable treatment that those with low levels of qualification.

This chapter also evaluated state policy on equal opportunities in Britain and France at the beginning of the new millennium. In Britain attention has been focused on earnings rather than the wider issue of professional equality which has a low profile in Britain. The campaign in France for professional equality following on from the changes in the law to encourage political parity signals a greater state involvement than in Britain. However, critics maintain that there is little new in the 1999 Génisson proposals on professional equality which could not be found in the 1983 Roudy laws. Opinions are divided on whether the laws were too rigid or never properly applied while more radical proponents call for sanctions.

The last two chapters dealt with the issue of ongoing training at the level of the nation state in Britain and France. The following chapter will now deal with developments at the supranational European level.
CHAPTER 5

WOMEN AND TRAINING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters analysed the policy environment affecting ongoing training for women at the level of the nation state in France and Britain, but it is useful to go beyond this to examine policy developments at the European Union level and to weigh up any impact that this may have on changing practice and leading to convergence in training policy in member states. The link between equal opportunities and training has arguably been made more overtly at European Union level than at the level of the nation state.

Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, 1957, established the objective of equality between men and women and is seen by many as the corner stone of equal opportunity measures since that date (Boddendjik 1991, Beaumelau and Mora-Canzoni, 1996). Directives on equality of remuneration (1975) were swiftly followed by directives governing equality of access to work, training, promotion and equal conditions of work (1976), equality of treatment in social security (1979), equality of treatment for women exercising independent activity (1986), rights to paid maternity leave and guarantee of health and safety measures for pregnant workers (1992). It can therefore be seen that the link between labour market policies and social policies, including the link between training and equal opportunities for women, is an underlying theme in European Union policy-making which is not always present at the level of the nation state. There is continuity in the direction of European Union policy making over longer time periods which can be contrasted with the prevalence of short-term political goals at national level.

Hatt (1996) states that the European Union may prove to be one of the most powerful forces promoting equality for women. She emphasises the role of the French who were instrumental in insisting on European laws governing equal pay to match their own so that they would not be competitively disadvantaged. These laws were subsequently interpreted as a basis to argue in favour of equal pay for men and women doing work of equal value to ensure equality even
when segregation in employment is widespread. She points out however that legislation on equal pay alone focuses entirely upon the labour market and ignores deeper structural issues such as access to training and childcare which affect women's position in society and their labour market status. As we shall see, this is an intrinsic weakness in policy at European Union level and the question must be posed as to whether the above policies, and more specifically those concerning training for women at work, have had the desired impact.

5.2
EUROPEAN COMMISSION ACTION PROGRAMMES

Much has been published in European Commission documents about the need to increase women's participation in the labour market in order to reach a gender balance and there have been four action programmes on equal opportunities for women since the first was launched in 1982. The Fourth Community Action Programme document (No 335/337) for 1996-2000 clearly states the wide-reaching implications for change when it mentions the twofold necessity for changes in political life and cultures of decision-making in the private sector.

Commission publications refer to increased equality for women as a desirable goal which complements the capitalist ethic, as it would more efficiently use human resources and talents currently under-utilised, while being beneficial to the wishes of an egalitarian society in creating greater parity. There is broad consensus on these issues, although different countries within the EU highlight different objectives as the way of tackling them. Different cultures have varying approaches to the issue of co-financing which is an essential element of Commission policy.

The problem of horizontal labour market segregation (or the goal of "mixité" in French) is seen as being a deep rooted problem, starting with different career paths for boys and girls at school and ending with professions which are seen in many instances to be male-dominated or female-dominated. The reconciliation of work and family life is frequently referred to in any discussion of labour market policies or training issue affecting women with children (women still in the vast majority of cases being more affected than men by the childcare issue). The third issue of culture is perhaps the most important and the least tangible one, since it deals with the deep-rooted problem of hierarchies, networks and the distribution of power within a
patriarchal society.

Rees (1998) suggests that the wording of equal opportunities statements within Council decisions and guidelines to applicants for programmes can be divided into two categories. Programmes such as COMETT, EUROTECNET, FORCE, PETRA) use the term to "promote" (i.e. to further the development of) equal opportunities whereas others (ERASMUS, TEMPUS) use the term "ensure" (i.e. to guarantee). However there is no discernible difference in approach or difference in the mechanisms for checking the extent to which equal opportunities were provided. This raises the question of the extent to which EO statements are intended to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of gender in the legal sense or whether both genders should have effective equality of access, which would necessitate the recognition and accommodation of different starting positions.

5.3
TINKERING, TAILORING AND TRANSFORMING

The conceptual framework concerning the definition of equal opportunities is linked by Rees (1998) to three stages when examining equal opportunities in the European Union. She likens equal treatment approaches, including providing a sound legal base with adequate resources to ensure law enforcement, to tinkering with the existing situation. Awareness raising is important for this but effective monitoring and evaluation is needed to measure progress achieved, such as building equal opportunities objectives into the performance review of staff in a company. The second stage of positive action or positive discrimination is christened tailoring and could include women-only training, women role models, earmarking of budgets for guidance and counselling and documenting examples of good practice. This necessitates recognition of women's domestic commitments, including childcare, which may restrict their opportunity to engage in training. This approach is based on a deficit model whereby the intention is to remedy the deficiencies of the underperforming group and so merely attempts to deal with the distribution of resources rather than tackling the underlying structures of oppression and domination within the status quo.

Rees advocates a model whereby training provision should be transformed and the mainstream should be feminised. Such a model necessitates changing organisational cultures and
institutions by placing women's training needs and the realities of their lives centre stage in the
design of all programmes. This measure echoes Cockburn's (1991) argument that EO policies
do not work if they are used as part of a short agenda and tacked on to existing structures.
Instead, a long agenda is needed to promote substantial change, to value women's skills and
labour and to question the nature of the organisation and power relations within it.

This is obviously far more radical than the notion of informing employers and employees
about equality issues and disseminating good practice. However, mainstreaming is often
coupled with an approach where the task is seen as being to "win hearts and minds" (Rees,
1998:47) This "softly softly" approach of persuading employers that it is for the good of their
company to improve promotion prospects for women, and to improve access to training to
further this, can be criticised for having no teeth if there is no onus on the employer or
incentive to change deep-rooted practices. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that it is easy
enough to learn politically correct language to appear to support well-meaning objectives but
there must be proper monitoring and evaluation of the labour market to ensure that change is
taking place. If there is no real change over a reasonable time period, more radical measures
may be needed, such as legislation to promote positive discrimination.

5.4
WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE NINETIES

According to the Labour Force Survey 1997, unemployment rates for women in the UK are
much lower than in France. For the 25-49 category the rates are 5.1% in the UK and 13.4% in
France, while the figures for the 15-24 age group show an even more striking disparity: 11.2%
in the UK and 31.2% in France. One reason for this is that the percentage of women in part-
time work is much higher in the UK than in France: 44.9% in the UK and 30.9% in France.
However, the number of part-time workers in the workforce has increased rapidly in France
from under one fifth in 1982 to around a third at the beginning of the nineties, 85% of whom
are women. Denmark and the Netherlands also have over 40% part-time women workers, and
Belgium is in the same category as Britain with 43.6% of women working part-time. Most
part-time workers tend to work between 11 and 20 hours. It must however be borne in mind
that a large number of part-time workers in France work four days a week excluding
Wednesday to fit in with childcare responsibilities since schools are closed. It should also be
remembered that while the British definition of part-time work is working less than 30 hours a week, the French definition of part-time work is linked to the full-time norm at one-fifth fewer hours per week, currently 28 hours rather than 35 hours, which reflects the prevalence of a long part-time model of 4 full days a week.

Figures given in the Fourth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities in 1996 state the following. Two out of five of all jobs in the EU are now held by women and the majority of the new jobs created during the last years are held by women. However, women make up over 80% of part-time workers, 70% of family workers, over half of temporary employees, over 60% of clerical workers. If entitlements to employment protection and other work-related benefits are linked to quantities of hours worked per week, many women who work part-time are disqualified from benefits enjoyed by many men, including training. In many cases social benefits assume a model of a full-time working male. Fewer than half of all women in the European Community have dependent children but many references to women workers assume responsibility for child-care and often attribute lower earnings, fewer benefits and poorer promotion prospects to this factor. Over half of the unemployed in the Community are women. This does not even take into consideration the number of women who do not register as unemployed because they know they are not eligible for benefit. For those in work, the pay differential between men and women in the UK is lower than in France, with British women earning on average 68.2% of men's wages for a manual job and 54.2% for a non-manual job. Corresponding figures for France are 80.8% for manual workers and 66.6% for non-manual workers. (Europe News Autumn 1994).

However, in contrast to data on employment, those on training are difficult to obtain and statements can only be made "in so far as data allow - their availability or otherwise is in itself a revealing indicator of gender awareness" (Rees 1998:122).
5.5
EUROPEAN COMMISSION INITIATIVES ON TRAINING FOR WOMEN

5.5.1
IRIS

The fate of the IRIS network provides a good example of different perspectives on policy-making designed to benefit women. It was created in 1988 following recommendation by the Commission on 24th November 1987 (87/567/CEE), that member states should adopt policies to encourage women to get involved in training, particularly training measures linked to developing industries and those professions where women are traditionally under-represented. Following the success of the first phase of the programme, the European Commission, through its Task Force on Human Resources in DG V, stated that it would fund IRIS II to run from 1994 - 1998 with a budget of 1 million Ecus.

However, this came to nothing when on 6 December 1994 the Council of Ministers adopted a Decision establishing a new vocational training programme, LEONARDO da VINCI, which was to build on the PETRA, FORCE, EUROTECNET, COMMETT programmes as well as part of the LINGUA programme and the IRIS network. Activities until then carried out by the IRIS network were to be integrated in the LEONARDO programmes. A private non-profit making association was created to continue the activities of the IRIS network as from July 1995. This was welcomed by the Commission as proof that community pump-priming money can stimulate self-sufficiency. Beaumelou and Mora-Canzoni (1996) describe this date as a historical moment and note without further comment that participants were able to pay a subscription to belong to IRIS and that Member States would make decisions individually on whether to support this initiative. This example of privatisation is arguably an underhand way of taking away EU funding while claiming that this is a good policy. There was opposition to this from some members of the European Parliament. Beaumelou and Mora-Canzoni (1996) stress that the IRIS network was set up on a recommendation by the Commission rather than a decision which has greater weight (as for FORCE, LEONARDO and SOCRATES) and therefore suffered from endemic fragility and a modest budget.
The main priorities of the IRIS programme were: to increase exchanges on good practice in the European community, to identify and disseminate expertise in training for women, to include the social partners in training action, to promote innovative action in professional training, to increase awareness of the different actors involved and to disseminate information concerning equal opportunities between women and men. However, it can be argued that increasing awareness and disseminating information has little force particularly if there is no funding for monitoring and evaluation of the effects of these actions. An analogous situation is the call for stringent criteria regarding measures to tackle unemployment in the European Union which were demanded by socialist leaders to counterbalance the binding conditions demanded of countries wishing to be part of monetary union.

The increasing importance given to women's training was reflected in the joint opinion from European employers and Trade Unions on women's training issued at the end of November 1993 in which they said that women must benefit from training opportunities on an equal footing with men if they are to gain access to a wider range of skilled jobs. This document called for an innovative approach to the participation of women in general education and training activities, including in-company training, to combat labour market segregation where women despite often high levels of education were clustered in a limited number of female-dominated sectors. It stressed that action is needed to compile existing relevant information and provide further information about labour market prospects and training possibilities for women. There are still many instances of statistics not being broken down by gender, which often makes analysis impossible.

A report on the IRIS seminar for 60 representatives of employers federations and trade unions held in November 1993 in Greece to mark the end of the first phase of IRIS shows awareness of the difficulties of implementing change in an area where socio-cultural elements play such a large part. The influence of parents and peer groups in women's career choices was highlighted, as was the importance of diversification of career choices for women. The enterprise culture was seen as a reflection of a hitherto male-dominated culture, but some optimism surrounded the notion of new styles of management where "female" skills such as team work and communication skills are given greater prominence. Trade union representatives were pessimistic about the use of flexible working practices, since it often meant no protection, precarious status and insufficient pay with women being
disproportionately affected.

The IRIS network had over 900 members by April 1996 and has a database which is not available for consultation by non-members. This is a consequence of the private non-profit making structure under which it now operates but is obstructive to researchers without financial resources. Members must be organisations carrying out women's training with a view to equal opportunities, employers or trade union organisations or companies who are involved in organizing continuing training with an equal opportunities dimension.

According to a report published by DG V in June 1993, at that time IRIS only had very weak influence on employers probably due to the fact that the network did not have much contact with them. The earlier programmes were all concerned with women seeking employment with few programmes looking at training in firms. The report recommended closer links with firms and closer cooperation with the FORCE ongoing training programme. A major criticism of the programme in general is that no clear common methodology for evaluation of results was agreed. IRIS reports were only issued in French and English to start with so this may have limited its audience.

Monitoring and evaluation of results is a key area and it is significant that this was not done, in contrast to action carried out by CEDEFOP who have made it an important part of their strategy. Networks such as IRIS often have clear objectives but are open to criticism in evaluation of outcomes. This can lead to a situation where network publications publish documents congratulating members for increasing awareness of good practice but unless this nebulous concept is translated into action which has measurable consequences, the effects are difficult to ascertain. European Commission publications often seem to ignore the lack of real impact on working practices and can be accused of preaching to the converted.

Provisions at national level highlight the importance given to the IRIS network and arguably emphasise differences in how national groups prioritize training. France set up a national IRIS bureau called RACINE whereas there was no such provision in Britain. In fact, out of all European Community states, only France and Germany took the step of setting up a national office. RACINE criticised the poor definition of IRIS objectives since it was not made clear whether the programme was supposed to promote innovation, show what Member States were
doing to promote women's training or to set up European partnerships, all of which would imply different strategies. RACINE identified four areas for itself to work on in France in workshops to take place three times a year:

* setting up innovation in training
* following the development of these training programmes
* preparing trainers for transnational partnerships
* disseminating good practice.

They found that French women returners were over-represented in programmes as compared to their proportion nationally of the female workforce. They found that women aged 18-25 were under-represented with only 10% of programmes being aimed at them. The report from French partners in the IRIS network was positive about the increase in quality of IRIS programmes as the network developed.

In Britain there were a majority of programmes aimed at women with no qualifications seeking work. Ethnic minority women were well represented with 12 projects out of 63 taking account of their specific needs. Most programmes operated outside the aegis of Training and Education Councils and Local Education Councils (the Scottish equivalent) with half of all projects linked to university and college initiatives and a third of IRIS projects initiated by women's organisations that are funded by the European Social Fund. Most IRIS projects in Great Britain receive a mixture of funding from local authorities and the ESF.

The majority of training programmes in the private sector involved confidence building and personal development. These were normally short courses designed as a springboard to develop confidence in women who already had some qualifications and did not reach women who had no qualifications and were most in need of training. Courses were also set up to train personnel departments in equal opportunities recruitment practices. Many courses had links with the local community with the most popular being exchange visits to promote good practice in training for women.

The British IRIS network members suggested the following areas for improvement

* strengthen links between employers and programmes,
* publish fewer IRIS documents while increasing their quality and depth particularly in
disseminating examples of good practice
* research into future labour market needs, lack of qualifications and future careers
* support for trainees who have entered traditionally masculine jobs during the recession and setting up of networks for mutual support
* Support for women setting up their own businesses during the recession where selection procedures may operate even more strongly against women
* setting up of courses to compare how personal development is taught in different areas of the Community
* Setting up of women-only courses rather than extra training for women within mixed courses.

36% of the budget for IRIS 1 was spent on seminars and reports. Both Britain and France have set up comparatively few programmes under IRIS compared to Italy, Spain and Denmark.

The 1993 report on "La Formation Professionnelle des femmes dans la Communauté" (European Commission 1993) highlighted the poor level of childcare facilities in Britain. As was stated by Avon TEC, (interview 1993) this means that training money is often spent on basic child-care provision which in other countries is the responsibility of the State. This again emphasises the importance of the infrastructure which is needed to support training measures.

5.5.2
EMPLOYMENT - NOW

The Employment NOW programme running from 1994 - 1999 aimed to build on the successes of the first NOW programme which was set up within the aegis of the European Social Fund in 1991. Its stated aim was to develop equal opportunities for women in the labour market, facilitating their access to future oriented jobs and to management. Priorities included major structural issues such as reconciliation of work and family life, desegregation of the labour market, access to education and training and a balanced representation of women and men in decision making.

Measures developed within EMPLOYMENT - NOW were seen to complement actions
undertaken within the Fourth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. EMPLOYMENT - NOW did not aim to have a large and immediate impact on the high rates of female unemployment but rather supported forward-looking pilot programmes that address the challenges of industrial and social change. The importance of training was recognised since a critical objective of EMPLOYMENT - NOW was the integration of successful outcomes of projects into national systems of training and employment.

The programme had seven characteristic features which are worth listing in full since it was the largest positive action programme of the European Union in the nineteen nineties (Conroy 2000).

1. A successful think-tank and laboratory (for example it developed a methodology for giving women credit for the skills and experience they gained outside the formal education and employment systems)
2. A proven track record (linking social and psychological support with training, work experience and job search.)
3. A potential for mainstreaming (especially at a local and regional level where NOW forged solid coalitions with key actors and put the equal opportunities issue on the agenda).
4. An essential structural impact (Equal Opportunities is now a transversal objective for all parts of the Structural Funds and measures to underpin the reconciliation of work and family life was highlighted, particularly for Objective 1 regions).
5. A true approach to human resource development (targeting previously invisible groups such as older women and migrants)
6. An added value through transnational cooperation (sharing good practice and obtaining higher media visibility)
7. A fertile ground for innovation (forming new networks and conceiving new methodologies).

NOW had a particularly strong effect on Objective 1 countries - Spain, Greece, Ireland, Portugal but less on the northern countries including Britain and France. This could be because measures to provide childcare as a preliminary structural support before women can undertake training are particularly valuable in these areas.

113
The NOW programme highlighted areas where women tend to have low participation such as creation of new companies. Interestingly, a 1996 survey by the Swiss Bank Association found businesses created by women to be generally more healthy, stable and less affected by failures. (Special Report on Employment - NOW March 1996). It encouraged the setting up of national networks but few transnational partnerships took place. National co-ordinators are usually linked to IRIS or the Equal Opportunities body in their country. Criticisms were made of the lack of involvement of the social partners and of trainers at a local and national level. This is linked to the fact that co-financing meant that social partners were often unwilling to spend money on projects. Advertising the network was given priority but information on procedures of how the network was to function and how projects would be financed was slow to follow.

The March 1996 special Employment - NOW report No 4 (European Commission 1996) emphasised the following aspects as guiding principles to be incorporated wherever possible: innovation, transnationality, the multiplier effect of mainstreaming, a bottom-up approach, and complementarity of programmes. Priority areas of action were: redressing the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market, promoting entrepreneurship and job creation by women, improving the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, and stimulating employers, training organisations, trade unions and other relevant actors. Types of measures supported were training, guidance, counselling and employment systems, training measures to specifically address the needs of women, job creation and entrepreneurship, information, dissemination and awareness actions.

There were strong links between NOW and IRIS, with 405 out of 534 IRIS members putting forward projects under NOW at the end of 1993 using the IRIS database to find partners. Problems arise since NOW emphasises training leading to recognised diplomas where the time period for study is often longer than the duration of the NOW programme, with funding being notoriously slow-moving. The number of NOW projects selected in 1995 were 769 for the total of the EU, with 82 coming from the UK and 158 coming from France. Funding was almost equal with France receiving 37,404,200 Ecu and the UK receiving 37,098,923 Ecu (adding together the Great Britain and Northern Ireland figures).

The low level of involvement of private national partners can be seen in both France and Britain but the contribution of the private sector in France is much higher than that of Britain.
The public sector has an interest in showing itself to be the locomotive for change and public sector companies in both France and Britain tend to have a greater level of equal opportunities awareness than the private sector. 11% of funding for the above NOW projects was provided by national partners in the private sector in France as compared to 2% in the UK. The public sector partners are the major contributors in the UK, contributing even more than the EU, whereas in France the private sector has the biggest input of any EU countries, along with the Netherlands. This great difference between private companies in France and Britain may be linked to the legal obligation on French companies to provide training under the 1971 Formation Continue law. This leads to a situation where the private sector has a greater training culture and is more responsive to invitations of involvement in such projects. It could also be due to expertise within private companies in France of training officers who are used to dealing with a bureaucratic system of justification of use of the training budget which would be useful when dealing with funding paperwork. As one French director of Human resources commented (interview, Paris June 1997) those involved in training must have legal expertise, personnel expertise and product knowledge at their fingertips. The lack of involvement of the private sector in Britain once again highlights the split between practice in the private sector and that in the public sector where equal opportunities training courses are given much more importance.

Conroy (2000) regards the closure of the NOW programme to be a negative factor. Its replacement by a new Community initiative called Equal, aligned with article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty on non-discrimination is considered to be a move towards minoritising gender in the new Community initiatives, despite the discourse claiming that integration of gender into Community policies will be accompanied by a dual strategy of mainstreaming and positive action. Article 13 of the Treaty states that "the Council acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation". Immediate causes for concern are that it requires unanimity in the Council, the nature of appropriate action is not defined and in contrast to the Social Protocol proposals do not have to be discussed with social partners.
5.5.3

LEONARDO

The first LEONARDO programme ran from 1995-1999 covering vocational training initiatives and amalgamating the existing range of programmes in this area such as COMMETT, FORCE AND EUROTECNET. It had a budget of 801.8 million Ecu, double the budget for 1990-1994, but somewhat less the budget of 1005.6 million Ecu for the SOCRATES programmes dealing with education.

The IRIS network was not included in this streamlining programme and its future is uncertain, since it has been privatised and relies on members' subscriptions. It could be that women will benefit from the mainstreaming of the equal opportunities issue if it is on the agenda as a matter of course in all programmes, but it is all too easy to find vague references to equal opportunities and lack of funding to back up any real analysis and evaluation of the situation. The division of women's training into IRIS, which was funded jointly by DG 5 and the Task force for Human Resources, Education Training and Youth, and WOW which is funded only by DG 5 through the European Structural Funds, mirrors the overlap and possible confusion over whether training is primarily a labour market strategy or a social affairs issue. On the other hand, diversity of funding mechanisms may be desirable. In a similar situation, The European Parliament wanted information and awareness raising campaigns under NOW to be channelled within the framework of the new enlarged IRIS network but the Commission in its final text adopted in June 94 did not take up this amendment.

Carol Tongue, MEP for East London, highlighted the funding problem in the 1994 IRIS bulletin NO 21/22 since funding from the Commission's Task force for Human Resources was to disappear under LEONARDO. She argued that European horizontal networks targeting specific groups such as IRIS should be funded under LEONARDO. Her report proposed amendments to LEONARDO which were was backed by the Parliament in a resolution in May 1994, based on a report drawn up by a former MEP, Mechtild von Alemann (EPP, Germany) who over the years had become Parliament's specialist on training. However neither the Commission nor the Council backed funding for IRIS under the LEONARDO programme. The new text conceded that "a specific retraining effort must be made to open up new areas of work for women and to encourage them to return to work after a career break,"
but it did not give any guarantees on funding through IRIS or any other specific mechanisms.

Carole Tongue (European Commission 1994b) summarised Parliament's demands under four headings: more specific measures for training women, a more even balance between women and men in training, more monitoring and evaluation, and lastly the maintenance of the IRIS network. She stated that evaluation and monitoring remained a particular weakness in all European Social Fund programmes and said that unless this is done it is difficult to see who is benefitting from funds. In her report to the European Parliament, she had asked for representation of at least 40% of women in the European Commission's new advisory Committee to be set up to accompany LEONARDO. Parliament agreed that at least one of the two representatives from each member State should be a woman. She did not mention the more radical idea of sanctions where payments for projects could be withheld if no equal opportunities element is included. In the interview published in the IRIS bulletin she stated that "Monitoring and evaluation have to be firmly rooted before tackling this issue."

This highlights the tension between the demands of Parliament and the changes agreed by the Council and Commission. If an equal opportunities statement is included in all training proposals it may highlight awareness of the issue of women's training but without a pressure group with its own funding, this may not result in concrete changes. Local councils have had such an equal opportunities statement as part of their employment and training policies for many years without in many cases this having much impact on the balance of gender and race within positions of power in the hierarchy.

5.6 MAINSTREAMING

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the issue of mainstreaming, where equal opportunities become a horizontal priority and should be present in all community policies became an important element of policy in the mid nineteen nineties. The Commission's stated aim is to mobilise all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women. This would affect areas such as development policies, the organisation of work, choices relating to transport or the fixing of school hours.
which may have significant differential impacts on the situation of women and men. Some authors (Rees 1995, 1998) see mainstreaming as a great leap forward, but it could be argued that this is overly optimistic, since it is simply the notion of putting equal opportunities on the agenda and moreover will only affect organisations which want to obtain European Community funding and which are likely to have a higher than average level of awareness of equal opportunities. Even these organisations may not translate this awareness into real equality of outcome regarding upward mobility for female workers. As will later be discussed in this chapter, it also ignores a more radical agenda which would require measures to compensate for the traditional responsibilities that women bear within the family and which mean that the brunt of the reconciliation between employment and family life is borne by them.

Women's issues were included for the first time in all Structural Funds actions under the Fourth Medium-term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for women and men. The Communication for the Commission on 21.02.96 COM (96) 67 entitled "incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all community policies and activities " explains the priority to be given to equal opportunities. The optimistic view is that this may be the breakthrough which will answer the continuing need for specialised programmes for women since the balance of provision, both in society and in new legislation, is still weighted in favour of men and against women. However without effective monitoring and evaluation there is a risk that national governments will see no immediate short-term pay-off and this may remain at the level of Commission rhetoric. The real effects will be seen within applications for funding for projects by the European Social Fund which now must contain an equal opportunities element.

Conroy (2000) welcomes the Commission's swift action prior to ratification of the treaty to include a range of gender based requirements, evaluations and assessments into the regulations for structural funding and terms them extremely significant but considers that this change marks the failure of voluntary approaches to gender and structural change through the funds adopted over previous decades. She contrasts the European framework, characterised by liberal feminism since it discounts structural differences between men and women, with what can be read as the more radical feminism of the United Nations Platform for Action and Beijing declaration which takes account of the unequal distribution of power, rights,
A number of the objectives for the new gender programme proposed for 2001-2006 are broadly similar to the fourth action programme for 1996-2000, with some of the terminology changing slightly. Promoting equality in the economy, providing a better gender balance in the decision-making process and reconciliation of working and family life are now expressed as equality in economic life, equal participation and representation and equality in social life. As well as arguably being more vague, the new proposals do not mention the concept of rights.

5.7 OBSTACLES TO A SUCCESSFUL EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

While some policy analysts see the European Union at work as "superstate feminism" (noted by Hoskyns, 1992), others see its equal opportunities policies as merely window dressing and "fiction on a grander scale" than its other areas of policy statement (Meehan 1993:118). Although it is possible to argue that without European Union policies the level of equal opportunities might be even lower and that measures derived from it can still provide the means for giving women greater political power and room for manoeuvre even if the underlying structure is flawed, many criticise the wide gulf between the EU's policy rhetoric and gendered reality. Hoskyns (1996) goes further than this and criticises the long standing perspective of linking gender equality to employment policy since limits are placed on gender policy by its circumspection within market opportunities.

The main criticisms are rehearsed by Duncan (1994) as follows. Firstly the European Union's legal and equal opportunities reforms are inadequate in their own terms, suffering from weaknesses of implementation and weaknesses of direction. National governments did not anticipate the practical implications in terms of Directives following the establishing of formal "window-dressing" principle of gender equality and therefore do not feel constrained to apply rulings in good faith. Levelling down to minimum standards occurs rather than levelling up. The European Parliament's Women's Committee which has pressed for levelling up in equal opportunities is limited to submitting Opinions which have no legislative force. The direction of European Union policy-making is influenced by a gendered economic discourse where men
and male interests are the actors. Wider issues such as the reconciliation of employment and family responsibilities, the desegregation of the labour market and women's low level of participation in decision-making are not addressed.

Secondly, the political and economic principles underlying the European Union are heavily gendered. Interest in social issues has primarily resulted from their impact on freedom of movement rather than from their implications for gender. Reproduction and the caring sector are not included in gender-blind discussions of labour mobility. Soft social issues concerning welfare, children, families and gender are marginalized in peripheral discourses. The economistic assumption that the European Union is populated by male workers is compounded by the dominant political paradigm of the conservative welfare state regime where social citizenship is seen in terms of a male worker supported by a wife or mother. Subsidiarity itself is a heavily gendered principle since according to this the traditional family, based on a model of the women as primary caregiver, should only be replaced by state aid if its capacity becomes exhausted.

Lastly, the European Union does not address the constitution of gender inequality. Women are already constituted differently with respect to both markets and states and this constitution is both socially deep seated and regionally variable. EU equal opportunities policies merely tackle the outcomes of gender inequality, leaving the processes which produce gender inequality intact. Unequal opportunity for women results from an integrated patriarchal system articulated through many interacting areas of social life.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2 of this study, Walby (1990) stresses the importance of patriarchal social systems, which she divides into six areas: paid work, the state, the household, male violence, sexuality and culture. However, EU gender policy only deals with the first two and treats them in isolation whereas they are part of a wider social process and the links between the different elements are important. The example given by Duncan (1996:413) is of particular relevance to this study: "it is of little benefit to set up training schemes for women when household practices position women as homeworkers, and where state policy, cultural images and male violence (e.g. harassment at work) all buttress this positioning. The result would be to produce highly trained housewives and part-time workers immobilized by their domestic role and employed below their qualification level."
The concentration on formal employment as the crucial element in maintaining patriarchal systems could be criticised for reflecting a residual economism in gender studies. Instead, it can be argued that it is not inequality in paid work which is the only element in producing unequal gender relations but rather that such inequality reflects unequal gender relations. The explanation is partly to be found in how women refer to particular cultural norms and values in their orientation and behaviour towards paid work. These conceptions are supported by and reflected in social welfare policies and institutional behaviour, including the expectations of employers. Another way of looking at this is in terms of a gender contract, defined as a rough social consensus on what women and men do think and are. This term was developed in Scandinavia in ironic counterpoint to the male-defined social contract between capital and labour. (Duncan 1994) These are also unequal contracts but recognise that the subordinate partner (capital in the social contract, women in the gender contract) also have influence and power. Gender contracts are long lasting since they are deeply rooted in social expectations and assumptions about gender roles from an early age and also because institutional structures, which shape policy, grow out of and support these contracts. Gender contracts differ throughout states within the European Union due to different historical and cultural contexts and can be traced back to differences in the transition to industrial capitalist society.

5.8
PERCEPTION OF WOMEN CITIZENS OF THE EU

There is an acknowledged gap between the Commission perception of reality and the perceptions of women in the EU. The stated aims of the Commission are eminently laudable but a "cultural transformation of individual behaviour" referred to in the Communication from the Commission of 21.02.96 is an ambitious aim for which no specific proposals are made. There is widespread awareness of the gap between the institutional rhetoric and the reality as experienced by female citizens as underlined by several surveys on the future of Europe which show that women are frequently more reluctant to support the furthering of the construction of Europe. Women in Scandinavia are particularly concerned that hard won social benefits may be affected by levelling down and the opposition of women's organisations in Sweden to the country's entry into the EU in the 1994 referendum campaign is a clear indication of this.
The Fourth medium-term Community action programme document on equal opportunities for women and men for 1996-2000 raises the following questions concerning women's lack of involvement (European Commission 1995:2): Is this because of a lack of information? Does it betray unease with regard to social and economic change? Do they feel that they are not sufficiently involved or have a sufficiently active role in Community life? Are they expressing disappointment at what they see as being inadequate progress? Responses to the Spring 1994 Eurobarometer survey of 3,500 women highlight some of the answers to these questions (Eurostat 1995). When asked whether they felt that in their personal or professional lives they had benefitted or would benefit from European Union policies or programmes, 51% of EU women surveyed said no. The positive response was much lower in France than in the UK with 28% of UK women saying they had benefitted as compared to just over 10% of French women. When the women who gave negative responses were questioned further, 39.9% of EU women said that they were unaware of the existence of EU programmes specifically aimed at women, and 19.2% of them said that the EU and its policies were too far removed from daily life. On the specific areas of training, Beaumelou and Mora-Canzoni (1994) found that women suffered from lack of information, career guidance and awareness of training opportunities.

The Fourth Action programme document (European Commission 1995:17) answers its own questions about the way forward when it highlights the need for monitoring and evaluation and recalls that in the past there has been little reliable data and information on the extent to which women really had access to and got benefit from general measures supported by Structural Funds and that this situation generated misunderstandings, mistrust and frustration. There is a new emphasis on attitude change, underlining that this is not merely a question of conveying a positive image of women in education, culture and the media. The aim now is to promote a change in women's and men's experiences and their aspirations in the public and private domains. At European level the interdisciplinary approach of women's studies could well be an asset for the integration of studies of inequality in a variety of fields. The interdisciplinary French research group Marche du Travail et Genre (Gender and the Labour Market), funded partly by the European Commission, brings together experts from different fields to examine equal opportunities in the field of labour market policy and it is hoped that this will have a concrete effect on future policy decisions.
The White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment presented by Jacques Delors at the Corfu summit in 1993 emphasised the role of education and training in stimulating growth and monitoring competitiveness and achieving a more socially acceptable level of employment. However, the equal opportunities issue was not highlighted and greater emphasis was given to youth unemployment. The Green Paper presented by Padraig Flynn, Social Affairs and Employment commissioner took a more radical line in stating that one of the main aims of European social policy is to make further progress in equality of opportunity in the labour market. It recommended setting clear employment and training targets for women in male-dominated occupations, backed up by adequate monitoring systems and creation of more diversified training, job and career opportunities. It is significant that this was not part of the White paper.

The White Paper stressed that solidarity based on equality for men and women was an essential part of the three-pronged plan. Throughout the text, references are made to the equal priority given to unemployment and equal opportunities. This can be seen as wishful thinking, since the Green Paper put the case for equal opportunities much more forcefully and was then watered down. Media coverage centred exclusively on unemployment as the main problem which Europe has to combat together. There was little or no reference to the fact that in all EU countries except the UK (due to the prevalence of insecure part-time work contracts) female unemployment is higher than male unemployment and the general issue of equal opportunities was given no visible coverage.

The tension between provision at national and supranational level is highlighted in the document which states that "the EU cannot and ought not monopolise the action since much of it is up to the Member States, their education systems, their regional and local authorities, the various partners in economic and social life, the social partners, voluntary organisations, the media and not least the partnership between men and women." It should be remembered that the EU can only provide 60% funding at most and is normally between 40% and 50%. It is also interesting to note that the Council wanted to reduce the amount of funding available to the Fourth action plan to half the amount proposed by the Commission and this was then increased to a satisfactory amount by the intervention of the European Parliament, which has shown itself to be the body most willing to push for increased resources for equal opportunities funding.
The Commission's role is to "strengthen equality law, supporting and disseminating sound practice and policies and encouraging debate even on sensitive and intractable issues."

The document states that "changes in political life and in cultures of decision-making in the private sector as well as an interest in the efficient use of human resources and talents are factors creating a favourable environment for achieving a gender balance in representation and influence. The increased presence of women in decision-making institutions and bodies would provide for a renewal of values, ideas and styles of behaviour beneficial to society as a whole and contribute to achieving the goal of parity of representation."

However despite a recent increase in the number of women in the European Commission, they still only number five women commissioners out of twenty. One Commission employee (interview April 2nd 1996) drily remarked that it would be good if the Commission cleaned up its own back yard and carried out an Equal Opportunities audit of its own pyramid structure where women are under-represented at the top levels of decision making. This is a stated Objective 4.1 under developing strategies to promote a gender balance.

For the purposes of this study, this highlights the long term nature of development in the area of equal access to ongoing training. The European Court of Justice is an institution which is likely to advance the cause of equal rights but it takes time for cases to be brought. Issues such as equal pay for equal work are easier to demonstrate than discrimination surrounding access to training. Encouragement to take up training which may help to advance the individual is part of a network which is often male-dominated. Reference is made in several parts of the document to the need for mentoring where successful women could show other women the way to advance. Advice on visibility in meeting and on memos and influencing decision making is now seen as part of how to access power structures.

5.9
CONCLUSIONS

Many documents produced by the European Commission are laudable in their intent but are too far removed from the immediate concerns of many women. While it is inevitable that a long-term approach is strategically necessary, to speak of attitude change over time and the
need for a change of culture such as behaviours in meetings and networking often seems wildly optimistic particularly if no specific measures are implemented. There is sometimes confusion about the aims of particular programmes which often overlap with others and the complexity of funding mechanisms which often require funds to be matched with national funding, make it difficult for organisations unfamiliar with the workings of European Commission bureaucracy to obtain funding. This may particularly affect private firms in Britain which have an extremely low level of involvement in funding programmes, whereas private firms in France have expertise in dealing with the bureaucracy of the state levy Formation Continue system.

Britain is handicapped more than France in funding training for women since such a high proportion of funds have to be spent on providing the basic infrastructure of childcare which is a prerequisite for many women to be able to attend training courses. The creation of the RACINE office in France which deals with programmes funded by the European Union and the lack of the equivalent in Britain suggests that training initiatives for women are given a higher priority in France than in Britain, although the objective of the French office is in tune with French government policy in that it is primarily concerned with reducing the unemployment of young people. The much higher percentage of co-financing undertaken by private firms in France than in Britain underlines the existence of a training culture supported by the state which has educated firms about the advantages of training.

The dissemination of good practice is a laudable aim but may be a case of preaching to the converted. To take one example of this, it can be seen that if a large proportion of IRIS funds are used to run conferences for training providers where issues are discussed, this is not equivalent to any real change being effected in the workplace. Mainstreaming can also be seen as a way for policy-makers to incorporate politically correct ideas without there being any real change in attitudes of management and coworkers within the workforce. The pyramid structure within the hierarchy of the European Commission itself with many female employees and few female heads of section tends to suggest that there has been no real effect on that workforce, and it may not practise what it preaches.

Monitoring and evaluation is needed to ensure that real change is taking place. How to determine whether objectives have been met by real outcomes is a key issue for equal
opportunities within training. Optimistic assertions were made by many of the people interviewed for this study that it would take time but the next generation would have more equal access to training and promotion opportunities. As the statistics showing such change reveal, change is currently so slow that equality will not be realised until the middle of the twenty-first century. It is arguably time for more radical measures to be envisaged. These could include cases being brought for lack of equal treatment but it must be borne in mind that it is extremely risky in career terms to bring a case against one's employer and become a test case, always supposing that an employee has the financial backing to do so. Another avenue could be hard-line application of the current policy where bodies applying for funding need to prove their equal opportunities commitment before obtaining it. Unfortunately the European Commission does not deal with many employers in the cut and thrust world of the financial sector and many employers are not interested in any pronouncements the Commission might make about equality. Skill shortages are much more likely to be the trigger for increased entry into male dominated professions for women but even if horizontal segregation decreases, there is no guarantee that this will be matched by increased mobility for women to combat vertical segregation.

The training culture in France and Britain is determined largely by the position of the state, with Britain still having a voluntarist system and eschewing any move towards the state-levy model, despite a change of government. Change will have to come from moves at a national level although obviously research done with European Union backing will provide useful reference points. The existence of the MAGE group in France which brings together different researchers working on labour market policy and gender, may well have an impact on policy making in the future as since its creation in the mid nineteen-nineties it has been consistently voted amongst the best performing research groups in the state-sponsored Centre National de Recherche Scientifique. The fact that this group is partly dependent for funding on the European Commission may well be one of the most important impacts the European dimension has on policy-making. While this may appear on the face of it to be an over-optimistic assertion about the ability of a research group in setting the agenda the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique is considered to be an important source by policy-makers Key members such as Margaret Maruani, Jacqueline Laufer and Rachel Silvera have a high profile in France and are regular contributors to television programmes and journalistic articles on the situation of women.
A comment by Beaumelou and Mora-Canzoni (1994:31) on the specific area of training opportunities in Europe is particularly revealing and indicates the wider issues surrounding equal opportunities policies both at a national and supranational level. After stating that women suffer from lack of information, career guidance and awareness of training opportunities they go on to say the following:

"Le travail lui-même malgré les évolutions importantes que nous venons de constater, reste cependant une valeur principalement masculine, d'où la prédominance d'hommes dans les dispositifs de formation continue, qui tendent à améliorer leurs qualifications et à leur assurer le maintien dans l'emploi. La préoccupation d'évolution professionnelle, et donc de carrière, demeure largement une affaire d'hommes."

No explanation for the underlying reasons for this are given and it is not clear whether the authors see the greater involvement of men as being due to agency, thus espousing the theories of human capital development, (see Chapter 2) or structural factors which impede the involvement of women in the labour market at the same level as men.

Rees (1998) stresses that women are expected to work within parameters set up by and for men and are therefore disadvantaged when they have to "march to the male stride" (1998:189). She sees the mainstreaming agenda at European and national level as having to tackle firstly, the complexities of the relationship between capital and patriarchy and secondly, how these complexities are manifested in gender contracts based on a traditional model of male breadwinner and female homemaker.

This chapter has examined the issue of training at European level and noted the tensions inherent in any policy area between the national preoccupations of the council of ministers and the supranational concerns of the European Commission and the European Parliament. There is a gap between Commission rhetoric and the reality as perceived by women in the European Union. Women in Scandinavian countries where social policy is at a more advanced stage are

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5 (Work itself, despite the great changes that we have just noted, remains a principally male value, hence the predominance of men in the Formation Continue system, who tend to improve their qualifications and ensure their continued employment. Concern about one's professional evolution, and therefore with one's career, remains largely a matter for men.)
particularly concerned to preserve national gains which have had a positive impact on the
gender contract. While women’s employment has received a great deal of attention, measures
proposed have a liberal agenda which do not tackle the underlying structures which provide
constraints on women’s availability for paid work or for training. Specific training policy
measures were evaluated, along with the concept of mainstreaming equal opportunities and
concrete results were found to be disappointing. However there is cause for cautious
optimism due to the increasing level of legislation on equal opportunities passed by the
European Court of Justice.

This concludes the first part of this study which dealt with theoretical perspectives and
literature regarding equal opportunities and ongoing training in the workplace.
PART TWO

The following four chapters deal with the case study of the insurance industry in Britain and France. Chapter 6 gives the context of the insurance industry within which the fieldwork for this study was carried out. Chapter 7 gives details of the methodology used and presents the sample on which new empirical work was based.

Chapter 8 analyses field work collected through questionnaires and interviews with managers responsible for training and questionnaires sent to employees in insurance firms in Britain and France. Chapter 8 concludes with a comparative analysis of fieldwork findings and chapter 9 offers overall conclusions which evaluate how theory meets practice.
6.1 INTRODUCTION

The insurance industry was chosen as the case study for this thesis as it is an important employer of women and is an industry with a good record on training. As will be seen, this does not necessarily mean that the industry has a good record on equal opportunities for women in accessing training within the industry. As was discussed in chapters 3 and 4, ongoing training in the workplace has a different history in France and Britain, leading to different legal requirements.

Before looking at the size and composition of the industry, it is useful to consider its conditions of employment and levels of unionisation. According to a 1998 report (Groupe Bernard Brunhes 1998), conditions of employment are relatively good in the insurance industry, where employees benefit from thirteenth and fourteenth month pay bonuses, generous retirement packages and holiday leave and a relatively short working week. This can be linked to the fact that unionisation rates are generally higher in banking and insurance than they are elsewhere with a rate of 28% in the British insurance industry and a French rate of 10-12%. Currently, sectoral accords at national level act as a framework with detailed negotiation taking place at company level. There is greater enthusiasm within some large insurance companies in Britain for company level bargaining and local partnership agreements, whereas in France a new sectoral collective agreement was established in 1992 (European Industrial Relations Review, 1992) and there is greater unwillingness to move away from national to company level bargaining. Training was an important element of the 1992 sectoral collective agreement which provided for training for workers without the Baccalaureat (A-level equivalent) qualification and gave bonuses to employees for participating in training courses which led to the award of a qualification. One of the main training issues dealt with by British companies is how to increase transferable skills through training.
Chart 1
Insurance industry as percentage of GDP

Chart 2

Chart 3
Percentage of total workforce

Chart 4
French Insurance industry

Administrative Staff

Field Staff

Female 62%
Male 38%

Female 38%
Male 62%

Female 17%
Male 83%
6.2
SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF INDUSTRY

According to Eurostat (1996), the European insurance industry at its peak at the beginning of the 1990s constituted 31.5% of the world market. This dropped to 25.3% by 1993 due to competition from insurance firms in Asia. Insurance premiums account for 8.22% of GDP in France and 14.7% in Britain and therefore constitute a significant part of the economies in both countries (see Chart 1). Britain, with 194 life insurance companies and 575 non-life companies, has the second largest numbers of insurance firms in Europe after Spain. France has the fourth largest number of firms with 143 life insurance companies and 466 non-life companies (see chart 2).

The insurance industry employs nearly one million people (978,722) in Europe, 65% of whom work in France, Germany or Britain. British insurance companies are bigger employers than the French, being responsible for 1.22% of the total number in employment compared to 0.65% of the total numbers in employment in France (see Chart 3). There are 267,800 employees working in the insurance industry in Britain as opposed to 122,000 in France, both figures excluding brokers and agents. The French insurance industry is split into 78% administrative support staff and 22% field sales staff (see Chart 4). Within these categories, women in the French insurance industry make up 62% of the administrative and support staff (see chart 4a) but only 17% of sales personnel in the field (see chart 4b). No figures are given for the percentage of female employees in the British insurance industry by the above Eurostat publication as the chapters on France and Britain have different headings, which once more underlines the difficulty of comparative research based on partial information. However, the Association of British Insurers estimates the proportion of women in the administrative division of the industry to be two-thirds, with a low female representation in sales, similar to the French figures.

As these figures show, the insurance industry is characterised by a high degree of gender segregation in both France and Britain. The workforce is divided between sales which is overwhelmingly male-dominated and administration where the majority of employees are female but the majority of senior managers are male. Companies are usually divided into the life insurance division and the general insurance division. The latter is called IARD in France -
Incendie, Accident et Risques Divers (Fire, Accident and General Risk). For the purposes of this study, it was considered more useful to examine the training situation within the administrative division of companies which accounts for the largest proportion of employees and where women are in the majority. However, it is useful to examine research into attitudes within the sales force where women are a small minority in order to better understand the environment of the insurance sector.

6.3 SEGREGATION ACCORDING TO GENDER WITHIN THE BRITISH INSURANCE INDUSTRY

Research into the specific environment of insurance firms in Britain has been carried out by Collinson and Knights (1986) who critically examine the division between sales which is considered to be a male job, and clerical back-up which is considered to be a female job. They conclude that "male" jobs are elevated in importance and defined as productive whilst "female" jobs are widely viewed as merely supportive and secondary. Sales is considered to be the most productive job since a policy can only be drawn up after this and can be categorised as both sales and marketing to convince the client to buy, and production of the contract which is the commodity. In this culture, "male" qualities such as toughness and dynamism are seen as necessary to do a good job, to have the control and resilience to take the knocks in an aggressive marketplace.

However, much of the sales work involves traditionally "female" communication skills, developing long-term business relationships with agents thereby encouraging them to sell the company product. Any use of interpersonal skills takes place in an exclusively male environment. Women are discouraged from moving into sales under the guise of protective paternalism. Retraining often means being sent away on a course and then being transferred to another branch. Mobility would therefore be an issue which may limit women's prospects more than men's if family commitments prevent mobility.
6.4
STRATEGIES OF EXCLUSION

Collinson, Knights and Collinson (1990) later expose the issue of mobility as a pretext to
undermine and exclude women with an example of a woman who had a car and was totally
mobile being passed over for promotion in favour of a man who lived 120 miles away, was
not mobile and who could not drive. The mobility factor was ignored in the male candidate's
interview whereas in the female candidate's interview it was stressed as being very important.
Other questions were put to the female candidate about her personal life which were not put to
the male candidate and which were therefore clearly discriminatory. Collinson et al indicate
that employer discretion on questions to be put can be used in a highly discriminatory manner.

They give a further illustration of this where, in confidence, a senior personnel officer in an
insurance company explained that the mobility policy was, in reality, operated in a relaxed and
flexible fashion and was open to interpretation, while female clerks were put off applying for
promotion since the mobility criteria was presented as non-negotiable. Similar situations arise
where women are discouraged from applying for training in external training courses since this
may mean evening and weekend travel to training centres. This is compounded by women
often having the second older and more unreliable car in the family and being unwilling to
drive any distance. Fieldwork for this study revealed that training organisers in Brittany
realised this and provided hire cars as part of the training support package.

Using the mobility criterion as a way of dissuading women from applying for promotion can
be seen as an example of paternalistic behaviour. Paternalism according to Collinson, Knights
and Collinson is, in this context (1990), "a managerial style in which a coercive approach is
replaced by calls for moral cooperation, the emergence of personal trust relations and for
employees' voluntary investment in their work and identification with company..... It is also a
peculiarly gendered form of control which draws on the familial metaphor of the 'rule of the
father' who is authoritative, benevolent, self-disciplined and wise. Subordinates are ideally
compliant, loyal and deferential with social relations in the office being stable and productive."
Female employees are therefore invited to collude with attitudes which exclude them from
certain functions for their own good. Franks (1999) refers to the joke which is apparently
well-known in personnel sections that the best way to make sure female candidates for a job
are excluded is to re-advertise it at a higher salary, since women are often more lacking in
confidence than men and often voluntarily bow out of the running, thereby effectively colluding in their own exclusion. This is not suggesting that we should blame women who are the victims of low self-esteem but that the difficulty of crossing the gender divide as women progress up the hierarchy should not be underestimated.

The overly masculine aggressive culture of sales appears to condone horseplay and joke-telling which can undermine women who are damned if they join in as being sexually available and damned if they don't as being humourless and not fitting in with the culture. Collinson and Collinson (1992) shows how women have different tactics to combat this, none of which appear to work well. The incidences of sexual harassment documented in the article illustrate the problems of women trying to break into a male domain.

Women's resistance to exclusion mechanisms is often diluted by the concern to avoid conflict and protect the self. It takes a strong personality and strong motivation to react against undermining attitudes where paternalistic concern by male managers for vulnerable female staff masks the message to women that the company culture is a male culture. Visibly challenging the company culture may be seen as counter productive. Women often internalise the doubts presented to them, acquiesce and collude by admitting that training women who may go off and have babies and not return is costly for the company. As clients they may also have socially conditioned perceptions of women being less competent at selling a product to them. Collinson and Knights give examples of female customers actively preferring and trusting the judgement of male sales staff over female staff. This highlights a dynamic also referred to by Hakim (1996) whereby women can be seen as part of the problem of discrimination and could be accused of being their own worst enemy.

Promotion in the insurance industry is often through having worked in sales and becoming sales inspector in the field before being put in charge of a division and this route is therefore largely denied to women who are unlikely to be selected in this area. The clearest example of blocked potential and dual labour markets is arguably in the case of high ranking secretaries who hit a concrete ceiling and despite having a wealth of skills in management and knowledge about the company such women find that there is no possibility of transferring sideways to a management function.
6.5 GENDERED WORK

This identification of clerical back-up work as unimportant and a female domain is historically recent, since it used to be a well-paid male job at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is a good example of how work becomes devalued and ascribed to innate qualities rather than learned skills when it is seen as women's work (Maruani, 1987, 1991). Paradoxically, given the identification of the successful sales executive with dynamic and aggressive "male" qualities, many clients cite good after-sales care with personalised knowledge of the client's situation by the back-up staff as one of the reasons why they would buy the insurance. Female administrative staff are expected to use traditionally "female" qualities of listening and sympathising which are viewed as innate talents rather than acquired skills and therefore do not need reward. The relationship between male sales staff and female clerical staff can also be seen as mirroring traditional roles where the women stay in the office while the men go out to "hunt" for business. The women are often expected to act as ego massagers for male sales staff who return to the office dejected.

Some companies are changing work practices so that one person is responsible for all follow-up work with all products provided by them to build a stronger link between the client and one support staff rather than the claim being dealt with according to the type of claim. This may be linked to the growth of direct insurance where there is only telephone contact and a personal approach may be more important to ensure client loyalty. This may in its turn open the door to more career opportunities for women since safety of door-to-door calls for women sales representatives would no longer be an issue. Some managers interviewed for this study said that in general they found female staff to be more flexible than male staff, and this may in the future become a quality which is more highly valued than in the past.

6.6 HORIZONTAL SEGREGATION IN THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

The overall outcome of the segmentation in the insurance industry is institutionalised reproduction of gender-based job segregation. This is partly through recruitment practices which creates a vicious circle where channelling women into jobs and men into careers can
have both self-fulfilling and self-defeating consequences. (Collinson, Knights and Collinson 1990). Sales recruits are often found through word of mouth and poaching with rewards even being offered for successful recommendations. Clerical jobs, advertised at low wages, were expected to attract young women since it was admitted that these wages did not constitute a family wage as it was not at the level needed to be the breadwinner's salary. It was assumed that ambitious women would not have taken these jobs in the first place and that a certain level of turnover brought in new blood which was desirable, while ignoring the consequent waste involved in training new recruits.

If the only career progression path is through sales as these authors seem to suggest then this leaves women in a female ghetto, with no hope of being offered the appropriate "hard" training to enable them to change path or progress in the hierarchy. There may well be a certain amount of collusion with this situation if the women are strongly attached to the culture of a female dominated office but, as Collinson, Knights and Collinson show, this may be largely due to male structures of control undermining any attempts to escape from job segregation based on gender.

6.7
SEGREGATION ACCORDING TO GENDER IN THE FRENCH INSURANCE INDUSTRY

As in Britain, the large majority of administrative staff are female (62%) and the sales staff in all companies is extremely male-dominated (83%). No equivalent body of academic research into the specific environment of the insurance industry exists in France to match the research carried out by Collinson, Knights and Collinson in Britain but the same phenomenon of horizontal and vertical exclusion can be seen, as figures in the chapter on fieldwork in this study will show.

A 1997 training guide for French graduates warned that it is now difficult to get into insurance with one exception: for those who have played sport at a high level and are willing to use their networking skills and sense of competition. This perpetuates the image of the salesperson as being a male figure: women's sport has an even lower profile in France than in England and
this comment does not seem to be intended for a female audience. A similar picture of "jobs for the boys" is given by an article (Ghiumila, 1992) published in a specialist insurance publication. Jean-Louis Gonzalez, responsible for recruiting managers is quoted as saying "je conseille aux jeunes diplômés de faire feu de tout bois" (I advise young graduates to use whatever means are available to get into a company). According to the article 10% of AXA employees are taken on by recommendation. Rank Xerox went further and offered bonuses of 2,500 francs to those who successfully "co-opted" a new recruit to the company. As Ghiumila concludes, there is a fine line between this and "piston" (nepotism). Equal opportunities is obviously not a high priority in areas where such practices are prevalent.

Older employees, who are in the majority, were recruited in the 60s and early 70s with low levels of qualifications but now recruitment takes place at the BAC plus 2 years level. Jean-Pierre Narnio of UAP stated in a workshop on the future of training held by the FFSA (Fédération Française des Sociétés des Assurances/Federation of French Insurance Companies) in December 1996, that in many firms over half of employees were between 38 and 45 years old. 70% of staff does not have the level of the Bac. At UAP he said that the average worker in 1984 left UAP after 36 years "On y entrait en culottes courtes et on y faisait toute sa carrière". (One went in when one was in short trousers and spent one's whole career there). This seems a peculiarly gendered way of expressing the concept of a job for life, and is typical of comments found in conferences and reports on the insurance industry in its blithe assumption that workers are male, whereas in fact the insurance industry employs more women than men.

Training and internal mobility is therefore an important issue for French insurance companies, but there are two very different populations: older and younger employees. Young recruits who have studied for five years after the equivalent of A-level feel that they should be given management responsibilities, which the firm is often unwilling to do partly because this is obviously resented by employees with twenty years of experience. Narnio found that those young employees who were taken on with the baccalauréat (A-level equivalent) and then given day release to do a Brevet de Technicien Supérieur course over two years were far more motivated to do the same work than those with a "Bac plus 4" (graduates from higher education). Giving validation to operational competence along the lines of National Vocation Qualifications was also seen as useful in changing mentalities.
The catalogue of training courses available as part of common practice in the early 90s was felt by Namio to be "dépassé", and he criticised the example of employees taking their training rights for granted as a way of learning subjects like English which they could then use to help their children with their homework. In fact it could be argued that this is perfectly in line with the spirit of individual development expressed in the 1971 law which established the Formation Continue.

The vast majority of speakers and representatives at the 1996 conference organised by the Federation of French insurance companies were male and the language used highlights assumptions within a male-dominated management structure. Bernard Chasles, a trade union representative, stated

"Une société d'assurances, comme c'est le cas dans tous les autres secteurs de l'économie, ne vaut que par les hommes qui la composent......Notre rôle, à nous syndicats est de veiller à ce que la formation soit avant tout celle des hommes, même si ces enseignements doivent tenir compte des besoins de la profession et de sa permanente évolution.....Je ne pense pas qu'il soit possible de faire autrement que d'assurer la qualité des hommes pour garantir la pérennité des entreprises."

These may be laudable sentiments but deplorable use of gendered language (as it can be assumed that he was referring to the female working population as well.) This is particularly so as the one reference to gender at this conference was made by M.Chasles concerning the feminisation of the insurance industry with no comment as to the impact of this:

"...des réunions de la Commission paritaire nationale de l'emploi et de la formation des sociétés d'assurances se tiennent tous les ans. On y prend connaissance du taux de feminisation et d'autres chiffres concernant l'exercice précédent. Mais rien n'est dit sur l'avenir."

Even within the context of increasing feminisation of the insurance industry in France, equal opportunities for women employees is clearly not on the agenda.

4 (An insurance firm, as is the case for all other sectors of the economy is only worth the sum of the men who make it up. Our role as trade unions is to make sure that the training given is above all training for these men, even if the training given has to take into account the needs of the profession and its permanent evolution.....I do not think it is possible to do anything other than ensure the quality of the men involved in order to guarantee that firms will continue to exist.)

7 (Meetings of the National Commission dealing with parity in employment and training within the insurance industry are held every year. Note has been taken of the level of feminisation and other figures concerning the last financial year. But nothing is decided for the future.)
6.8

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS WITHIN THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY.

There has been a levelling up concerning the type of qualification which is acceptable for entry to the insurance industry in France. While previously the sub A-level qualifications Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle and the Brevet Professionnel were acceptable, since the end of the nineteen nineties only the BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur) is considered to be a worthwhile qualification. This corresponds to A-level reached through a technical rather than academic route. Many older employees in the French insurance industry have a low level of initial qualification and have not obtained further qualifications since in-house qualifications cannot be validated by the national education and training system. Research by Aventur and Möbus (1999) into the merits of comparative qualifications in training systems across Europe praises the existence of National Vocational Qualifications in Britain which can be used to validate prior experience and laments the lack of an equivalent in France.

Figures given in the Argus, the specialist publication on the French insurance industry, (1996:62) show that figures for training in the French insurance industry in 1995 were slightly down on 1994 (5.2% down to 4.9%). This is still much higher than the 1.5% legally required and shows the insurance industry to be among the best training providers. UAP spent the highest percentage of the wages bill, excluding the mutual societies: (5.74% with 11,837 people trained and an average of 8 days spent on training.) AGF spent 5.11% of the wages bill on 4871 trainees and an average duration of 8.33 days per employee trained. However, when these figures are analysed according to gender there were 4871 male trainees at AGF as compared to 3769 female trainees and an even bigger difference at UAP (7467 men as opposed to 4370 women). The gender imbalance was not commented on by the author of the article.

The most popular training courses in the French insurance industry are either in basic knowledge of the insurance industry or in communication. Dominique Le Roux-Bedat of Commercial Union is quoted in the above article in the Argus as remarking upon a reaffirmation of the importance of technique whereas previously the emphasis had been on management. In his opinion for the last three or four years there had been a move towards reexamining the basics. Employees in the British insurance industry are expected to take
professional exams and attend evening classes where they pay the fees and have them refunded only if they pass. This highlights the points made by Aventur and Möbus (1999) that the British system depends heavily on individual initiatives rather than employer-led initiative as in France.

As documented by Aventur and Möbus (1999), the institutions which deal with identifying training needs and availability and financing of training plans are the Training and Enterprise Councils in Britain and their equivalent in France are the "organisme paritaires collecteurs agréés ". These bodies are set up either on a regional basis, or by grouping together different companies within the same branch of industry and they manage training funds which companies are obliged by law to pay. The procedure of collecting the funds within the training industry was changed by ministerial decree on 22 March 1995 following agreement among the main organisations and trades unions in the insurance industry. The funds are now collected by Op cassur (Organisme Paritaire Collecteur agréé des assurances) which provides no training itself and so has no conflict of interest in receiving applications for individual training contracts from employees and using training providers to fulfil training needs. It sees itself as having an important advisory function to the industry (Journal de l'Assurance 1996:24). However, firms of more than ten employees are allowed to manage their own training plans so that OPCASSUR tends to deal mainly with general agents and brokers.

6.9 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter gives the context for the new empirical work in this study and has examined the situation of the insurance industry in Europe which is known to be amongst the best training providers, along with banks, telecommunications and the energy industry (Aventur and Möbus 1999). The best training providers tend to be those working in capital intensive industries using new technology and needing qualified personnel. This effort to provide a high level of training is partly due to necessity, as new technology is continuously transforming the job of documenting insurance policies. Financial advice is also regulated by the profession with a minimum number of hours training being required for anyone giving product advice to customers. Although there is no equivalent to the Formation Continue in Britain, the Personal Investment Authority requires that a minimum number of hours training be given to sales and
advice staff, while no such regulation exists for the majority of administrative staff, where the firm takes decisions on training according to its needs. In Britain there is no debate about whether training needs should primarily benefit the individual and have a social purpose as was the original purpose of the Formation Continue. The French situation differs from the British situation in that the employees are on the whole older and recruited at a time of low unemployment with a lower level of qualifications, so that there is a more obvious split between older workers and younger more qualified workers.

A similar situation exists with regards to equal opportunities and access to training in the insurance industry in France and Britain with gender and equal opportunities occupying a very low profile, despite the clear vertically segregated structure of a predominantly female-dominated administrative workforce and a male-dominated senior management structure. The absence of women in the sales force in both countries could be a contributory factor, along with exclusionary mechanisms to keep women out. The situation is similar in both countries despite the existence for the last 27 years of stronger training legislation in France which claimed to provide equality of treatment for all. The following chapter on fieldwork will examine employer and employee perceptions regarding the question of equal access to training for male and female employees and the reasons underlying the high level of vertical segregation of the industry.
CHAPTER 7

ACCESS TO TRAINING AT WORK FOR WOMEN IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN IN THE SERVICE SECTOR: CASE STUDY OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

7.1
INTRODUCTION

The following two chapters present and analyse new empirical data from fieldwork carried out on women and ongoing training in the insurance industry in France and Britain. Chapters 1-5 of this study evaluated previous literature and empirical data in France and Britain and at European level and the following two chapters present a specific example of the situation of equal opportunities and ongoing training within the context of the insurance industry already evaluated in chapter 6.

This chapter contains a brief overview of the issue of gendered employment within the insurance industry, raising some of the particular problems encountered by women in that industry, but which are not unique to it and an overview of the methodology used for the new empirical work in this study. Questionnaires received in stage 1 of the fieldwork from training managers in France and Britain (questionnaire A in the appendix) and the interviews carried out with respondents in stage 2 are then analysed to draw out conclusions, and problems encountered in the first part of the fieldwork are also discussed. In the second part of the chapter stage 3 is presented with returns from a second questionnaire (questionnaire B) distributed to employees in three British insurance companies and three French insurance companies are then analysed, and the main findings given.

As we have seen in chapter 3, as part of the French Formation Continue training levy system, all companies of over 10 people are obliged to spend at least 1.5% of the wages bill on continuous training of their employees. The legally binding Formation Continue agreement, set up in 1971 when changes were brought in following the demands for worker participation in 1968, has, arguably been the prime factor underlying the training culture in France. This contrasts with the British system which has been heavily criticised over the years where the onus is on the employer to provide training to remain competitive but with no legal
compulsion and no State intervention. Professions such as engineering and the law have training requirements which their professional bodies oversee, but this is not controlled by the state.

This new empirical study aims to investigate whether the state levy training system as operated in France, or the voluntarist model as seen in Great Britain, provides better continuing training for women. In this chapter, after explaining the choice of countries selected for cross national comparison and the reasons for the choice of industry, the issue of gendered employment is situated within the industry chosen for collection of empirical data. The rationale behind the research design chosen is then discussed and difficulties in gaining access to private companies is highlighted to explain constraints regarding the methodology used for carrying out interviews and distributing questionnaires. The structure of the empirical work analysed in chapter 8 is divided into three stages: stages one and two which involved gathering information with a questionnaire (questionnaire a in the appendix) and follow-up interviews with training officers in charge of the training process are presented in this chapter with conclusions. Stage three concerning employee experience of ongoing training at work is also presented in detail in chapter 8 with overall conclusions on the comparison of the situation in the two countries studied.

7.2

CHOICE OF COUNTRIES STUDIED

The main reason for the choice of countries studies is the contrasting models of training at towards both end of the voluntarist / state-controlled continuum. Equally important are other factors which need comparing such as state attitudes to childcare and the cultural context surrounding women and work in France and Britain. It can be argued, as do Gregory and Windebank (2000), that Britain and France are illuminating examples when examining the difference that social and labour market policies can make to the configurations of women’s work. The two countries under examination have similar levels of women’s employment but highly divergent patterns of women’s participation in the labour force, all set in the context of divergent policy environments.
7.3

CHOICE OF INDUSTRY

The insurance industry was chosen because it is an important service sector industry which employs large numbers of women. (As shown in the figures for chapter six, just under half of the workforce is female in Britain and just over half in France although the French insurance industry is smaller.) According to the report submitted to the select committee on Education and Employment on May 7th 1999, the Association of British Insurers suggests that insurance has relatively more women in senior clerical and professional occupations than in other areas of financial services and that people in these occupations were less likely to be employed on a part-time basis. The claim that the insurance industry is a good employer of women will be examined in this chapter. It is currently at an important stage since it is undergoing a period of rapid change due to new technology and because of the increase of direct telephone sales.

7.4

GENDERED EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

Ongoing training at work is an essential part of any equal opportunities policy which aims to tackle gender segregation in the workplace, even though it may not provide all the answers. As has been shown in chapter six, the insurance industry is a useful model of vertical segregation where women are employed in large numbers but are poorly represented in the higher levels of management. There is also horizontal segregation between female dominated administrative staff and male dominated sales staff where anti-female bias can be seen in recruitment of the sales force through a "chaps working with chaps" ethos.

Reference was made in chapter six to research on the segmented nature of the insurance industry by David Knights, David Collinson and Margaret Collinson (1986, 1990, 1996) which focused on the division between primarily male sales force staff and primarily female administrative support staff. Their 1990 study focuses on the issue of recruitment which is obviously linked to the type of training which is seen as appropriate for certain categories of workers, and highlights the rigid divisions which exist between these two areas of the industry. To be promoted above the level of team leader in British companies, workers
need to demonstrate experience of management, and field management is overwhelmingly male, which effectively bars most women within insurance companies from one avenue to promotion to senior level.

Women's presence within the sales force in insurance companies in Britain is at a low level at well under 10% and promotion opportunities are further limited by a stated need that candidates must be mobile and have continuous service. The mobility criteria may not in reality be applied but is used to undermine and discourage women who want to broaden their experience and get promoted. (Collinson, Knights and Collinson 1990). This can be seen as part of the list quoted by Gadrey (1994) where if inferior physical strength can no longer be used to exclude women from the workplace, sexual difference will be predicated on factors such noise, smells, dirt and danger to underline that the workplace is an unsuitable place for a woman.

The use of the mobility criteria to exclude women takes place within an industry characterised by paternalism where managers often present the outside world as a dangerous place where women are under more physical danger than men in going to visit clients in the evening. This issue was clearly illustrated in an opinion given by a training manager in an interview carried out for this study in 1995 by a reference she made to Suzy Lamplugh who was abducted and later presumed murdered in the course of her job as an estate agent. One possible response to this perception of the world being such a dangerous place is that this could, of course, be turned to a female sales representative's advantage if the company were to acknowledge the reluctance of female clients to let a strange man into their homes and appoint more female sales staff.

Reference was made in chapter two to work carried out by Adkins (1992) in her study of the tourist industry which highlights how women are clustered in front-line service jobs where their sexuality is an integral part of the kinds of customer relations which women are expected to carry out and men are not. Gendered work relations contribute to the production of what she calls "compulsory heterosexuality". This is particularly visible in the tourist industry where uniforms issued to female staff are often designed to signal sexual availability to men but it could also be argued that the dress code for women in office work is fraught with the way it is perceived by male colleagues and male customers. Collinson, Knights and Collinson (1990)
give examples of how women who did make it into sales jobs in insurance were accused of sleeping with managers to get promoted and also gives examples of how some customers suggested sexual favours might be part of the deal in order to ensure obtaining an important contract. The position of front-line staff in the insurance sector can be considered to be gendered in the same way as in the tourism industry but in the case of the insurance industry, it is female staff who make up the vast majority of support staff dealing with claims who are seen as more sympathetic and maternal than male staff in times of crisis.

7.5
LEVELS OF TRAINING IN THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

The administrative personnel have legally enshrined training rights in France and in Britain and figures of 4%-5% are usual, which are documented by companies. The insurance industry in Britain was the largest industry training provider in terms of percentage according to the British report published by IFF in 1996 for the FORCE Continuing Vocational Training project. As British companies do not have figures available on percentage of the wages bill spent, it was decided to express training in terms of numbers of training hours per person per year to facilitate comparison. Even by doing this, many British companies could not provide accurate figures for this study as no central records were kept.

7.6
COMPARISON OF FRENCH AND BRITISH DATA ON TRAINING

It is difficult to compare like with like when comparing French and British figures on ongoing training, since under the French system records have to be kept for audit and under the British system figures quoted are based on estimates provided by employers. This leads to the situation where training expenditure figures may well be vastly overestimated such as the figures given by the British government to the European Commission publication Social Europe (European Commission, 1993) where the figure of 2 billion pounds per year spent on training is extremely difficult to verify. The figure of £10.6 billion quoted by FFI (Figures and Forecasting International) for the British section of the Force report on Continuing Vocational Training (1996) represents a fivefold increase in just three years which should be viewed with scepticism, since such claims are not documented legally as they are in France.
In investigating the issue of gender in this field the immediate problem is that gendered figures have not until recently been kept on what percentage of training is delivered to women within organisations. As mentioned in chapter five, the European Commission has realised the importance of this in ensuring equal opportunities, and the first report comparing Continuing Vocational Training in the original 12 member states where gendered figures are provided was published by the FORCE (FORmation Continue en Europe) bureau in 1997.

7.7

CHOICE OF RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Hakim (1990:42) "Research is in the nature of sailing off to chart unexplored seas or more concretely, trudging off to map unexplored territories." As so little previous research has been done in the area of ongoing training for women in both France and Britain, this was particularly true, and the fieldwork for this thesis can be seen as an example of an exploratory case study.

As this research was carried out by a single researcher it can be described as safari research where a well-defined issue is looked at in two or more countries, combining surveys and secondary analysis of national data with personal observation and an interpretation of the findings in relation to the wider social context (Hantrais, 1996). The advantages of working as a single researcher are multiple: the same person carries out all interviews so this minimizes the danger of several different styles affecting the data. The researcher can use a semi-structured interview format, allowing interviewees to give their own definitions of concepts, thereby establishing an objective measure. This makes it easier to highlight conceptual differences and make standardised observations. It also means that the researcher can set her own parameters and define concepts without having to limit herself to definitions imposed by previous work. Having referred to the advantages of working as a single researcher, it must also be stressed that this limits the scope of this study as time and financial constraints meant that the research design had to be tailored to work within a materially and practically feasible structure. Sample sizes in the industry level research were therefore limited and a general industry wide survey with response rates calculated to ensure a representative sample was ruled out as unfeasible. Working alone meant that the network of contacts was reduced so access to the whole range of materials and information was limited to companies who showed
goodwill in collaborating with the research. The choice of countries to be studied utilised the researcher's language skills and cultural knowledge.

The research design chosen for this study was the case study as it is the most flexible research design. The intention was to go beyond the simplest level of providing a descriptive account of one or more cases to testing out hypotheses and ideas and identifying best practice in order to make policy recommendations. Questionnaire B to employees in Stage 3 were used to gather fairly descriptive data except for the last few questions where participants are asked to analyse constraints and desired opportunities. However, contrasting the data calls for analysis of similarities and differences even where the original response is descriptive. The use of multiple sources of evidence in two languages allows this case study to present a more rounded and complete account of social issues and processes. As Hakim states (1990:43) "multiple case studies provide an important alternative to the sample survey for certain research questions where there is a need to provide broad generalisation as well as to take account of the complexity of the subject matter." According to Sudman (1976), confidence in the general significance and robustness of research findings increases with the number of sites in which a survey is conducted, although the largest single gain occurs when the number of sites is increased from one to two.

Interviews often require the interviewer to demonstrate a good deal of prior knowledge of the subject and to treat the interviewee as an informant as well as a respondent. According to Hakim (1990) discussion of this type takes place on the basis of equality (or even of researcher inferiority). When carrying out interviews for this study it was decided to adopt a neutral stance verging on encouragement of any opinion expressed in order to get the interviewee to expand. This is obviously difficult if one finds the interviewee to be far from politically correct but it was felt that it is better to hear the interviewee's true opinions as part of the research rather than using one's position to educate or influence attitudes with which one does not agree. It is also necessary to respect the confidentiality of information and the respondents' needs for anonymity since they are the invisible co-authors of the study. It was also found that to appear competent, it is necessary to do enough preparatory research about the company and about the legal requirements of the training system so as to present an informed perspective on the subject matter of interviews and therefore be able to offer a more egalitarian and stimulating discussion to respondents.
It was necessary to highlight the advantages of the present study to companies to persuade them to spend their limited time on collaborating with this research. In return for their help they were sent a full report comparing employee perceptions of training provided in their company with the other two companies studied. One training and development manager asked employees to complete the questionnaire frankly and thoughtfully and explained that analysis of the questionnaire would enable the training department to improve their position based on customer (i.e. employee) feedback.

There are a large number of insurance firms in Bristol and geographical accessibility was a factor in the choice of industry. A contact was made at the beginning of this research who provided access to a large insurance firm where the preliminary questionnaire was piloted. As research design literature points out again and again, research is always influenced by opportunistic concerns in order to maximise the effectiveness of a "lone ranger" researcher. It was decided to interview training managers wherever possible and to gather views from employees using questionnaires, since interviewing a large number of employees in the workplace would have used a large amount of company time and was not deemed feasible.

7.8 CONSTRAINTS SURROUNDING GAINING ACCESS TO COMPANIES

It was much more difficult to gain access to firms in France than in Britain. An average of three telephone calls were made to contact the person responsible for training and it took an average of two weeks after this date to secure an interview. The French fieldwork would have been immeasurably more difficult if it had not been possible to make many phone calls from a French address to ascertain to whom the request should be addressed, and to leave a French number where the training manager could return the call.

The British research was carried out from Bristol and the French research was carried out from a base in Rennes in western France from September 1996-June 1997. Rennes did not have many large local branches of insurance firms and the western "délegation régionale" was often based in Nantes or Angers. The Paris head office of firms were then recontacted after regional heads of training had been interviewed in order to arrange an interview with the head office.
training director and to try and have employee questionnaires distributed. Regional offices had a certain amount of autonomy but all preferred the arrangements to be cleared with their head office.

The insurance industry is a national industry with local labour conditions having little or no impact on training policy. Rennes was an acceptable match to contrast with Bristol as it is roughly the same size and is the main town in the west of France. French insurance firms do have regional offices and wherever possible this was the unit examined, then with further examination of the head office which was always in Paris or just outside (Courbevoie, La Défense).

7.9
METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this study is informed by the most different systems design to contrast the state levy training system in France with the voluntarist free market system in Britain. Most similar systems design was used to highlight similarities in the way women are treated at work and in the perceptions of those women of their treatment in the two countries. These two analytical tools were then linked to developments at the European level.

This study draws on the descriptive or survey method for the first stage. A juxtaposition approach was used to compare literature written about training for women in Britain and France and conclusions were drawn to evaluate the degree of similarity in findings. Some large-scale projects in crossnational research draw on several methods for an evaluative approach, using the inductive method to verify loosely defined hypotheses, the deductive method to apply a general theory to a specific case in order to interpret certain aspects, and the demonstrative method, designed to confirm and refine a theory. With such large-scale projects there may be problems of interpretation if research is carried out by different teams or individuals and results pooled. This study was carried out by a single researcher and did not therefore have to deal with such problems. The problem and research hypotheses were formulated and two questionnaires were designed and replicated in French and English.

This study aims to discover the incidence of training of one specific group within the
workforce which has historically been undervalued but which for demographic reasons will
become increasingly important. It is not limited to any age category or grade of work although
these were recorded. There was no attempt to analyse the questionnaires returned in terms of
social class or status groups, which would be a variable worthy of discussion in another study.
The part-time versus full-time categories are obviously important but the debate surrounding
choice of part-time work is examined only in so far as it forms part of the gendering of access
to training.

Quantitative comparisons were established based on figures returned by training and
development officers (percentage of women in the workforce, full-time and part-time, hours
of training allotted in total and to women in particular). This was problematic as records are
not always scrupulously kept, particularly in Britain. An attempt was also made to compare the
comments made by training and development managers in interviews and questionnaires about
company policy in France and Britain and their own perception of training for women. As will
be seen, participants were interviewed because of the role in the training process, but personal
attitudes often impinged upon their official status and in practice it is often difficult to entangle
the two. For stage 3 of the research, separate reports were prepared based on employee
responses to questionnaire B from each company and an example of this is given in the
appendix. Results of the reports from the three British companies and three French companies
have been synthesised under headings in chapter 8 in order to draw out national similarities
and differences.

7.10
CONSTRAINTS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE FIELDWORK

The constraints surrounding access to private companies are enormous and any future study
should be rigorously analysed to ascertain its feasibility. Indeed, the prerequisite for such a
study may well be that access has first been agreed and existing contacts and networks of
interested participants may well need to determine the sector to be studied. Training managers
and their staff feel that they are overloaded in the present climate and are unlikely to co-
operate with any study unless the aims are clearly defined and unless there is something in it
for them.
The first step of persuading training managers to take part in such a study is a major hurdle and techniques of persuasion similar to sales techniques have to be used. This is very different from armchair research where the researcher can obtain information from libraries and other written sources, and while it makes the research more interesting from one point of view as opinions are sought from key actors who have first-hand knowledge of the situation, the constraints in terms of travel time, making appointments which may be broken at the last minute and the physical effort of visiting companies should not be underestimated.

7.11 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Cultural differences became apparent in involving participants in this research and great difficulties were initially encountered in contacting firms in France. Letters were first sent with a questionnaire to training managers: many of these letters needed to be followed up with a phone call and then a fax to confirm the content of the phone call. Access to French firms was only possible on the necessary scale due to an academic year being spent at a French university, and the reaction was far more welcoming once the researcher was seen as being linked to a nearby French institution rather than a distant overseas correspondent. British firms were more welcoming in terms of providing access to training managers but, even if these were sympathetic, they were often unable or unwilling to help with questionnaire distribution as they could not afford the employees spending fifteen minutes per questionnaire out of working time. However training managers were for the most part interested in discussing and analysing the issue of training and development, and were supportive towards academic research in this area.

Timing of visits to firms was a particularly difficult issue in France. September and October are times of heavy workload, December is obviously leading up to the Christmas break, February is skiing holiday time, Easter is a popular holiday time, May has three bank holidays which are often turned into long weekends and July and August are holiday periods where it is difficult to contact anybody in a French company. In addition any interviews in the morning would be terminated immediately at midday for lunch and it was unlikely to find anybody available for interview before 14.00.
The National Association of Chartered Insurers in Britain was contacted at an early stage of
fieldwork and after promising negotiations where it was hoped that hundreds of questionnaires
could be distributed to its members, the request was refused. This would have provided a
different way of gathering information where response rates could have been calculated and
perhaps a more representative sample of workers within the industry obtained.

7.12
METHODOLOGY OF INTERVIEWS IN STAGE 2

The interviews with training managers were not taped as the participants were unwilling to
have their comments on record and it was felt that more honest comments would be made if
notes were taken and transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. A list of interviewees
is given in the appendix along with an example of one such interview. The participants wishes
to remain anonymous has been respected While not being able to tape the interviews created
constraints in terms of the need for rich data for a qualitative study since it limited the number
of quotations which could be given verbatim, it was felt that the advantages in respecting
participants' wishes to feel confident that they could speak freely outweighed the
methodological disadvantages. While this made participants feel more at ease, the
methodology was more stressful for the researcher having to rely on memory, and follow-up
phone calls were sometimes made to check information as well as thank the participant.
Although a semi-structured interview schedule was used to expand on questions asked in
questionnaire A, it was sometimes difficult to get training managers to stick to the points in
question. Some participants were curious about the motivations behind the research and time
needed to be spent answering this. Some used the interview as an opportunity to explain the
difficulties of their work or to give their opinions on British politics or to use the expertise of
the interviewer in areas useful to them. One British training manager wanted careers advice on
modern languages courses for her daughter. This was extremely frustrating when limited time
was available and it is sometimes difficult to be directive without being impolite.
There needs to be a climate of trust between the researcher and the employees of the firm and all parties need to feel that any remarks made are confidential and will not affect their position within the company. It is therefore essential that employees have the chance to answer anonymously and return any questionnaire to the researcher without going through their hierarchical superior. It is also more likely that useful critical comments will be obtained in this way. However, in this study the questionnaires returned on an individual basis were by far in the minority, with batches passed on by the training manager making up the majority of responses from all companies surveyed. A fourth stage to this research could have been envisaged if female employees had responded to the request on the questionnaire to contact the researcher to give further detail but unfortunately this was not the case.

For stage 3 of this research training managers were first asked to distribute questionnaire B to a mixture of employees at all levels and all ages. It was later decided to stress the importance of female participants as there were fewer female responses but this led to one company returning all female responses and a second request for male responses became necessary. A later request to British firms for more female respondents to provide a completely balanced sample in numbers of male and female respondents was fruitless.

The first part of the questionnaire was answered by all participants but the last, and more important, page with open questions was sometimes not answered, leading to the decision to stress the importance of the last page to later participants. This highlights the problem of partial information, due to poor memory of some participants or laziness or unwillingness to give as much information as asked for. Few respondents took up the invitation to give their personal details in order to set up a later interview and this means that any information received through this means, though interesting, can only give a partial picture.

It was much quicker and easier to analyse the first sections of the employee questionnaire which was based on tick-boxes, whereas the more interesting sections with open questions sometimes elicited no response or a very brief response which was frustrating. An attitudinal questionnaire could have been devised which would have been more straightforward to
analyse. This could be done for further research on this subject, but this is not in keeping with
the spirit of this study which uses the safari method to gather information to determine what
problems exist regarding equal opportunities without setting rigid parameters for commentary.

Finally, the research method chosen for the second part of this study was largely based within
a traditional positivist paradigm since the number of questionnaires (over a hundred) was
considered to be an important factor to establish validity. As West (1991) states, there are
many arguments from feminists against positivist methodologies being the most useful
method for studying experience. Further research into motivations of employees regarding
attitudes to training could be carried out using phenomenological methodologies such as case
studies. Hussey (1997) states that such methodologies have contextual relevance across
measures, methods, paradigms, settings and time. Further research into this area could use a
smaller number of participants for in-depth interviews which would be equally valid. Having
said this, it can be said that, as in the above studies referred to by West, the qualitative data
collected for this thesis reflects real accounts of experience which enriches the quantitative data
collected.

7.14
OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY
STAGE 1: Questionnaire A sent to
25 companies in Britain
25 companies in France contacted
Results from 10 British companies
Results from 8 French companies
STAGE 2: Interviews in 5 British companies
Interviews in 8 French companies
STAGE 3: Questionnaire B sent to
3 companies in Britain
3 companies in France
Results from 109 British employees
Results from 121 French employees
STAGE 1 1995-1996

Questionnaire A was piloted and sent by post to the training manager at the head office of the top 30 insurance firms in Britain and France. The aim of the questionnaire A was to discover whether equal opportunities for men and women in receiving ongoing training was an important issue. A disappointingly low number of returns from French companies was received despite following this up with telephone calls and faxes to encourage participation. This could be due to the perception that there is little to be learned from the British experience or because French companies were contacted from abroad in the first instance. The sample was later expanded to eight when a French address was used. The main findings based on questionnaire A returns from ten British companies and eight French companies are given in the first part of this chapter.

STAGE 2 1996-1997

Visits were made from a base in Bristol between January 1996 and August 1996 to five insurance companies in the west and midlands in Britain who had returned answers to questionnaire A, and between September 1996 and June 1997 from a base in Rennes to eight insurance companies in the west and centre of France. Interviews were carried out with training managers, or the equal opportunities specialist in the human resources department in one company Britain and the head of the regional branch in one company in France. In order for the information given to be appropriately interpreted and contextualised a list giving brief personal detail of interviewees with dates of interviews can be found in appendix D. Names have of course been changed to preserve the anonymity of participants. A sample of notes taken after one interview is also given in appendix E.

STAGE 3 1997-1999

After receiving replies from a cross-section of insurance companies in France and Britain an employee questionnaire with a mixture of questions with boxes to be ticked and open questions (Questionnaire B in the appendix) was drawn up and piloted. The British questionnaire was piloted by testing it on the training officer at Company 2. Her feedback on format and whether questions were immediately and unambiguously comprehensible were incorporated into the final design. The questionnaire was then translated into French and checked for any linguistic ambiguities by a French native speaker, and then piloted by testing it on a bilingual French native speaker working as a personnel officer in a British company to
ascertain whether terms used were equivalent between the two languages. Further modifications were made to terms used in the French questionnaire by testing it on a training expert working at the CEREQ (Centre for research into education and qualifications) in France.

Training officers who agreed to participate in the third stage of the study (three in Britain and three in France) were asked to circulate the questionnaire to a mixture of employees (male/female, older and younger, different grades) working in the administrative division of the company. They were at first asked to circulate 100 questionnaires but as they felt that this would be too heavy a cost of employee time, this request was then modified to 50. The number of questionnaires returned should not be seen as evidence of response rates as the training officers agreed to try and return a certain number of questionnaires by distributing them to employees who would be likely to co-operate with their request for help with this study. Training managers therefore acted as gatekeepers who allowed access to employees within the company. Employees had the choice of sending questionnaires back to the researcher (British companies to a British address, French companies to a French address) or to return it to training managers. No differentiation has been made between the small minority who returned the questionnaire directly to the researcher and the vast majority who returned them via their training manager. An attempt was made to circulate 2,000 questionnaires through the Insurance Institute of Bristol but after initial agreement some board members felt that the study was not strictly linked to members' interests and agreement was withdrawn. A wider circulation such as this could have provided a larger scale study with response rates calculated but the problem of a matching sample in France would then have been encountered. A report was then drawn up on each company and sent to the training manager for feedback. Reports were then cross-referenced with other companies in the same country and finally compared across the two countries involved. This generated fieldwork reports which totalled over 60,000 words and although it was felt that these were too unwieldy to include in their entirety an example of such a report is given in appendix F to give a flavour of the responses given.
7.15
NUMBERS OF RESPONSES FROM EMPLOYEES IN STAGE 3

From British companies (see table 1) 12 questionnaires from female respondents and 12 questionnaires from male respondents were received from company 1. From company 2, 19 questionnaires were received from female respondents, and 20 from male respondents. From company 3, 19 questionnaires were received from female respondents and 27 from male respondents. This made a total of 50 female respondents (3 of whom were part-time) and 59 male respondents who filled in the British questionnaire.

From French companies, (see table 2) the following were received: 27 questionnaires from female respondents and 17 from male employees in Company A, 28 questionnaires from female respondents and 14 male employees in company B, and 23 questionnaires from female employees and 12 by male employees in company C. This made a total of 78 questionnaires from female respondents (27 of whom were part-time) and 43 from male respondents.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRITISH COMPANIES</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>50 (9P/T)</td>
<td>59</td>
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</table>

Table 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FRENCH COMPANIES</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
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<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>78 (27P/T)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 8

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the results of data collection obtained through fieldwork carried out with companies in the insurance industry in France and Britain. As shown in chapter 7, the fieldwork is divided into three stages, with the first two stages covering results of a questionnaire and follow-up interviews with managers in charge of training and stage three covering results of returns from a questionnaire (B) sent to employees in three insurance firms in France and Britain. The aims of questionnaires a and B are explained and results laid out under these headings. Where appropriate differentiation is made between data collected using a primarily quantitative method and those collected using qualitative methods.

8.2 AIMS OF QUESTIONNAIRE A TO TRAINING MANAGERS

The purpose of Questionnaire A was fourfold. Firstly, to obtain comparable quantitative data from French and British insurance companies. Secondly, to ascertain the existence of any overt measures within the company's training strategy with the stated aim of encouraging equal opportunities for women regarding access to ongoing training. Thirdly, to obtain details of the company's overall training strategy in order to evaluate whether equal opportunities was an underlying aim in the general training strategy even if not overtly expressed. Fourthly, to identify employers who were willing to be contacted for interview so that more specific questions could be asked and to identify companies where training managers might be willing to organise distribution of a further questionnaire (Questionnaire B) which would ask employees to give details of their perception of the training situation.

8.3 RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE A

As has been seen, obtaining data from national sources often means that figures are not based on the same unit of measurement. By approaching companies directly it was hoped to establish reliable comparative data.
Data on the following 4 areas were obtained:

* percentage of women staff
* percentage of the workforce employed part-time
* training hours (PPPY=per person per year)
* number of training hours received by women
* training strategy
* whether the training strategy included measures specifically focusing on equal opportunities for women (Strategy for F)
* external qualifications which employees were encouraged to obtain

FRENCH COMPANIES SURVEYED

FIGURES COLLATED

In all the French companies, (See table 3) women were in the majority in all but one company and even there they made up 45% of the workforce. This reflects the figure for the insurance and banking sector in France as a whole which is 53%.

It can be seen from these figures that the part-time rate is small in France, ranging from under 5% up to 11%. One company said that three quarters of their part-time workers worked four days a week which is a popular option in France for women with childcare responsibilities since many children go to school on Saturday morning and not on Wednesdays.

All managers surveyed regarded gender as not being a relevant issue where training is concerned. Unsurprisingly, therefore, no measures existed to overly pursue the goal of equal opportunities within the training strategy. All responses stressed individual needs and disregarded gender as an irrelevant issue. About half of the companies kept gendered figures and in all these cases the amount of training received was slightly below the level that the female percentage of the workforce would have been expected to receive with male employees benefiting disproportionately. Part of the reason for this is that women are concentrated in lower level jobs within the hierarchy whereas those higher up the hierarchy are more likely to receive training, but the variable of gender increases the likelihood of women at every level receiving less training than their male counterparts (Chapman 1993, GREP 1998).
When the figures are further examined in terms of training hours it is very clear that men benefit more. For example in company H in 1996, 385 women and 351 men received training. Despite women making up 57% of the workforce, they did not receive 57% of training. This illustrates the hierarchical pyramid nature of the structure of the workforce with 229 of the male workers receiving training classed as "cadres" (managers) as opposed to 64 of the female workers, whereas the remainder were 40 male and 50 female intermediate personnel and 281 female workers classed as "employées" (white collar workers) as opposed to 82 men. The number of training hours is not divided according to gender but of the 26,385 hours received, 10,105 went to managers. This clearly shows disproportionate benefits going to the larger number of males which is partly due to their larger presence in the management category.

Similarly, in company F, which spends 4.27% of the wages bill on training on the general insurance side, women made up 4191 or 67% of the 6281 strong administrative workforce but only benefited from 61% of 201,606 training hours received. This means that male employees benefit disproportionately as 33% of the workforce have 39% of the hours devoted to them. Men therefore benefit from a larger number of hours, probably linked to higher quality training whereas women receive more short courses. Women made up 68% of trainees, as some did two courses. Although there are twice as many women in the administrative workforce than men, there are more male managers within this section (18.7% male and 13.3% female). This means that if one encounters a man from the administrative side of this company he is more likely to be a cadre (18.7%) than non-cadre (16.1%). Women are even less present in management of the sales section.

In company D, figures disaggregated by gender show that men benefit disproportionately from training within the company. This is linked to the structure of the workforce which favours managers the vast majority of whom are male (65% plus 5% senior management), whereas only 35% of the female workforce is classified as "cadre". As non-cadres only receive 27% of the 28,263 training hours this inevitably disadvantages the female workforce.

National figures given by Fournier et al (1999) for 1993 show that in the banking and insurance sector the rate of access to continuing vocational training is 53.1% for male
employees but only 43.8% for female employees. The inequality of access to training for women in France shown by the figures for this study is therefore borne out by statistics at a national level. All French companies surveyed encouraged employees to aim for a BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur specialising in the insurance industry or for in-house qualification. Lower levels such as the CAP (Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnel) or BP (Brevet Professionnel) were seen as less useful but could be used as stepping stones.
### British companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Hours ppy</th>
<th>% Female Staff</th>
<th>Strategy for Females</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>P/T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Qualifications**

- **ACII**=Associateship of the Insurance Institute
- **FCP**=Financial Planning Certificate
- **CII**=Chartered Insurance Institute
- **CIP**=Certificate of Insurance Practice
- **NVQ**=National Vocational Qualification

### French companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Hours ppy</th>
<th>% Female Staff</th>
<th>Strategy for Females</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>32.0</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>25.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>c.50.0</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Qualifications**

- **CAP**=Certificat d'Aptitude Pratique
- **BTS**=Brevet de Technicien Supérieur
- **BP**=Brevet Professionnel
- **ENAS**=Ecole nationale des assurances (diploma from a selective higher education establishment specialising in insurance).
8.4

BRITISH COMPANIES SURVEYED

8.4.1

CONCLUSIONS ON RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE A

The training hours per person per year are unknown in the vast majority of the British companies. This is very different from the French system where figures have to be kept and audited by the State. It also raises the question of how British firms carry out monitoring to ensure effectiveness. Where figures are given they are interestingly enough higher than the French ones which could indicate that the companies involved in good practice in training provision see the value in keeping records.

The percentage of women employed in British companies surveyed ranged from 60% down to 20% with the exception of one Scottish company who stated their workforce was 70% female, and 100% of the part-time staff were women. Women made up the majority of the workforce in only two out of the ten companies but were present in large numbers (40-50%) in another five out of the ten. A small percentage of the workforce in the insurance industry appears to be employed part-time, mirroring the industry figures given by the Association of British Insurers of 14% but, as might be expected, women make up the vast majority of this category. The percentage of part-time workers is likely to increase as more companies find they have to compete by offering telephone services for longer hours and therefore use flexible working practices which usually means more part-time workers used at peak hours. However, in the second report to the select committee on education and employment on May 7th 1999, David Gooderham of Norwich Union insurance argued that there was little pressure from the workforce to be allowed to work on a part-time basis. He also indicated that the Norwich Union's working practices did not lead them to require a large number of part-time workers. If the work available is in call centres out of town where commuting is necessary this is unlikely to lead to people working a pattern of short shifts although it may of course lead to part-time working with a reduced number of shifts.

All had employee schemes and training strategies linked to staff needs but none had any measures linked specifically to women. One company was discussing the possibility of
training geared to women's needs but on further investigation it was found that the questionnaire had been filled in by a freelance consultant who had since stopped working with the company and no further information was available on such plans. One company ran single sex courses for women if there was a perceived need but the training manager no longer felt this to be relevant. The vast majority of training managers that were interviewed considered women only courses to be totally inappropriate for their company culture and stated that women themselves did not want differential treatment.

Most companies considered externally sanctioned qualifications and examinations run by the Chartered Insurance Institute to be important. Employees involved in giving financial advice are legally required to pass financial planning certificates at different levels.

8.5 STRATEGY

Full details of training managers' definition of their company's training strategy (Fletcher 2000) are given in appendix C. The following points emerged from these responses.

8.5.1 OVERT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MEASURES:

Seven out of the ten British training managers mentioned the issue of equal opportunities for women, while three of these qualified their statement by stressing the availability of training for all employees regardless of gender. Two stressed the role or job of the employee as the defining factor rather than gender. Only one training manager stated that they ran women's development courses where occasionally both men and women enjoy single gender training, but immediately added that many other employees refused to attend as they regarded it as discriminatory. The same training manager commented that training for women was "an eighties issue with far less relevance now". The issue of separate training for women was under discussion in one other company but no details were given. A training manager in yet another company commented that equal opportunities was an explosive subject. One company stated that the company was committed to Opportunity 2000 and getting women into management but none mentioned Investors in People which has had an equal
opportunities component since January 1997. The level of awareness of Investors In People in one company visited for this survey was so low that the equal opportunities representative interviewed did not know that the company participated in the scheme despite a framed declaration being in evidence in the canteen.

The willingness of British companies surveyed to deal with the issue of gender and equal opportunities was in marked contrast to the French responses, despite French training managers having received the same questionnaire in translation. The French questionnaires ignored the request to comment on gender and highlighted individual needs on an inclusive basis, since three training managers mentioned increasing skills levels across the board, involving all employees and working at the level of individual objectives.

8.5.2
RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE A ON OVERALL TRAINING STRATEGY

Half of the British responses regarding the content of the overall training strategy were so vague as to be uninformative, such as "the company's training strategy is to achieve business objectives and support the objectives of business" or "the annual group training plan gives a clear framework for training policy". It is of course possible that representatives were unwilling to give out this information but it is perhaps more likely that there was no clear statement of training strategy which was available for quotation. Only one French questionnaire gave an equally uninformative but precise and almost legalistic definition of their strategy : "The training strategy is linked to the training plan, drawn up every year with workers representatives, using information from the yearly appraisal of employees."

The French responses to questionnaire A gave more detail of the content of company strategy than the British questionnaires, which could indicate that this is better defined within the French companies surveyed. Four referred to national policy applied according to local needs while two mentioned only a national strategy. Two mentioned the objective of increasing internal mobility, which was not mentioned by any British company. Three gave priority to IT training, while two others mentioned management of change from the employee's point of view to enable staff to cope with change in job content or to successfully keep up with changes in career directions. Other priorities listed were either in the category of updating technical
product knowledge or in the area of improving customer relations.

The British responses were far less informative as to content of the training strategy, with only two companies mentioning any other area besides training for women. These responses mirrored those given by the French companies surveyed since they included the need to increase technical skills, improve levels of professionalism and quality of teamworking, prioritise information technology to enable the company to cope with change in the insurance industry. The issues raised by rapid change in the insurance industry caused by new technology are common to both countries, but only the French questionnaires mentioned the consequences for the employee of having to cope with such change. Only one British company mentioned the need to encourage the acquisition of professional qualifications.

8.6
CONCLUSIONS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE A (STAGE 1) AND INTERVIEWS WITH TRAINING MANAGERS (STAGE 2)

British companies do not keep clear figures on training delivered or employee satisfaction so it is difficult to see how they can monitor the training which is being delivered. Equal opportunities and differentiated training for women appear to be viewed as a thorny issue.

As can be seen from the summary of returns of questionnaire A, British training managers did make some attempt to refer to training for female staff, whereas this was not addressed in the French questionnaires which were returned.

Comments made in interviews are problematic since although the participants are interviewed because of their role as training manager or personnel specialist, they also made comments based on their personal beliefs and attitudes regarding gender. This raises the issue of how procedures to encourage equal access to training may be of less importance than the company culture and the attitudes of those responsible for implementing training policy. This also highlights the impact that a training champion is able to make if in a position to bring about change, and indicates that company or state policy could be subverted by individuals with strong beliefs and attitudes towards the importance of gender at work. An attempt has been made regarding the following comments to draw some threads together to give an overview of
When interviewed, French training managers refused in most cases to consider gender as an issue, preferring to claim that they were gender blind. One manager (male, company A) claimed that gender was as unimportant to him as eye-colour. Another manager (female company D) stated that women were not discriminated against in terms of training hours allocated, then had to revise her opinion in the face of statistics which proved otherwise. Another (male) manager of the regional delegation (company G) had very firm beliefs that women could make either very good workers or very bad workers, depending on whether they were really committed to the job. This echoes research by Gadrey (1994) which notes the opposition between male and female characteristics perceived by employers such as male strength and female dexterity, greater female than male absenteeism but also greater "conscience professionnelle" (being reliable in doing one's job thoroughly). Only one French training manager (female, company B) was encountered who was familiar with the concept of the "plan d'égalité" (see Chapter 4) and stated that she had been complaining about the lack of equality in training given to women for many years, and had threatened her employers with instituting such a scheme.

The problem for women of travelling to external training courses was mentioned by several French training managers, and also by the women's rights representative for the Breton region, Female employees were often limited in their ability to attend courses which necessitated staying away from home due to child care responsibilities and more prosaic problems such as lack of good transport. The women's rights representative mentioned above (interview, Ministère des droits des femmes, see Chapter 5) commented that women often had the second less reliable family car in which they were wary of travelling long distances and that this problem could be overcome by provision of a hired car if the company were serious about providing equal access to training for women.

The American concept of management of diversity is now being used, particularly in British companies, to state that needs should be considered on an individual basis rather than treating individuals as having any identity as part of a grouping such as gender or race. This is obviously useful to avoid any male backlash since if every individual is a minority of one, white male middle-class heterosexual males can also be treated as having special needs.
The few British firms in this survey which have equal opportunities officers did not seem to be concerned with equal opportunities in training but rather with issues related to dismissal or maternity leave. In Britain the training manager was part of a human resources team and another member of that team would normally have responsibility for equal opportunities issues. The nearest equivalent found in a French company was a female personnel officer in company D who was responsible for issues of promotion and mobility in the company to whom my requests for information were directed. Otherwise there was a belief in French companies that equality was already dealt with in the statutes governing training provision and was therefore not an issue.

A small number of companies had been affected by training champions who had left their mark in new procedures. Until the early 1990s, the head of Company C had been a female managing director who had instituted a modular scheme to obtain qualifications for training, thereby allowing women to build up their portfolio of skills based on previous experience at work and sanctioned by an internal qualification. This is analogous to provision of National Vocational Qualifications in Britain which are considered by some to be a useful route for many women to obtain accreditation of prior learning. This style of learning is easier to fit into a career pattern which may be marked by periods outside the workforce due to childcare responsibilities. The same female managing director had restricted promotion opportunities during one particular year to female employees in order to redress a gender balance in the management. The regional office of the company then became so female dominated that in recruitment males were actively sought in order to redress the balance which consequently existed in favour of female management. Company 6 in Britain had a new training manager who found the under-representation of women to be a great change from the previous company he had worked for and was resolved to encourage women to take up training. The importance of these training and equal opportunities champions cannot be underestimated.

Qualifications were seen by most training managers to be important but many stressed the preference for internal qualifications so that the firm could provide specific training which was most useful for its needs. This may not be popular with some employees as internal qualifications may not be considered to be a marketable commodity since they are too company specific. National qualifications were seen as important as a benchmark of
achievement, and to identify motivated individuals who were willing to put in extra hours to get on within the company.

Stages 1 and 2 of the fieldwork depended on training managers being willing to fill in the questionnaires sent to them and to then grant an interview. Response levels meant that the sample under study was fairly small but enough rich data was generated to enable a general picture to be drawn of the situation in France and Britain to enable comparison and draw conclusions.

Stage 3 of this fieldwork necessitated contact with employees on the receiving end of the training process. This meant asking for more company time and unfortunately many training managers gave a negative response when asked for permission to distribute 50 questionnaires to employees which would have taken 10-15 minutes to complete. Anxiety about giving the employees the chance to express their opinions is exemplified in the comment of one French manager that the trades union representative would be interested in this study to the extent that there was a risk of questionnaires being trawled to find staff grievances which would then be used to demand improvements for staff. The two biggest insurance firms in France were at the time undergoing a merger and training managers in these companies felt that it was too sensitive a time to ask staff to comment on their worries and possible grievances. Many managers, particularly in Britain, had been told by their senior managers that they were under pressure to use staff time effectively and could not allow the questionnaire to be completed, despite the researcher offering to compile a report on the returns which would give them some insights into staff opinions on training plus a further report at the end of the study.

This highlights the problem of the company taking a hard-headed commercial attitude and deciding that the risks of co-operating with a research project is greater than any possible benefits than would be obtained from feedback on the situation. Since time is at a premium in private industry it is difficult to get participation from busy professionals who feel they are overloaded with work and the fieldwork may be complicated by their reluctance to have interviews with them tape-recorded. It often difficult to disentangle objective professional comment based on hard data from personal opinion which is informed by attitude towards the issue under discussion. This is particularly true of discussions surrounding the motivations and aspirations of women at work. However the interest shown in this study by some training
managers in large insurance companies was encouraging as they were genuinely interested in
discussing the issues raised and sharing their knowledge and it was possible to gain entry in
three insurance firms in each country to distribute questionnaires to employees. Stage 3 of the
fieldwork is presented in chapter 8 followed by overall comments and conclusions.

8.7
REPORTS ON EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRES (STAGE 3)

8.7.1
INTRODUCTION

Having examined data relating to those in charge of the training process in chapter 7, the
following chapter deals with the perceptions of those receiving training in order to build a full
picture involving actors on both sides of the process. Three companies gave access to allow a
questionnaire (questionnaire B in the appendix) to be distributed to a total of 109 returns from
Britain and 121 from France (see p.150 for breakdown of numbers involved) It was felt to be
particularly important to collect data from employees on their experience of training received
and future training needs. Responses were contrasted firstly, in terms of male and female
perceptions and secondly cross-nationally in terms of French and British responses. The
existence of these two layers inevitably means that there are four sets of data which need to be
examined on every item in the questionnaire. A further layer could be added in terms of part-
time and full-time employees but this is unfortunately a partial picture since the number of
returns from part-time British employees was very small. Reference will be made to any
differences in perception between full-time and part-time female workers within the French
sample where appropriate.

Both quantitative and qualitative methodology were used for stage 3 and this is indicated
under headings where appropriate. Results are grouped together according to four main
objectives and conclusions drawn about data collected in each of these categories.
OBJECTIVES OF QUESTIONNAIRE B TO EMPLOYEES

The main objectives of the questionnaire circulated to employees in three insurance companies in France and Britain were the following. Firstly, to establish whether training is considered to be as important by female respondents as by male respondents in each country. Since women are often seen as having a lower level of work affiliation than men this would affect their desire to seek training. Secondly, to evaluate comments made by male and female employees surveyed in each country regarding experience of training and development opportunities in the past. Thirdly, to evaluate comments made regarding training opportunities desired in the future. Fourthly to evaluate any perceived obstacles to future training.

8.8.1
OBJECTIVE 1
IMPORTANCE GIVEN TO ACCESS TO TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

When analysing the data given in Section A of the employee questionnaire (How important are the following elements 1-20 in the quality of working life?) 3 points were attributed to those areas felt to be extremely important, 2 to those felt to be very important, 1 = fairly important, 0 = not important. Scores were given out of a possible total to compare relative importance of different elements in working life, one of which (Question No 5) was access to training and development. Scores which average 2 or more are given here and compared between male and female participants and between companies in Britain and companies in France.

Participants were not told that one element in particular was of more interest than others and were asked to also select the five most important elements out of the list of 20, so that a clearer picture of elements found to be important could be drawn. This preliminary part of the survey was useful in ascertaining to what extent training and development was likely to be a major or a minor issue or of no importance to participants.
British companies are identified by number (1,2,3) and French companies by letter (A,B,C).

Table 4a
BRITISH COMPANIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>32/36</td>
<td>28/36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>43/57</td>
<td>44/60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>44/57</td>
<td>63/81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4b
FRENCH COMPANIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>28/42  + 20/39 P/T</td>
<td>31/51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>38/57  + 12/27 P/T</td>
<td>32/42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>43/54  + 9/15 P/T</td>
<td>23/36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4c
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

British females average 2.2 overall; British males 2.25 overall
French females average 2.1 overall; French males 2.0 overall

As can be seen from the above table, the British respondents both male and female considered access to training and development to be more important than the French respondents and gave similar ratings. French female employees considered training to be marginally more important than did French male employees surveyed for this study. French part-time female
respondents considered training to be less important than full-time female respondents but still gave it equal importance to French male respondents.

Even allowing for the higher number of British male respondents than French male respondents, it can be seen that British male respondents consider training and development to be more important than do French male respondents who gave training the lowest rating out of the four categories. This difference between French and British male respondents is the greatest cross-national difference found for this section whereas there is greater similarity between French and British female respondents since training is given almost equal importance (i.e. considered to be very important) by British and French women surveyed.

8.8.2 CONCLUSIONS ON OBJECTIVE 1

The notion that women do not consider training and development to be as important as men do, is not borne out by this study. Although reasons why respondents classified their preferences as they did was not within the scope of this study and therefore remains unknown it is important to highlight the level of interest shown in training by female respondents since one of the prime reasons often cited for the lower percentage of female employees receiving training is that female employees are less interested in training. This is linked to perceptions of many female workers as having lower work affiliation than male employees and choosing to invest them differently at home and at work. Conflicting theories on this issue were discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

Responses to Question A do not immediately provide an explanation for the reasons behind the ranking of importance given to training and development by respondents and it is possible that there are a variety of reasons why respondents regard training as they do. Those that consider it to be important may do so for reasons of promotion, for personal development or simply because it provides a change from the usual routine. Similarly those who consider it to be unimportant may do so because they do not perceive training to be linked to promotion, since length of service may be the most important factor in their company, or simply because they are not interested in following a career path. Some of these issues are referred to in more detail in responses to later questions.
Creche facilities were ranked as one of the least important issues, with women rating them almost as unimportant as men. This is surprising given the lack of good inexpensive childcare facilities in Britain. One possible reason for this is that British women do not see this as a workplace issue and see it as up to the individual to make their own arrangements, and French women make a clear difference between the duty of the state and the duty of employers.

8.9

OBJECTIVE 2

EVALUATION OF PAST TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES BY EMPLOYEES

8.9.1

A) QUANTITATIVE

Male employees in most companies in both France and Britain received more training hours than female employees. This has already been established earlier in this chapter by examination of figures given by training managers. More male than females benefited from very large numbers of training hours in companies surveyed in Britain, while the picture from French companies surveyed was more mixed.

8.9.2

B) QUALITATIVE

It is important to distinguish between types of training since the qualitative aspect is the more important in terms of career advantage. It was found that in both countries more male employees than female employees benefited from external training courses whereas the vast majority of female employees surveyed had only had internal training courses (with the exception of French company C where more women than men had been sent on external training courses).

This mirrors research carried out on training by Fidanza and Guégnard in France for the GREP in 1998 (Groupe de Recherche pour l'Educated et la Prospective) (1999) on a sample of 115
employees and 17 training managers in fifteen firms in industry and two banks. The GREP research differentiates between internal training, seen as "soft" training, which lasts between three days and a week and is concerned with company specific skills, most often delivered to women and external training where male employees benefit in the majority, seen as "hard" training which is concerned with transferable skills and is more useful for future promotion or job mobility. One third of the training delivered to female employees in the GREP study was concentrated in the area of computer training for office use and training in administrative techniques, where training consisted of short courses which rarely led to obtaining qualifications. One female respondent commented that it was more often information that was imparted rather than training. In contrast, men had access to far greater variety of training opportunities which were more often sanctioned by a qualification in the end (15% of trainees). 46% of men as compared with 39% of women surveyed had received training which lasted longer than a week. For those who had received training lasting less than a week, only 7% of female trainees and 10% of male trainees had obtained a diploma. Blue collar workers in this study were particularly aware of the importance of the diploma to sanction training received.

This difference, between internal and external training courses, also echoes the crucial difference made by Rees (1998) between training which is potentially transformative, or likely to improve occupational life chances, and training which merely facilitates people to do their current job. While the first, which more men than women receive, leads to the development of skills which enables employees to enhance their human capital, the second category serves the purpose of induction of new employees or training on new equipment. The objective of this second category of training is simply to allow employees to perform their existing jobs more adequately at work. Rees states that women are more likely to be the recipients of the second category of training since they are more likely to have career breaks and return to the labour market than are men, and suggests that length of training courses can be a surrogate indicator of type of training when no details are given of the type of employer sponsored training received. Men are far more likely to have longer-term sponsored training while women tend to be the recipients of employer-sponsored training of three days or less. Rees criticises the British Labour Force Survey for not making the crucial distinction between the two categories.
8.9.3
C) APPRAISALS AND CRITICISMS

Staff surveyed in both countries were overwhelmingly positive in their appraisal of training. Negative comments were mainly about lack of relevance in some cases, overhasty and haphazard implementation due to work pressures and lack of development training. A balance obviously needs to be found between computer systems training, technical training and personal development, and training may currently focus too much on the first to the detriment of the other two due to the speed of change within the insurance industry caused by new technology and new working practices. The majority of employees found training given to be interesting, well-structured, relevant and well-delivered, but a recurrent comment from employees in both countries was that training was sometimes too general or theoretical and not adapted to trainees' needs. External training was seen as more useful, partly because the competence of trainers outside the institution was rated more highly.

Full-time female employees commented in much greater detail on how they felt about the training received than either part-time female employees or male employees. Part-time female employees tended to give very short answers relating to technical training or computer training. Male employees had received more management training than female employees and had therefore followed more wide-ranging courses.

8.9.4
D) PROMOTION

There was general acceptance from most employees surveyed that while training could not be anything but a factor in their favour, there was no automatic promotion just because of the training, although there were disgruntled comments from a small minority of respondents.

8.9.5
CONCLUSIONS ON OBJECTIVE 2

It is important to differentiate between the quantity of training received and the quality of training received and this can be linked to gender. Since women occupy a lower position in
the hierarchy at work they are more likely to be offered company-specific training rather than training in transferable skills which enhances mobility. Comments from female employees that company-specific training was more useful can also be linked to lack of optimism about mobility.

8.10

OBJECTIVE 3

8.10.1

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES DESIRED IN THE FUTURE

Perceptions of what would be useful in the future are divided according to gender reflecting the segregation of the industry. More males than females mentioned management training, sales training or technical product training, while more female employees requested computer training or internal training specific to their job. Software training and updating on legislation were mentioned by male and female employees. Both mentioned job rotation as a measure which would be beneficial.

Internal training was particularly valued by some French female employees surveyed as it was seen as being more relevant if correctly targeted. Several female respondents in both countries expressed satisfaction with the present arrangements although not asked about this, giving the impression that they were anxious not to criticise the company. This could be linked to role expectations and ambitions for the future. The fact that more male employees stated a desire for management training than female employees would seem to indicate that their vision of their future career was less linked to specific training for the company and more linked to training which would be transferable to another job and another company in the future.
8.10.2
INCENTIVES TO TAKE UP TRAINING
EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF MOBILITY
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

For this question in Section B (How would you rate your job mobility potential to move to an equivalent post in a different company or within the same company a) locally b) nationally,) 3 points were attributed to the perception by respondents that the likelihood of job mobility either sideways or upwards was extremely high (3) very high (2) fairly high (1) or not high (0).

These questions may indicate whether training available is perceived as useful to the employee and on the type of training requested, since if there is little hope of obtaining another job, employees may have less interest in obtaining transferable skills and may be satisfied with in-house company specific training to advance within the company.

8.10.3
SUMMARY OF RESULTS REGARDING EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF MOBILITY IN FRENCH AND BRITISH INSURANCE COMPANIES SURVEYED.

Table 5a
SIDEWAYS MOBILITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>locally</th>
<th>nationally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British females</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French females</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2 (p/t 1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British males</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French males</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.10.4
CONCLUSIONS ON OBJECTIVE 3
EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF MOBILITY AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
DESIRED IN FRENCH AND BRITISH INSURANCE COMPANIES SURVEYED.

This survey was carried out in provincial cities rather than the capital city and if a sample had been taken there, results may well have been different, since the demand for labour in the capital tends to create a better market for employees to change jobs. These results show that employees surveyed in the West of England and Birmingham are more optimistic about their chances of job mobility sideways and upwards than their French counterparts in the west of France. In the case of each country, female employees are more pessimistic about their chances of changing jobs than their male counterparts, with part-time French female employees surveyed being no more pessimistic than full-time females. A general shared perception amongst all employees surveyed is that chances of moving jobs are better on a national scale than on a local scale but employees were not asked whether they would consider moving to a bigger city such as the capital.

Type of training wanted can be linked to gender with transferable skills such as management skills perceived as more important by those who want to increase their mobility. Those who were enthusiastic about company specific training were less likely to be concerned about their
level of mobility and less likely to list transferable skills as important in future training opportunities.

8.11
OBJECTIVE 4
FACTORS LIMITING OR INFLUENCING ABILITY TO TAKE UP TRAINING IN THE COMPANY

In the British companies surveyed for this study, a large number of male employees stated that they had no serious constraints which prevented them from taking up training on offer, whereas this was the case for only one British female respondent. French female respondents appeared more pessimistic than male respondents and mentioned a list of constraining factors, with time and workload obviously being most important whereas male respondents appeared more confident that they could take up training offered by the company without any constraints.

8.11.1
TIME CONSTRAINTS

A large body of research has recently been carried out on family and employment careers (Hantrais and Letablier 1996b), and on the tension between paid and unpaid work within the family (Gregory and Windebank 2000). This includes ongoing research by the Office for National Statistics in Britain and INSEE in France, which shows that even in couples where both work outside the home, women do a much higher proportion of work within the home and therefore have less available time overall. The literature on the division of paid work outside the home and unpaid work within the home has highlighted the constraints imposed on women workers by their family situation.

A significant number of both male and female employees felt that they were constrained by time, budgets and lack of staff to cover for them. More male employees than female employees were aware of the constraints on managers, such as budget constraints, which prevented employees' individual needs being met. Far more comments were made by British than French respondents that the workload of their job meant that there was no time available
for training. This could indicate that training is given a higher priority in French firms as compared to British firms, and that time is made available within working hours. However the introduction of the 35 hour working week in France may mean in the future that training may no longer be undertaken during working hours and that employees may be encouraged to train in their own time rather than company time.

When asked to comment on preferences in the structure of working time for this study (question 4), a large number of French respondents commented on the difficulty of reconciling work and family life, which was referred to by a much smaller number of British employees surveyed. The majority of these were French women but the issue was also mentioned by some French men. Preferences from the French sample were much more varied than in the British sample, with most choices split between flexitime and working four days out of five. British employees surveyed expressed a preference for flexitime and commented that working four days out of five was an attractive proposition but unfeasible. This again underlines how the structure of work can be hugely modified by societal arrangements, since in France the four day working week has long been a feature of permanent reduced hours contracts for parents, usually women, involved in child care on Wednesdays when schools are closed. It remains to be seen whether the introduction of the 35 hour working week in France will affect division of work within the family.

A number of female employees were intending to change jobs to companies which they hoped would fund their desire for professional qualifications. Greater awareness was seen amongst female employees than male employees of the value of qualifications.

There were far more comments from French employees than British employees in this survey regarding the lack of incentive in terms of possible promotion or pay rise to give up one's time for training. There were also several disgruntled comments from British male respondents that effort put into training was often not rewarded and they were particularly aware of the lack of any automatic reward attached to training.

According to the 1998 GREP survey of French companies, only 9% of the female staff and 10% of the male staff surveyed had been promoted upon completion of a training course. However, almost 90% of employees declared themselves to be satisfied with training received
and declared that it had met their expectations. There appears to be acceptance by most employees that training and promotion are not linked with both male and female respondents showing awareness that learning and progression was good for their self-image at work.

However, companies need to be aware that employees may feel disaffected if they feel that the firm does not adequately recognise the effort put in by them when they undertake training courses, and that this may severely reduce their incentive to take up training. A small minority of respondents in this study felt that they were not encouraged to train or informed about availability of courses. This mirrors comments made in the GREP study by blue-collar workers such as "on ne m'a jamais rien proposé" (I've never been offered any training). Although in France the Formation Continue law gives every individual the right to ongoing training, in reality the conditions within the firm like the conditions within the individual's family mean that it often remains a theoretical possibility which is too difficult to realise, particularly for women at the bottom of the hierarchy. Factors such as the example of others who come back from a training course or the level of group solidarity of trainees on a course, and the level of support within the family are crucial in encouraging women with low levels of initial training to take the daunting first step in applying for training. Another comment from the GREP study was that information was displayed in a corridor on a poster without any explanation which was off-putting for those workers who were lacking in confidence. Another commented that from time to time the company gave out forms where employees put stated three preferences of training courses they would like to follow but this was not necessarily followed up.

When asked in fieldwork for the present study about encouraging or limiting factors in taking up training, comments were made by several French female respondents about the lack of interest by the firm in individual growth. One commented that family commitments act as a barrier to attending off-site training courses. More female than male respondents mentioned effects on personal confidence and personal growth and enjoyment of contact with other personnel. Male respondents gave generally factual concrete replies such as amount of work or the lack of adequate pay-off attached to personal investment in training.

Comments overall from French company C seemed to indicate that employees were fairly satisfied with treatment received. A quarter of the employees surveyed in this company stated that there were no factors which discouraged them from training. Any negative comments...
related to lack of availability, difficulty of travelling to external training courses, ageism in company policy causing low motivation and high workload.

The GREP study showed that female employees weigh up whether to take up training according to the vision they have of their future within the company and their level of optimism about that future. Training can only be said to have a real meaning for the employee when the advantages, costs and risks of going on a training course have been weighed up. Disruption of family life can therefore appear as a cost which is too high, whether the female employee is a manager or a blue-collar worker. Support from the family is a crucial factor in deciding to undertake training.

8.12
OVERALL CONCLUSIONS ON EMPIRICAL FIELDWORK

The problem of equality for women in the workplace is part of a wider issue which concerns the gendered division of labour in society including within the family. As Kergoat (1999) states:

"Il faut prendre en compte le fait que rapports sociaux de sexe et division sexuelle du travail forment système, et partir de l'analyse de ce système pour penser la problématique de l'égalité professionnelle. Faute de quoi on s'essoufflera à imaginer des mesures (ou des revendications) de rattrapage qui risquent en fait de déplacer les problèmes bien plus que de les résoudre."

(It must be taken into account that gender relations and sexual division of work are part of a system, and start with the analysis of this system to consider the problem of equality at work. If this is not done, we will tire ourselves out thinking up compensatory measures or proposals which run the risk of displacing problems rather than solving them.)

Any solutions proposed to mitigate inequality at work must inevitably be found lacking if they are implemented without radical change of social structures which produced this inequality in the first place. Laufer (1998) warns of side effects of social policies having undesired consequences which cannot always be predicted and further warns that what is appropriate for one national context may not be appropriate for transfer to another. With these provisos in mind, it is still useful to try to isolate the importance of individual policies and make recommendations to improve conditions.
Access to training and development is only one area where equal opportunities for women in the labour market influences their chances of mobility, promotion, salary increase and power within the organisation. The objective of this study is to examine the influence of ongoing training which cannot, however, be divorced from other framing factors and compare it across two national contexts.

8.12.1
TRAINING OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS

In French companies surveyed, gender was not considered to be an important issue. Training officers repeatedly stated that female employees were treated the same as male employees, and were normally in full flow when their assistant brought in statistics that had been requested on breakdown of training hours and courses according to gender. When giving company statistics that clearly showed that male employees were getting a proportionately bigger share of the training cake than their numbers warranted, the female training officers seemed particularly puzzled that they had not noticed this disparity before, even though gendered statistics are held by French companies as a matter of course. When asked about the possibility of all-female training courses the overwhelming opinion given by training officers was that this would be unpopular with both male employees who would claim unfair discrimination if they were excluded and with female employees who would feel defensive about any promotion given on the grounds of gender. While these statements should be taken as informed opinions gathered in the course of participants’ role at work, the personal attitudes and opinions of interviewees must impinge on their professional opinion. These are, of course, old arguments used against any forms of positive discrimination at work which aims to change the gender or ethnic composition of the workforce. Since changing the structure of the hierarchy at work through coercive measures is deemed inappropriate and unpopular with the workforce, the onus is put on the workers to rise in the hierarchy through their own efforts. This means that the hierarchy at work is presented as a meritocracy, managers see themselves as being eminently unprejudiced and arguments used that women could succeed if they really had the ability and the desire to do so. As we have seen in chapter 7 one male training manager when interviewed claimed that he was not at all interested in the colour of an employee's eyes, and by analogy hardly noticed if he was dealing with a male or a female employee. This seems to demonstrate
a belief in the possibility of gender blindness which is not commensurate with reality.

The theory advanced by many French training officers interviewed was that change would come about slowly and surely since things had changed so much for women now in their twenties and thirties that they had the same aspirations as men. If the current male dominated hierarchy was a product of previous generations where women's work was always seen as subordinate to their roles as wife and mother, this was slowly changing as educated women did not leave the labour market when they had children but attempted to combine the two. With time, these younger women would take their place in the management structure and the disparity between women's majority at lower levels and men's majority at management level would diminish. The French training officers and personnel managers interviewed were satisfied that the increased competence of female employees would result in more representation at higher levels since they believed their organisations to be meritocratic. The exception to this was the one female training who had heard of the existence of the “plan d'égalité”and said with feeling that she had been “threatening them with bringing in a “plan d'égalité” since she was pessimistic about change coming about with no catalyst to cause it.

The laissez-faire attitude of the majority of French training managers interviewed is based on a mixture of professional opinion and personal attitudes to the gender composition of the workforce. Besides being a hopelessly optimistic example of "jam tomorrow", this also places the onus on women fitting into the system and assumes that women's aspirations are the prime element in changing a management structure which many claim is gender neutral. However, as Maruani (1999) points out, at the rate change is currently taking place, the gap will not be closed until the end of the twenty-first century. Further evidence from Le Monde (March 8th 2001) suggests that in order to advance at work as well as being competent at a job it was necessary to be part of a good network and to be present a good image. Women were considered to be in general well-qualified and able to do their jobs but fell behind in the latter two categories which were part of office politics.

At the same time, many training officers interviewed were of the opinion that women were less available, and therefore less committed to their jobs, between the ages of 25 and 40 as this period was the optimum time to start a family as well as the crucial time for establishing a career pattern. This again could be seen as being a mixture of personal opinion formed in the exercise of their professional capacity since these statements were not based on any research.
One male training officer also divided his female employees into those who were not serious and were just passing time and those who were motivated career-minded women who were more useful than their male counterparts. In his opinion women made the best and the worst employees.

Monitoring and evaluation of female participation in training courses is much clearer in France than in Britain, since figures on male and female rates of participation in training are kept as a matter of course by French training managers. If there was a perceived problem of discrimination this would be dealt with by the training manager, with the employee having the right to call on the services of the "comité d'entreprise" (workers representatives). There is no perceived need for the post of equal opportunity officers in French companies, and indeed there is no perception that discrimination against women at work is an issue which needs to be addressed. Since this is so, there is no monitoring and evaluation carried out to track the progress of women in the company since all employees are seen as individuals and there is no widespread concept of positive action. Training managers interviewed in France were most emphatic that female employees would not like to be given special treatment and that there would be a backlash where women would be accused of benefiting from favouritism if they obtained special treatment under such measures. The notion of the "plan d'égalité" was unheard of in all companies that were surveyed for this study and has obviously had little impact outside literature on equal opportunities. As discussed in detail in chapter 4, the French government has realised the lack of impact that these "plans d'égalité", proposed by the 1983 Loi Roudy, have had on the workplace. The 30 point report on professional equality submitted in September 1999 by députée Catherine Génisson to the Prime Minister proposed to set up "contrats d'égalité" which would be more flexible, but for some who are in favour of radical policy measures, this is an ineffective liberal measure which does not question the structures which lead to inequality in the workplace. There are differing views on the value of sanctions, as will later be discussed.

It is possible for a champion of equal opportunities to effect change fairly rapidly if he or she has the management position to do so. The decision taken by the former female head of French company C to initiate affirmative action when she decided that all promotions in one year were to go to women since they were under-represented at management level is a striking example of what can be done by management who give priority to equal opportunities. In the
same company it was decided that internal modules were to be set up to validate employees skills with "unités capitalisables", with the awareness that this would be particularly advantageous for women with low qualifications. The existence of such a champion on the ground within the company is arguably the most important prerequisite for action to establish equal opportunities within a company, and is of greater weight than systems set up on a national level.

Figures on training in British companies, on the other hand, are much more difficult to obtain since there are no gendered statistics kept as this is not required by law under the voluntarist British system. Monitoring and evaluation are therefore impossible even if there are usually personnel staff with responsibility for equal opportunities who could take on examination of the issue. One training manager contacted refused to answer the questionnaire for managers as he felt that equal opportunities was an explosive issue. It was not until his (female) manager was contacted that it was possible to speak to another personnel representative who had responsibility for equal opportunities issues. These tended to be linked to maternity benefit and no study had yet been made of allocation of training resources to male and female employees.

Equal opportunity officers interviewed spoke with enthusiasm of getting the issue of equal opportunities onto the agenda. Mainstreaming has become a much discussed subject both on a European level and in French and British research groups, such as during the November 1997 MAGE conference on women and the labour market in France. This is obviously the first stage in raising awareness amongst managers that discrimination is a problem but it is all too easy to incorporate an equal opportunities statement into company policy and simply pay lip-service to it without there being any tangible results. Programmes such as Investors in People do not have a strong policy on equal opportunities and merely make recommendations of good practice rather than making such issues a cornerstone of its validation. The European Commission has adopted the softly-softly approach of making it compulsory for there to be an equal opportunities element in funding applications for social projects and this may well have the desired effect on companies which receive funding from the Commission. Similarly, public sector organisations can declare themselves to be equal opportunity employers on paper but in practice it is the educated white female who benefits rather than those from ethnic minorities or from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.
CONCLUSIONS FROM QUESTIONNAIRE B

The first section of the questionnaire distributed to employees aimed to establish whether female employees were equally committed to training and development as their male counterparts, or whether, as is often claimed by proponents of human capital development theory, female employees have lower work affiliation and less interest in training. Questionnaire returns indicate that training and development appears to be marginally more important in the quality of working life to British female employees surveyed than to French female employees but is important to both. In Section A of the employee questionnaire, when asked to rate its importance in a list of 20 other elements British women gave it an average of 2.2 points (out of maximum of 3, classifying this element as very important to them) whereas French women gave it an average of 2.0). When this is broken down, it can be seen that some of this difference can be attributed to the lower score given to training by the 27 part-time women in the French sample.

British male respondents also classified training as very important with a score of 2.25 whereas French male respondents gave an average of 2.0, which indicates that training is of less importance to them. As can be seen from these figures, British male and female employees surveyed consider training to be far more important than their French male counterparts. French female employees consider training marginally less important than their British counterparts, but French male employees consider training to be least important of any group, even more so than French part-time female employees. It can therefore be concluded that full-time female respondents surveyed consider training to be an important issue, and even part-time French female employees surveyed are more committed than their male counterparts. This effectively counters the assertion sometimes made that women are less interested in training than their male counterparts. It was not within the scope of this study to investigate the reasons behind the responses of employees surveyed but it was considered important to establish from the beginning of the questionnaire whether female respondents were as interested as male respondents in the issue of training before gathering information on the experience of training received and desires for the future.

The competing claims of agency and structure as the main framing factors in women’s low
representation of the upper echelons of the hierarchy can be seen with regard to employee perceptions of inequality. Awareness of inequality at work was shown in an internal report on women and management carried out at company B in Britain on 541 employees. The report showed that the British female employees in the above company were more aware of inequality than male employees, with 75% of male employees believing that there were equal career opportunities as against 51% of female employees. This result is mirrored in national studies (Wajcma 1996). Similarly 72% of male employees believed that women were equally quickly promoted as male employees whereas only 37% of female employees believed this. This seems to indicate that there is a belief amongst female employees that the system does not give women an equal chance and it could be that training and obtaining validation of skills used in the workplace is seen as an objective way of struggling against this unfairness. To put it another way, there is a high level of awareness among British female employees that the system is not gender blind and that they suffer discrimination. This includes awareness that all-male networks and sporting clubs exist which can be advantageous to those within them. Golf seems to play a peculiar role in promoting male bonding within British companies, although no sporting equivalent in French companies was found. There was also awareness that, as research has shown, assessment centres are not objective as many of the criteria used still give male employees the advantage.

In both the British and French firms, training was not linked to promotion or salary increase. This is likely to affect motivation since if promotion is seen as a consequence of following training courses, with or without the bonus of extra qualifications, employees are more likely to be enthusiastic about training. This lack of connection was resented by employees in a large number of cases as it was felt that the management was getting increased productivity and efficiency from the employee while the effort made by the employee was not recognised in any tangible way. Other respondents were pragmatic about the fact that it was necessary to volunteer for training to be able to learn about the company and do more interesting work so that when promotion later became available they would have improved their CVs and be in a better position to apply.

More male than female respondents in both France and Britain felt that there were no constraints on their taking up training opportunities where offered. Where male respondents did mention constraints they were connected to lack of incentive to train, as mentioned above,
or heavy workload leading to lack of time, whereas a higher proportion of women mentioned lack of availability, inconvenience of having to travel to training centres, and lack of encouragement or information about training from management. There are clear implications here for the need for material and affective support which affect women more than men.

This chapter has analysed new empirical data which evaluates the level of equal opportunities for women regarding ongoing training in three insurance companies in France and three in Britain. The following and final part three of this study with the concluding chapter 9 will relate the specific environment within which the research was carried out to wider questions of gender equality and will further examine the debate concerning the differences and similarities of Britain and France on gender issues.
CHAPTER 9

9.1
INTRODUCTION

This study has sought to evaluate the effectiveness of national policy making environments on the achievement of the goal of equal opportunities for women in the field of ongoing training. However, this evaluation cannot be separated from more general questions which affect women in paid and unpaid work and the role of women in society. The final chapter of this study seeks to link theory and practice regarding women’s work in France and Britain. After reexamining some theoretical perspectives to evaluate their usefulness in informing policy in this area, the hypotheses set up in chapter two of this study are evaluated to give specific conclusions. The level of convergence between France and Britain regarding the situation of women’s work is then examined. Approaches requiring soft or hard policy measures are then contrasted. We then return to the research questions posed by this study and the answers found. The chapter ends with suggestions of policy solutions and links with findings outside the European Union.

9.2
EVALUATION OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Universalistic theorisations seek to explain gender division of work in terms of the competing claims of agency and structure. In this study there has been an examination of the universalistic microeconomic approach of human capital theory as proposed by Becker. This theory seeks to show that women have a comparative advantage in childcare and choose to become responsible for domestic labour and are therefore less available and less committed to paid work, including having less interest in training.

This theory is flawed for several reasons since it assumes that men’s and women’s interests are the same and ignores issues of how capitalism intersects with patriarchy as proposed by the Feminist-Marxist, Marxist-Feminist, Radical Feminist and Dual Systems analyses.
Another criticism of human capital theory is that it assumes that gender role preferences are biologically determined and do not evolve with changes in society. Walby (1997) gives a more convincing explanation of the status quo when she contrasts public and private patriarchy. Because of the increased demands of capital for women's labour there has been fairly widespread change in the degree of public patriarchy in the workplace although this has not yet led to truly equal opportunities. However, this has not been matched by equivalent levels of change in the sphere of private patriarchy in the home where domestic parity does not exist. As we have seen, domestic work may also be contracted out by those earning enough to make this worthwhile and in order to increase availability for work. As this work is usually done by women this does not lead to a reconfiguration of domestic work between men and women but a bifurcation of the labour market between well qualified high-earning women who can afford to purchase greater availability for well-paid work which is then serviced by women who work for lower pay. Walby's explanation of the workings of patriarchy and capitalism can also explain why the situation is slightly different in France and Britain since for her new forms of patriarchy are built upon old forms and must be interpreted according to context in space and time. Connell (1987) adds further explanations in terms of cultural specificity in the form of norms and stereotypes at societal as well as at the individual level, with the state playing an important role in defining the gender order. His theory is flexible enough to allow for variation in time and place of gender relations and therefore is useful in explaining the differences in France and Britain.

While the societal approach offers a useful particularistic approach to the analysis of differences in France and Britain it must be criticised for the weight it gives to different welfare regimes and its inability to account for the inequalities between men and women. Indeed, original proponents of the societal approach took as their subject the male worker in an industrial job and ignored gender altogether although later proponents have sought to rectify this (Daune-Richard 1998). While at first sight this seemed to be the most useful theoretical perspective to compare and contrast the different training régimes in France and Britain, its inability soon became apparent to account for the similarities in the situation and treatment of women in both countries. Elements of the societal approach were therefore usefully combined with universalistic explanations as detailed above.
9.3 HYPOTHESES POSED BY THIS STUDY

The first hypothesis posed was that a patriarchal society where women have primary responsibility for child care and men have traditionally been responsible for work outside the home will lead to men and women being treated differently at work. The division of unpaid work is arguably the single most important framing factor which governs women's availability for paid work and this in turn can be linked to sectoral and occupational segregation in both Britain and France. If we examine the environment of the insurance industry which was the focus for this study we find that in both Britain and France women are to be found in particular types of jobs within companies, such as administration of insurance companies rather than sales, and are underrepresented at the higher levels. We also find that males receive a higher proportion of training than women in both countries and that this training is of a better quality with both factors combining to aid greater mobility for male employees. Interviews for this study with training managers in both countries reveal that company culture is normally weighted in favour of males unless there has been an effort by a strong individual in the hierarchy to right the balance by promoting more women within the organisation. Questionnaires returned by employees in both countries revealed that while the world of work is increasingly pressurised for everybody, women have more constraints on their time because of family responsibilities and are therefore less available for training.

The second hypothesis posed was that the role of the state at national or supranational level can have an impact on equality of access to jobs and training. Britain is an example of a strong breadwinner state where there is a division between public and private responsibilities and a lack of state support for women's work outside the home, while France is an example of a modified breadwinner state where working mothers are supported by the state. While female participation in the labour market has increased considerably over the last 15 years in both countries, British women are therefore more affected by the presence of young children than are French women due to societal norms of state provision of child care and are more likely to work part-time. Part-time work itself has a different structure and a different meaning in Britain than in France. However, this does not necessarily mean that women in France are more available to invest their time in paid work.
since responsibilities for child care are devolved to the state rather than shared within the family with no consequent reconfiguration of the division of domestic labour.

This study has shown that there is a high level of state intervention in the area of ongoing training at work in France and an absence of this in Britain. However, since equal opportunities are not a central concern of the French training infrastructure, extra equality measures need to be added to the system and even with this the difficulties of effecting real change would still remain. Measurement of the impact of company culture is highly problematic, since advancement is often linked to networking which often involved activities which are exclusively male or which make women who participate uncomfortable. Personalist networks reinforce male dominance and subordinate women since many of them are maintained through nominally private activities and institutions which either formally exclude women or make it difficult for them to feel at home. (Sommerlad and Sanderson 1998). As Hakim notes, "some of the most important processes that contribute to greater career success among men than women are invisible, not just unmeasured but unmeasurable (1996:183). Similarly, it is difficult to assess the extent to which equal opportunities policies may be subverted, especially given the absence of any strong sanctions against miscreant employers One consequence of this is that the impact of state policy may not always be the impact desired by the legislator.

The third hypothesis which was posed is that state infrastructure including the national training system and equal opportunities legislation, can have an impact on equality of access to training at work. While it would seem that legislation to encourage good practice can only be a good thing, the reality of the business environment is that training is carried out for commercial reasons rather than any concern for the social good, although increasing awareness by investors of ethical considerations may give grounds for cautious optimism in this area. It could be argued that the existence of an influential training champion who has strong reasons for wanting to advance the situation of women within the company is the most important factor in influencing company culture and can outweigh the impact of state provision.

The fourth hypothesis on which this study is based is that it may be possible to highlight best practice by comparing two different types of infrastructure. While the way that the
state organises provision of training or child care may on the surface be more beneficial to women in the interventionist environment of France as compared to the laissez-faire policies in evidence in Britain, there are hidden consequences which may mean that this is not the case. To take the example of training, cynical practice may mean that courses such as foreign language courses are provided for workers by employing an agency which charges the firm a certain proportion of the allocated training funds for such language courses and then pays a significantly smaller amount in low wages to its teachers. In this way the necessary funding of training is carried out but there is no recognition of this subversion of funds within the system. In the example of child care, the high level of working women supported by formal child care arrangements may mean that there are fewer women available to help out in emergencies, whereas the high cost of child care in Britain leads to women working part-time and relying on partners for some of the child care. It is therefore not possible to present one system as being superior in every way to another since policies may be subverted by other framing factors.

9.4 CONVERGENCE OF BRITAIN AND FRANCE?

The similarities in the situation of women in paid employment in Britain and France are due to changes over the last thirty years, where women in both countries have increased their participation rates, as well as changes in the economic order which affect all European countries. Both countries have been and continue to be affected by major trends such as mass consumerism, flexibilisation of labour, and women’s increased control over reproduction. Debates about the nature of globalisation tend to stress similarities between France and Britain and the end of French “exceptionalism”.

However, it could be argued from the specific viewpoint of this study that the existence of a training system supported by the state leads French workers to have expectations that training is a social right rather than a benefit conferred upon them by the employer. Even after a first term in government the Labour party had provided no clear policy on increasing training or equal opportunities at work, whereas in France the debates over political parity for women in the 1990s were followed by the Génisson proposals on professional equality which included specific proposals to include access to training at work (see Appendix G).
At the beginning of the millennium this was then followed by the campaign for domestic parity in France which recognised that until women's unequal burden of domestic work was tackled progress in other political and economic areas would be undermined. The notion that things are changing for the better for women are belied by figures given by Le Monde on March 8th 2001 which show that in 1999 French women still did almost three times as much domestic work as French men and that this had only decreased by 4 minutes since 1986. Similar figures given in the Guardian on July 7th 2001 stated that on average men in Britain spent six hours per week on housework as compared with 18.5 hours for women. Moreover, the amount of time a woman spends in paid employment makes only a slight difference to the division of domestic labour, since for every hour a woman works, a man does an extra 1.2 minutes of cooking, cleaning and shopping. However, tackling this issue involves a radical agenda since it means encroaching on people's private life and individual liberty and even questioning the sexual identity of men and women.

In Britain, while some attention has been paid to the problem of equal pay, political parity remains an issue which remains to be tackled by a second Labour government. Reports in the Independent on April 22nd 2001 refer to a proposed one-clause bill which would state that it "is not illegal for political parties to introduce measures which would redress the imbalance of gender in the selection of candidates for election". This would open the door for all-woman shortlists if a political party desired this, but obviously contains no coercive measures to redress the balance. The same report refers to the intention to scrap the Women's unit and to devolve responsibility for issues previously within its remit to departmental level to ensure that its work is continued. While advocates of this move may maintain that it is a form of mainstreaming, this would seem to weaken the government position on equal opportunities for women.

Debate in Britain is at a much lower level of policy initiatives such as the Working Families Tax Credit which may help to support women in low paid employment, but as we have seen does not tackle the problem of lack of affordable childcare. Indeed the policy itself has been heavily criticised since it simply redistributes benefits from wallet to handbag. There have even been reports by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux of parents being sacked by firms trying to avoid the trouble of administering the scheme. (Guardian
In France even the reduction in working time to 35 hours brought in by the Aubry law at the turn of the millennium can be seen as opportunity to discuss wider issues about the work/life balance and there is further optimism due to a period of economic growth at the turn of the millenium. France is still willing to provide statist solutions as evidenced by the political parity law which seeks to compel political structures to accept women. It could therefore be argued that policy elaboration regarding major structural issues which affect the equality of women in society in general and more specifically regarding training at work is at a more advanced level in France than in Britain. Having said that, it is possible that the decision taken by the Economic and Social Research Council to divert funding from macro-economic modelling to projects thought to have greater contemporary relevance (Elliott, 2001) will encourage British research into solutions to the problem of domestic parity.

9.5
APPROACHES TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Approaches to equal opportunities in the workplace range from soft measures which stress the agency of women as actors in changing their own situations to hard measures which include sanctions to force the pace of change in institutions influenced by a patriarchal system. Some commentators, such as Barbara Thomas, chairman of Axon Group (Coleman, 2000) echo the position taken by Hakim (1995) in labelling some women as uncommitted, believing that balancing work and family commitments can create extra pressure for ambitious women but that the women sometimes use it as a cop-out and an excuse for not aiming high, since they do not really want a career at that level. While they admit that the glass ceiling exists, they see it as women's responsibility to change and to challenge the status quo.

Other commentators, such as Zena James of Opportunity Now (formerly Opportunity 2000), which is a business-led campaign to raise the profile of women in the workplace, stress the role of organisational culture and conclude that change will only come about when the boards of companies start to value diversity and realise that since they have invested in the training of women, they do not want to lose them through lack of career
opportunity. This approach assumes that the efficiency objective of companies in maximising the talent of all of the workforce can overcome traditional patriarchal attitudes and allow for the diversity necessary for employees to combine work and family responsibilities.

The most hard-hitting approach to instituting equal opportunities is that of legislation backed up by sanctions, once all hope is lost of winning hearts and minds. As we have seen, this is the approach favoured by some French politicians who believe that companies must be forced to act in an egalitarian manner. According to the 1999 French study commissioned by the Conseil Supérieur de l'Egalité Professionnelle, headed by Nicole Péry secretary of state for the rights of women and professional training, (Fournier, CEREQ Bref No 160, January 2000), there are many important obstacles faced by women in obtaining access to ongoing training at work such as the calendar of professional life which is dominated by a male career model, lack of information about the relevance of training provided, the obligation to be mobile when applying for promotion and the organisation of family life. Policy improvements required include providing statistics disaggregated by gender and systematically taking into account situations and needs of men and women in the framework of studies on ongoing training which are undertaken using public funding. At the same time it is necessary to improve access to funding and to oblige the employer to provide for any underlying expenses such as transport and child care. However there is clearly a tension between such stated objectives and the laissez-faire economic policies favoured by both the French and British governments at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

9.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first research question that this study aims to answer is whether women have equal access with men to continuous vocational training in the workplace. While figures suggest that there has been an improvement in women's situation in terms of quantity of training provided, analysis of the qualitative aspect reveals that women are more likely to be the recipients of induction training or soft training while more men than women benefit from hard training which provides transferable skills and is more likely to lead to advancement.
Monitoring and evaluation is essential in order to track the progress of gender equality but if this is not prioritised by the state or the company then analysis of the complexity of the situation is not possible.

Constraints on equality of access are well summarised by the French ministry for women's rights and professional training, quoted in chapter four. Also needed is the basic provision of equal opportunities courses encouraging the reexamination of beliefs and expectations, for those suffering the effects of discrimination and for managers who may be unwittingly perpetuating the status quo. As fieldwork for this study shows, awareness of the problem of discrimination by those in management is generally poor.

The second major question that this study aimed to answer is whether differences between levels of access for women to ongoing training in each country, quantified in chapter four, can be linked to different national legislative frameworks. Whether they are working in companies which operate a voluntarist training system, as in Britain, or a state-run levy system, as in France, women do not have equal access with men to training and development opportunities within private companies in general or in the insurance sector in particular. This is easier to demonstrate under the French system as clear statistics are kept but the evidence points to the same conclusions in Britain. Fieldwork for this study shows great disparities within the insurance industry even though it is considered to be a good training provider and a good employer of women. Despite its pedigree as one of the policy measures resulting from the May 1968 events in France, the declared aims of the Formation Continue system in France to support training for all workers regardless of gender is no more effective than the voluntaristic British system which views equality of opportunity in access to training for women as the employer's responsibility.

A bivariate analysis where training is seen as a simple variable is not appropriate to gauge whether one national system is better than another in providing equal opportunities for women with reference to ongoing training at work (Metcalfe 1997). As previously shown, raw data need to be carefully examined to reveal complexities which demand multivariate analysis. As O'Reilly (1994) states, the nature of the education and training system also has an influence on employers, in the way the labour force is skilled and how much employers are prepared to invest collectively or individually. The nature of the education and training
system affects the characteristics of available labour in terms of who is skilled and what skills they have. However, as we have seen, the notion of skill is not in itself gender blind and mirrors values placed on skill by society where these notions have been formed over time and are influenced by pressures of organised labour which has undervalued skills considered to be traditionally female. Who is available to take up paid employment is affected by the way the tax system, social welfare and child care provision are organised in a given country. As O'Reilly points out, where there is extensive child care provision, as in France, women will find it easier to work full-time, whereas where this provision is partial, as in Britain, women's availability for paid employment is dependent on how they can have their children cared for, either through partial state provision or through informal child care usually provided by the family. However, as further research by Gregory and Windebank (2000) stresses, women may suffer the side-effects of this in bearing the double burden of family responsibilities and a full-time job, and this is not necessarily evidence of progress in gender relations in France as compared to Britain.

Even with equal access to training, equality of outcome is not guaranteed. Completion rates for training courses are inevitably affected by participants' commitments elsewhere and until child care and responsibilities for the home are shared equally there cannot be a level playing field. The division of unpaid labour within the domestic sphere in structuring opportunities for women at work, and more specifically for this study, availability for training, cannot be ignored. Women's career trajectories are still severely affected in their thirties by maternity leave and subsequent problems concerning affordable child care. Despite the existence of an equal training record, promotion and progress up the hierarchy does not automatically take place as so many other variables such as selection procedures and company culture may cause bias, if for instance, males in management select other males in their own image. This vicious circle reinforces the status quo, where those at the top of the hierarchy are more likely to obtain company investment in training them further, and the majority of these employees are male. The level of awareness of existing discrimination seems to be lower amongst employees and training managers surveyed in France than in Britain, and the belief stronger that no structural measures to combat this are necessary since the situation will change with stronger work affiliation from the younger generation of women at work.
At the supranational level, policy formation may be at a more developed level but the status quo has not been sufficiently affected. Experts on equal opportunities in training at the European union level agree that while the stated aim of the European union policy is to encourage a highly skilled workforce committed to lifelong learning, current patterns of gender segregation and training actually reinforce occupational sector segregation by gender in the workforce, leading to the present situation which is inefficient and unjust. Programmes are therefore needed which have a marked effect on the processes of social and cultural reproduction that perpetuate gender inequality (Rees 1997). As we have seen, the radical transformation desired by proponents of mainstreaming equal opportunities in order to ensure that equality of opportunity has a central place in discussions on labour market issues is unlikely to not take place without the political will of national governments, and may remain at the level of window dressing.

Finally, the last question posed in the introduction aimed to ascertain whether policies can be identified at national, supranational or company level which may lead to desirable outcomes regarding improved access to training for women at work. While there is general agreement that state and supranational policies to improve women's position in the labour market play an important role, they are only one element amongst a complex interplay of framing factors. However, according to Barrère-Maurisson (1992) some welfare state and labour markets are better for women than others. Most writers believe that both attitude change and changes in material empowerment are important but tend to highlight one or the other. For Crompton (1997:140) "although changes both in attitudes to women and paid employment, and ideologies and discourses of masculinity and femininity are certainly very important, it is improvements in the material situation of women relative to men which are most likely to secure their equal treatment in society". Other writers such as Rees (1998) stress that it is necessary to "win hearts and minds". Gregory and Windebank (2000) stress the importance of interpersonal processes in engendering progress in gender relations and call upon men to change and to "disengage themselves from tradition and structure in order to construct their own life narratives"(2000:183).

This study should therefore be seen as a contribution to the literature on the situation of women in the workplace. Inequalities regarding training at work are not as easy to demonstrate as other areas of unequal treatment since they are linked to women’s position
within a vertically and horizontally segregated workforce. As we have seen, little work has been carried out on this subject partly because clear data are very difficult to obtain. At the same time, the issue of equal access to training can be used by companies who claim to have resolved the question to provide a quick fix to problems which are in fact deep seated issues which mirror the division of gender roles in society.

9.7
POLICY SOLUTIONS

Solutions to the problems of inequality in the workplace vary according to whether analysts see attitude change or material change as the most important element, although most would agree that the two have a dynamic relationship. Theoretical approaches are most useful when they integrate a gendered and societal perspective and recognise this dynamic relationship between the two. As Connell (1987) stresses, the implications of change in one area can have a progressive but not necessarily deterministic influence on change in other areas. Immediate policy solutions range from a softly-softly approach of encouraging attitude change by persuasion of key actors of the benefits of equality in the workplace to the use of strong legislation and sanctions to ensure compliance. Legislation which places the burden of proof on the employer to demonstrate the existence of non-discrimination rather than on the employee to prove discrimination is likely to have wide-reaching effects, as could the American model of class actions where several cases with similar grievances are heard together.

This study has examined differences in national approaches to the problem of ensuring equality in training in the workplace, but it is arguably the similarities in problems faced by women in both countries which is the most apparent conclusion. Differences in national systems in equal opportunities in access to ongoing training are outweighed by the similar constraints faced by women in the workplace in both France and Britain. As we have seen, the existence of patriarchy in the public sphere leads to assumptions about women's suitability for some areas of work, while patriarchy in the private sphere reduces women's available time since they are still responsible for unpaid domestic work in both societies. National or supranational legislation is unlikely to change company culture which is arguably the most important structuring element in providing an environment of equality
which encourages women to take up training in the workplace. The importance of training champions, individuals with a belief in the importance of equality and the power to implement those beliefs, can have more impact on a private sector company than national or supranational legislation.

It is arguably important and useful to document inequality and recommend best practice. However, there are several provisos which should be kept in mind. Firstly as Conroy (2000), writing about cooperation at European level, suggests, practices are born of material realities, cultural and social beliefs and are the outcomes of struggles, of losses and gains and that practice cannot be exchanged unless reduced to a technique. What can realistically be exchanged are views, approaches, outlooks, opinions and theories.

While it is not being suggested that policy measures implemented within one national socio-economic context can be grafted on to another, international comparisons can be revealing of advantages of certain approaches and lessons can be learned from experiences of policymakers in other countries. Chicha (1995) notes that measures introduced by the federal government in Canada to improve equal opportunities in the labour market had a very limited if positive impact. Many organisations to whom the law was applicable had employed nobody in the four disadvantaged categories (women, native Canadians, visible ethnic minorities, handicapped people). Several explanations are advanced for this: the small importance given to such measures within labour market policy in Canada and the concurrent downturn in the economy which led to a freeze on jobs. Another series of explanations suggested that the content and functioning of the equal opportunity programmes were at fault. It is possible that the process of implementing these measures was too long, the methodology used may have reproduced the very discrimination it was meant to do away with, or thirdly that coercive measures or penalties were easy to avoid or badly applied. Another theory is that complementary measures such as awareness raising, managing diversity or measures to reconcile work and family were lacking whereas these are essential to ensure success of such programmes.

The above study (Chicha 1995) found that obstacles preventing participation in training relating to family obligations affected 12% of women and 5% of men although family constraints played a fairly minor role in the eyes of individuals themselves. Obstacles were
due more to employer perceptions than to the perceptions of the employees themselves since young women with one child were only 60% as likely to be selected for training as young men in the same situation. (Green, 1991). The study by Green shows that employer prejudice leads to women being considered as being less stable as workers and having less attachment to work because of family commitments. Another study by Hall (1989) showed that even if a woman takes every measure necessary to work after the birth of a child, she is considered by her work colleagues to be less interested in work, and therefore less likely to be offered training. If reconciling work and family life is given priority then measures can be implemented such as correspondence courses combined with practical sessions during normal working hours. Women are further disadvantaged if they are part-time as employers see them as just passing through and do not invest in training them. Women are more likely to work for small firms and in the service sector, both of which variables decrease their chance of receiving training. Women are less likely to be confident about applying for scientific or technical training courses due to not choosing such courses at school, and if they give up such courses this inevitably reinforces employer commitment on poor female attitude and motivation. This is why support courses are necessary to ensure success for women in non-traditional subjects. Confidence building courses for women returning to work are now widely accepted to be invaluable. Laufer (1992) documents the initiatives which have been integrated into equal opportunity programmes to increase the chance of success. She points out that the attitude of the trainers themselves is a key element in whether women become discouraged. The level of support of the husband or partner can also influence women's confidence, as can the attitude of the hierarchy at work.

It is not utopic to hope that strong state legislation can effect changes in the level of equal opportunities for women, as the example of some Scandinavian countries has shown. According to Le Monde of March 8th 2001, since 1978 Norway has imposed quotas of 40% female representation on the board of directors of public sector companies. A bill was presented just after Easter 2001 to impose a similar quota on private sector companies, causing the Norwegian employers' association to complain that they could no longer guarantee that their firms would remain competitive if they were not free to choose those they judged most capable independently of their gender. The ministry of the family replied that since the private sector had not been able to take advantage of the freedom of manoeuvre which they had had in the past quotas were now deemed necessary. While it is
not possible to transfer policy moves which are appropriate for Norway to make recommendations for France or Britain, this does highlight what can be done to change the status quo fairly rapidly if the political will exists.

Studies by Eurostat have highlighted the disparity of training received by men and women throughout Europe. Work carried out by the European Commission highlights differing approaches in the area of equal opportunities and national organisations such as the Equal Opportunities Commission in Britain and the MAGE (Gender and the Labour market) research group within the CNRS in France have produced studies which may in the future inform national policy. Both countries have units within their governments whose task is to improve the lot of women in the workplace but for the moment they have a low profile and there is preference for a subtle campaign to persuade employers rather than coercing them. As we have seen, the British government's women's unit is likely to be disbanded, while the French government advocates the need for more flexibility rather than coercion. However, there is a strong business argument that unless national governments and individual firms in France and Britain start to treat equal access to training in the workplace as a priority, both countries will continue to waste the talents of a large proportion of the workforce which could otherwise be harnessed for increased efficiency and competitiveness. Moreover, from the viewpoint of social justice, they are denying the rights of the majority of citizens in a democratic society to be treated equally regardless of their gender. These things are not mutually exclusive. To use the words of the French government in their policy document of January 1999 on equal opportunities: "Le partage du pouvoir est une exigence démocratique et un gage d'efficacité".
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QUESTIONNAIRE DESTINE AUX RESPONSABLES DE FORMATION

Encore une fois merci de prendre le temps de remplir ce bref questionnaire (avant la fin juillet 1995 si possible) qui m'aidera dans mes recherches sur la formation des femmes dans le secteur des services en France.

Nom et adresse de l'entreprise:

1. Dans quel secteur de l'assurance votre entreprise est-elle spécialisée?

2. Quelle est la taille de votre effectif a) à l'échelle nationale b) dans votre agence?

3. Quel est le pourcentage de femmes dans votre effectif? Le pourcentage d'employées à plein temps et à temps partiel?

4. Votre entreprise a-t-elle une stratégie de formation? Si oui, s'agit-il d'une politique à l'échelle nationale ou d'une initiative locale? Quelle est la fréquence de révision de cette politique? Veuillez indiquer les points principaux de cette stratégie.
5. Existe-t-il un plan de formation ? Veuillez joindre une copie si possible. Est-il lié aux besoins de formation des employés ?

6. Est-ce que cette stratégie de formation/ce plan de formation inclut des mesures spécialement destinées aux femmes ?

7. Quelles sont les diplômes que la majorité de vos employés espère obtenir ? Avez-vous des objectifs en matière de certificat ou diplôme à obtenir ?

8. Combien d'heures de formation (chiffre approximatif) ont été assurées l'année dernière ?
9. Combien d'heures de formation ont été assurées pour les employées?

10. Veuillez indiquer à votre avis les besoins de formation des employées de votre entreprise.
Pensez-vous que ces besoins soient différents de ceux des employés de sexe masculin?
Si la formation proposée aux femmes est peu importante, veuillez en indiquer les raisons.

Ajoutez tout autre commentaire en continuant sur une feuille volante si nécessaire. Tout commentaire sera traité en stricte confidentialité.
Questionnaire to Employees

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire which will form part of my PhD research into employment in the financial services sector in France and Great Britain.

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Please give the following personal information for statistical purposes. You do not have to give your name if you do not wish to.

Male ☐ Female ☐

Age........................................................................................................................................................................

Marital status ..........................................................................................................................................................

Number of children ...................................................................................................................................................

Full-time or part-time (if part-time give hours per week)

........................................................................................................................................................................

Length of service

a) with this company ....................................................................................................................................................

b) in the industry ..........................................................................................................................................................

Employment grade or title ..........................................................................................................................................

Please feel free to comment on any of the following questions on a separate sheet if you wish.

If you would be willing to spare 20 minutes of your time to be interviewed at a later date, I would be grateful if you would state your name and contact address and telephone number.

Please return the questionnaire to your training and development manager or if you prefer, directly to:

Catherine Fletcher
Faculty of Languages and European Studies
University of the West of England
Coldharbour Lane
Frenchay
Bristol, BS16 1QY.
Section A

How important are the following in the quality of working life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>not</th>
<th>fairly</th>
<th>very</th>
<th>extremely</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Flexible hours</td>
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<td>2. Pay</td>
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<td>3. Social opportunities (e.g. sports facilities, pub outings)</td>
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<td>4. Subsidised meals</td>
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<td>5. Access to training and development</td>
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<td>6. Comfortable work environment</td>
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<td>7. Mobility within the company</td>
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<td>8. Personnel and counselling support</td>
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<td>9. Creche provision</td>
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<td>10. Supportive team environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Security of employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Good promotion prospects</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Fair appraisal scheme</td>
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<td>14. Incentive pay scheme</td>
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<td>15. Job satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Active trade union</td>
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<td>17. Up to date equipment</td>
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<td>18. Status within the company</td>
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<td>19. Freedom to use initiative</td>
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<td>20. Good pension plan</td>
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Please select the 5 most important aspects which if they were not present would prompt you to apply for other jobs, and number them in order of importance.

1. ....................................................................................................................
2. ....................................................................................................................
3. ....................................................................................................................
4. ....................................................................................................................
5. ....................................................................................................................
Section B.

How would you rate your JOB MOBILITY POTENTIAL to move to an equivalent post in a different company or within the same company?

Please tick one box.

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<tr>
<th>very low</th>
<th>quite low</th>
<th>quite high</th>
<th>very high</th>
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</thead>
</table>
a) locally | | | |
b) nationally | | | |

How would you rate your promotion prospects from your present level

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>poor</th>
<th>fair</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>excellent</th>
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</table>
a) locally | | | |
b) nationally | | | |

What would be the greatest incentive to move jobs?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

4. How would you like to structure your working time if given a free hand. Please number in order of preference, with 1 being first choice etc.

☐ flexitime every day
☐ working 4 days out of 5
☐ working longer hours for 3 weeks out of 4 in the month
☐ annualised hours contract
☐ no change

Please comment on your decision.

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

5a). What training and development opportunities have you had in the last 2 years? Please tick the boxes which apply.

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<tr>
<th>employer-sponsored</th>
<th>self-funded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. External training course</td>
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<td>2. Seminar</td>
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<td>3. Internal training course (work-based training)</td>
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<td>4. Job rotation</td>
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<td>5. Independent learning</td>
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<td>6. Distance learning</td>
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<td>7. Professional study</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Other (please specify)</td>
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</table>
5b) Please estimate hours of training received.
   
a) sponsored by your employer ..................................................................................

b) self-funded .............................................................................................................

5c) Please comment on your experience of training received. You may wish to continue on another
    sheet of paper.

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5d) Was the training linked to a qualification or a promotion? Please give details.

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5e) Have you undertaken any training and development independently of your company in the last 2
    years? Please give details.

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6. What training opportunities would you most benefit from in the future? Please use the above
categories in Q5a if useful but give full details.

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7. Please comment on any factors influencing or limiting your ability to take up training offered by
   your company.

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Comply Training Strategy

The following information is given in bullet points to attempt to give the flavour of the questionnaire.

French Companies

Company A
Connect national policy with local needs.
- Link training to personal objectives.
- Increase internal mobility.
- Allow everyone to keep up successfully with changes in career directions.
- Have the right person in the right place at the right time.

Company B
Be the leaders in the sector.
- Apply national policy according to local needs.
  - Revise policy according to needs.
  - Increase skills levels across the board.
  - Prioritise technical training, participative management, communication training.
  - Encourage staff to obtain BS and BTS qualifications.

Company C
No stated strategy. The general direction of policy is decided centrally but is linked to local needs.

Company D
National strategy, revised every 3 years.
- Prioritise management of communication and professional mobility.
- Reinforce skills of on-the-job staff.
- Enable staff to cope with change in job content.

Company E
National strategy, revised annually with the comité d'entreprise (workers' committee).
- Encourage development of commercial spirit.
- Encourage development of professional attitude.
- Encourage the acquisition of human relations skills.

Company F
National strategy.
- Focus on knowledge of insurance products.
- Develop information technology skills and management training.

Company G
Polyvalence (flexibility) seen as more important than specialisation which may become outmoded.
- Prioritise customer relations, computing training, quality control and technical training.

Company H
The training strategy is linked to the training plan, drawn up every year with workers' representatives, using information from the yearly appraisal of employees.
British Companies

Company 1
Strategy being reviewed. National strategy but central and local delivery.
- Encourage all staff to take up training. The issue of separate training for women is being discussed.

Company 2
Achieve business objectives and support objectives of business.
- Provide training related to roles not gender. There is no reduction of take-up in training by women.

Company 3
Human Resources Development is part of the corporate plan, cascaded down to the training department. It is revised every 12 months. There is a quarterly appraisal where training needs and development are linked. No difference is made between male and female employees.
- Increase technical skills.
- Improve levels of professionalism and quality of team-working.
- Consolidate operation of performance management.

Company 4
New strategy, to be revised annually. Courses are mixed. Men and women have different natural skills(!) Provision of quality service for the majority of staff.
- Provide training for varied needs according to job.

Company 5
National policy on training, identical for men and for women.

Company 6
- Continue to provide training to new recruits (new recruits are given 20 per cent of all training).
- Prioritise Information Technology skills to cope with change.
- Give training on product knowledge, leadership and management skills.
- Provide a personal development programme.
- Encourage acquisition of professional qualifications. 'This is a traditional firm but we want to tap everyone's potential. Women should be encouraged to go into sales.'

- 'Change is needed now - the glass ceiling is imposed by the traditional approach but women-only courses are inappropriate.'

Company 7
Annual group training plan gives a clear framework for training policy.

Company 8
Strategy is company policy. No details given. Telephone comment made that equal opportunities is 'an explosive subject'.

Company 9
Focus strategy to meet individual's needs.

Company 10
Company policy sits within the wider group. The company is committed to Opportunity 2000 and getting women into management. They run women's development courses. Occasionally both men and women take part in single-gender training. Many others refuse to attend as they regard it as discriminatory. The training manager sees training for women as 'an eighties issue with far less relevance now'.
- Support the business in a cost-effective way.
APPENDIX D

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES FOR FIELDWORK STAGE 2
NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PRESERVE ANONYMITY OF PARTICIPANTS

BRITAIN

1. BRISTOL MARCH 27TH 1996
MS. SARAH
MANAGER IN CHARGE OF TRAINING AT COMPANY 2
EARLY 30S, WITH THE COMPANY 5 YEARS

2. BRISTOL APRIL 30TH 1996
MS KERRY
MANAGER IN CHARGE OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT AT COMPANY 5
MID 40S, WITH THE COMPANY 15 YEARS

3. CHELTENHAM MAY 22ND 1996
MS BLODWEN
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SPECIALIST WITHIN THE PERSONNEL SECTION AT COMPANY 1
EARLY 30S, WITH THE COMPANY 6 YEARS

4. BIRMINGHAM JUNE 11TH 1996
MR ANTHONY
TRAINING MANAGER, COMPANY 3
EARLY 40S, RECENTLY ARRIVED AT THE COMPANY 8 MONTHS AGO

FRANCE

5. RENNES NOVEMBER 1996
M. ROBERT
MANAGER IN CHARGE OF TRAINING AT COMPANY A
LATE 50S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 20 YEARS

6. NANTES MARCH 4TH 1997
M. GROS
MALE TRAINING MANAGER COMPANY E
MID 40S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR UNDER 2 YEARS.

7. RENNES MARCH 8TH 1997
MME SONYA
FEMALE TRAINING MANAGER COMPANY B
EARLY 30S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 5 YEARS.

8. NANTES APRIL 3RD 1997
M. DENIS
MALE MANAGER IN HUMAN RESOURCES COMPANY D
LATE 40S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 10 YEARS

9. RENNES MAY 6TH
M. ROCHEFORT
MALE REGIONAL TRAINING MANAGER COMPANY F
EARLY 50S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 20 YEARS

10. PARIS JUNE 5TH 1997
M. RICHARD
MALE TRAINING MANAGER AT HEAD OFFICE OF COMPANY E
LATE 50S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 25 YEARS

PAGE 253
11. PARIS JUNE 6TH 1997
M. LEONARD
MALE TRAINING MANAGER HEAD OFFICE OF COMPANY F
LATE 50S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 20 YEARS.

12. LA DEFENSE, PARIS JUNE 6TH 1997
MME VERONIQUE
FEMALE TRAINING OFFICER HEAD OFFICE COMPANY C
LATE 40S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 15 YEARS.

13. LA DEFENSE, PARIS JUNE 6TH
MME GRETEL
HEAD OF PERSONNEL COMPANY C
MID 50S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 20 YEARS

14. LA DEFENSE PARIS JUNE 5TH
MME MARIA
REGIONAL HEAD OF TRAINING AND PERSONNEL AT COMPANY G
LATE 30S, WITH THE COMPANY FOR 4 YEARS

EXPERTS CONSULTED

1. MARSEILLES, FRANCE APRIL 6TH 1995
CHRISTINE FOURNIER
CEREQ, EXPERT ON WOMEN AND TRAINING

2. BRUSSELS, APRIL 8TH 1996
MICHELINÉ KOCAC, EUROPEAN COMMISSION DGXXII,
EXPERT ON EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN.

3. BRUSSELS, APRIL 8TH 1996
STEVE BAINBRIDGE, ECONOMIST WITH SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE ON TRAINING
WITHIN EUROPEAN COMMISSION DGXXII

3. BRUSSELS APRIL 8TH 1996
JANE KEARNEY EXPERT ON MAINSTREAMING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
WITHIN EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DGV.

4. RENNES, FRANCE, JANUARY 1997
GERARD PODEVIN, EXPERT ON TRAINING, CEREQ

5. RENNES, FRANCE, FEBRUARY 14TH 1997
ANNIE JUNTER-LOISEAU, FRENCH EXPERT ON TRAINING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
FOR WOMEN, UNIVERSITE DE RENNES 1.

6. FEBRUARY 26TH 1998
TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH NORMAN DAVIS,
EXPERT ON TRAINING WITHIN DG XXII

7. FEBRUARY 23RD 1998
CATHY WAITE
EXPERT ON TRAINING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES,
BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
Company 7 is a Bristol based organisation which recruits mainly at GCSE and A-level, only taking on about 3 graduates a year. Its life insurance section is a newer company formed 4 years ago to sell policies linked to a bank, whereas the main insurance company has been in existence since the early seventies acting as a broker selling all kinds of insurance.

Continuing Professional Development is now a compulsory requirement under the Financial Services Act in the late 80s, overseen by the Personal Investment Authority. This involves 3 levels of financial planning certificates, none of which are at a high level.

The training plan is derived from the strategic business plan and broken down into a detailed plan with objectives for employees. I could not obtain a copy of the form as it was copyright of the person who had drawn it up ....

The concept of women into management was now seen as being old hat with Self-development for women considered to be a better way of dealing with diversity within the company. Mrs K had commented that EO was an 80s issue, so I asked her what was in her opinion the issue facing women now. She felt that the glass ceiling had moved upwards and that women's networks were increasing but the important networks were dominated by men who played golf. She did not enjoy the sport and felt that it would be too high a price to pay to have to learn! She had met many women who felt obliged to continue working full-time to provide material benefits for a dual income family whereas their preference would be to spend more time with their children. She also mentioned proudly that company 7 now has provisions for unpaid paternity leave. Companies which dealt primarily with training for women were Domino and Springboard.

There were some part-time female managers but this had caused problems if they had to liaise with other part-times working the other end of the week in a different company. Mrs K noted that the absence on maternity leave of Alison White at WESTEC meant that her responsibilities had been shared out and the women's committee overlooked as the other equal opportunities officer had different priorities.

There are no figures kept to account for training hours and no data disaggregated by gender figures. She suggested contacting the insurance industry Training council in Sevenoaks which commissions labour market surveys within the industry.
QUESTIONNAIRE TO EMPLOYEES
Unfortunately, the company costs its employee time so carefully that it will not allow any time to be spent on questionnaires at the moment including internal training questionnaires. Mrs K agreed to distribute questionnaires if this policy changes before August 1997 (!). She felt that nursery and holiday provision for dependant children was more of an issue than creche provision since there was no car park and parents would have difficulty in bringing their children into the office in the centre of town. She would also suggest using a category of performance related pay rather than incentive pay scheme. She pointed out that staff associations were more prominent than unions in the insurance industry. She suggested adding a further 2 categories to section 5a): on the job training and NVQs.

CONCLUSIONS
Mrs K was very helpful and willing to give me an hour of her undoubtedly highly paid time - but the response on distributing questionnaires was pessimistic. This may change as the company is stretched at the moment to provide for high demand. She referred to her own situation of having given up full-time work for 12 years while caring for her own children and seemed disapproving of women who worked to provide a second income and luxuries for the family, as her family had gone without foreign holidays. She did not strike me as having an investment in pushing the principle of equal opportunities for women although she obviously found the existence of male networks very galling. There had to her knowledge been no report on Women into Management and she was only able to give me documentation on guidance to employees concerning exams in the insurance industry. She is currently chair of the chartered insurance institute training and development forum which has 400 members, sits on the CII education committee and works for the insurance lead body. Her interest seems primarily in issues of qualifications and assessment of skills.
APPENDIX F

SAMPLE REPORT OF 6 REPORTS PREPARED ON COMPANIES STUDIED IN DETAIL. CONCLUSIONS INCLUDE COMPARISONS WITH THE 2 OTHER BRITISH COMPANIES.

THIS REPORT WAS GIVEN AS FEEDBACK TO COMPANIES WHO PARTICIPATED IN STAGE 3 OF THE FIELDWORK AND DISTRIBUTED QUESTIONNAIRE B, AS SEEN ON P.253, TO EMPLOYEES.

REPORT ON TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE (B) AT Company 2

I received a total of 35 questionnaires and my thanks are due to all those who took the time to express their views on training.

15 questionnaires were returned by female employees and 20 by male employees.

Section A

I attributed 3 points to those areas felt to be extremely important, 2 to those felt to be very important, 1=fairly important, 0=not important. Out of a possible total of 45 for female employees and 60 for male employees the following picture emerged.

Female employees

Job satisfaction scored highest with 39 points. It was seen as most important by 7 respondents. Flexible hours and freedom to use initiative were given 39 points. Flexible hours was seen as most important by 5 respondents but none felt freedom to use initiative was the most important aspect of working life. Supportive team environment and a fair appraisal scheme scored 37 points. Security of employment scored 34 points. Access to TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT scored 33 points and appeared in fifth place along with good promotion prospects. Training was not seen as most important by any respondent but appeared in the 5 most important aspects for 7 people.

Pay scored 32 points and was most important for 2 people. Incentive pay scheme scored 31 points and comfortable work environment scored 30.

Considered to be least important were:

Subsidised meals (10 points)
Social opportunities (15 points)
Creche provision (11 points)
Active trade union (12 points)

Male employees

Job satisfaction scored highest with 49 points and was seen as most important by 4 respondents. Pay scored second highest with 48 points and was seen as important by 4 people. Security of employment was also given 48 points. Freedom to use initiative was given 47 points. Good promotion prospects and fair appraisal scheme were both given 46 points. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT scored 44 points and was in 5th place, seen as most important by one person. It was however included in
the most important 5 aspects by 6 people in total. Good pension plan was given 43 points. Up to date equipment scored 41 points along with supportive team environment.

Considered to be least important were:
- Subsidised meals (19 points)
- Creche provision (8 points)
- Active trade union (17 points)
- Social opportunities (20 points)

CONCLUSIONS ON SECTION A OF QUESTIONNAIRE B

As expected, job satisfaction rated most highly for both men and women. Pay was in second place for men and 6th place for women. Flexible hours are much more important for women - second place as opposed to a low score of 29 points for men. Pay rates in 6th place for women as opposed to second place for men.

Training is in fifth place for both women and men which does not seem to rate very highly but it was included in many of responses on the 5 most important aspects of working life (6 out of 20 men and 7 out of 15 women).

In company 3 it was rated as third highest for women, behind security of employment and fourth highest for men after freedom to use initiative.

In company 1 training and development was rated second highest amongst women and third highest amongst men.

SECTION B

When asked to rate their job mobility potential to move sideways female respondents answered as follows:
- Locally: 28 points out of a possible 45
- Nationally: 20 points out of 45

Male respondents answered as follows:
- Locally: 34 points out of a possible 60
- Nationally: 26 out of 60

When asked to rate their job mobility potential in terms of obtaining promotion the following was found:
- Locally: Females 17 out of 45, males 21 out of 60
- Nationally: Females 15 out of 45, males 22 out of 60.

Incentive for moving was given by female respondents in the following order:
- Pay (10) (Mentioned by 8 men)
- Promotion/career progression/bettt er graded job/more responsibility/increased status/ (3) (5 men)

Noone mentioned job security whereas it was mentioned by the 2 other companies in my survey. "To seek a new challenge" (1)
"More job satisfaction", "to find a more interesting job" or
lack of motivation in present post" (6) (5 men), (the majority of women expressed this in negative terms i.e. lack of motivation and job dissatisfaction)

"To find a better overall package" was mentioned by 2 women
To have increased opportunities for advancement was mentioned by 2 women while one male respondent specified a strategy and corporate planning opportunity.

3 male respondents mentioned location but this was not mentioned by female respondents.
Also mentioned by male respondents were
because of a blocked career path
"If I got the sack"
"to have less hassle"

CONCLUSIONS on Section B OF QUESTIONNAIRE B (Qs 1, 2 & 3)

It would seem that both female and male employees are more optimistic about job mobility at a local level than at a national level. Does this indicate that promotion prospects working at head office are better than moving elsewhere or does this mean that there are good opportunities in Bristol?

This is the reverse of the situation in company 3, males and females being more optimistic about job mobility at national level and where in fact females were also much more pessimistic than males.

In company 1 females were extremely pessimistic about obtaining promotion locally but slightly more optimistic than males about promotion prospects nationally. Male respondents were marginally more confident about prospects in an equivalent job locally but much more so nationally.

Female employees are as pessimistic as male employees about obtaining promotion, equally so nationally and locally. This is in contrast to company 3 where female employees were much more pessimistic than male employees.

Unsurprisingly, pay and promotion prospects are the prime motivator for both men and women as but it is interesting to note than more women than men express this as a negative: that is as lack of motivation and job dissatisfaction rather than seeking increased job satisfaction elsewhere.

The quality of management support and incentive was mentioned in company 3 but not at all here.

Training can be seen as an element of a better overall package, mentioned by 2 women.

Location was an issue for 3 men but for none of the women.
Question 4 (QUESTIONNAIRE B)
STRUCTURE OF WORKING TIME

Figures are given for female employees with males in brackets. Not all respondents filled in this section.

Flexitime was most popular with 5 votes (5)
Working 4/5 days got 4 votes (4)
No change got 3 votes (4)
There was one vote for 3 weeks out of 4, (2) and annualised hours (4).
Many workers already worked flexitime and therefore voted for no change.

COMMENTS BY FEMALE RESPONDENTS

Flexitime is important to balance work and family, to increase flexibility to respond to demand. One respondent would like to extend this to working from home part of the time.

Another felt she needed more time out of work. Another felt it was a non-exploitative system which was cheaper than overtime.

Another resented others taking as much time off as possible by "fixing the system".

4 days a week was seen as an attractive opportunity to spend more time with one's family but was not seen as feasible.

COMMENTS BY MALE EMPLOYEES

2 employees commented that flexitime is very important for quality of working life.

One was happy with the current situation.

One commented that employees should be responsible for meeting targets but have the flexibility to be in the office only when necessary.

Another commented that it is difficult to limit the number of hours per day and 4 days work a week would make this more possible.

2 commented that 4/5 days would be useful to accommodate family commitments.

Another wanted more leisure time.

Another felt that working in bursts maximises creativity and sense of achievement.

Another felt that there is not enough time to recuperate after periods of high activity and therefore there was a build-up of stress.

Another commented that the company was moving towards greater
flexibility which could mean less control by employees over their work resulting in more hours being worked.

CONCLUSIONS on Q4

Flexitime obviously suits most employees and is a popular option. A more intensive 4 day week with an extra day's leave was popular with many staff but it is not clear whether this is practical. (I included this because this is a popular political option in France which the government is encouraging and which may attract tax incentives in the future to increase employment).

These results are broadly similar to those obtained at company 1 and 3.

SECTION 5A)

Figures are given for training received by the 15 female respondents in the last 2 years while the figures for 20 male respondents are given in brackets.

8 (10) had been on employer-funded external training courses while 1 male funded this type of course himself.

10 had been to a training seminar (11) while 1 (1) had funded this herself.

11 out of 15 had been on an internal course (15 out of 20)

5 female respondents had benefited from job rotation (3)

1 had participated in employer-sponsored independent learning (8) while 2 (1) had funded it themselves.

5 had participated in distance learning (3) while 1 had funded this herself (0)

5 had undertaken employer sponsored professional study (6) while 1 had funded this herself (0)

One female respondent had completed a voluntary sector project and 1 male respondent had been a participant in a user group.

CONCLUSIONS ON SECTION 5A

Internal training courses have been taken by the vast majority of male and female respondents (three quarters of males and 11 out of 15 females)

External courses have been taken by a slightly higher percentage of female than male respondents (the contrary to company C and company A).

It is interesting to see than more female than male respondents had participated in job rotation. Similarly more female than
males have undertaken distance learning, including one female participant who funded this herself.

It would be interesting to know the ratio of males of female who obtain funding from the employer for independent professional study in the company as among this sample it is 8 sponsored males as against one sponsored female.

SECTION 5B

According to female respondents the employers had funded 3, 1 hour per month, 2 days, 20, 45, 70, 2 weeks, 2 and a half weeks, 12 hours per month, 600 hours in 16 months, 600 hours over 2 years, 800 hours including time for distance learning.

Most respondents had not funded their own training but those that did reported 30 hours, 45 hours, 500 hours including study time for independent learning.

Figures for male respondents were 0, 7 in the last 2 years, 10 hours, 10 hours, 21 hours, 30 hours, 50 hours, 50 hours, 50 hours a year, 55 hours, 50-60 hours, 60 hours, 10 days, 100 hours, 120 hours, 200 hours, 200 hours, 200 hours, 220 hours.

Self-funded training was undertaken by 5 out of the 20 respondents and was given as follows: 7 hours, 2 days, 1 week, 60 hours, 2 weeks.

CONCLUSIONS ON SECTION 5B

3 of the female respondents had received an exceptionally high number of hours (600 hours or 800 hours training), a figure which was not matched by the male respondents. This could indicate a move to help women in the company catch up with their male colleagues in advancement in the hierarchy. 6 out of 20 male respondents had over 100 hours training in the last years as opposed to 4 out of 15 females.

3 out of 15 females and 5 out of 20 males had funded their own training and development.

In company 3 males received much more training than females whereas the reverse was true in company 1.

Unfortunately enough details were not given to enable analysis in terms of quality of training courses to be carried out.
FEMALE RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS WERE AS FOLLOWS

Positive comments:

Very good course at local university. Beneficial to receive training by experts and the opportunity to debate with like minded people and people with similar backgrounds.

Most useful training came from external organisations or through distance/independent learning.

Training has been of a very good standard, particularly over the last few years. All of the job training was run by company staff, using a variety of methods such as one-to-one, group sessions, courses and CD Roms.

Training comes about for one employee because she wants to expand her knowledge and finds an appropriate training and development medium either internally or externally and make a case for funding and time to support this learning.

Very interesting.

Very good training on new legislation etc affecting the job, communication and stress management.

One employee felt that she learned to tackle issues on a day-to-day basis and this was supplemented by seminars and course provided.

Software training was useful.

Negative comments:

No formal training and had to pick it up as the employee went along.
Not very well structured or appropriate.
Fair.(2)
Very poor (this came from a part-time employee)
In house training is rarely as professional or focused as externally organised schemes.
When they get motivated they provide very good and thorough training but the company is not reactive enough to current legislation such as the Pension Act.

MALE RESPONDENTS COMMENTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

All training received has been of a good standard. Mostly instigated by myself in line with the company's self development policy. Managers in the IT division have been less supportive than the very improved culture of the company's customer service division.

Training has been of a very high standard.

Internal training provided on chartered insurance practice,
assertiveness and time management courses.

Training has been mainly in the form of a group session run by a member of the companies training unit. Computer based training undertaken independently.

Training is relevant to the job and therefore useful. It is generally well-planned and interesting.

Training is relevant and delivered on a departmental basis.

Overall training has been excellent. The mixture of courses, seminars, reading etc is very beneficial. The challenge as always is finding the time to think through the training and applying the learning.

Well structured opportunity to assist development in specific area such as project management.

Most has been of CPD type to maintain knowledge at the appropriate level.

Helpful career management course helped tool apply the concepts in everyday situations. Self-funded project management CBT module undertaken as it was essential for the role at that time.

The company provides an environment of training and development. Experience of this is only constrained by the time each individual has available. Training could benefit a larger proportion of the company than is the case.

Generally good but there have been instances of where training has been inappropriate and covering old ground.

Excellent training facilities but it is a shame the company is moving away from training as the core programme is being scrapped. All training received has been of a high standard.

External training is better than internal training. All training lacks practical examples relevant to the industry, that is, most are too theoretical.

Training received was based on soft skills, coaching, improving employee performance. Training is always professional but often too theoretical. Trainers have often not worked in customer service environment for some time and are therefore out of touch.

Limited to technical issues to assist in the actual job. Just imparting information. No actual development of me as a person.

The training I have received with regard to my pensions work has been very limited. I wanted to move to another section of the company and went out of my way to get some self development.

My position in the company is unique and they do not see any need to train me.

Not received in time, not detailed enough, often trainers are not experts.
CONCLUSIONS ON QUESTION 5C (EXPERIENCE OF TRAINING RECEIVED)

While the majority of all staff were highly complimentary about the quality of the company's training, a significant proportion of female staff made negative comments along with a smaller proportion of male employees.

It is interesting to note that the negative comments amongst male respondents come from team leaders and case managers. Although the majority of employees found training given to be interesting, well-structured, relevant and well-delivered, a recurrent comment was that training was too theoretical and that external training was more beneficial.

There seemed to be more disgruntled employees here than at company 3 or at company 1. This could well be because there is a perception in this company that things are getting worse rather than better, whereas company C is felt to have greatly improved recently in an area that was previously lacking. In company there was a small percentage of dissatisfied employees.

RESPONSES TO QUESTION 5D
(Links between training and promotion)

Female respondents:

Yes (Certificate in Management followed by Diploma in Management Studies)
Yes (Distance learning for ICS Diploma in Personnel Management)
Yes (linked to promotion to team leader)
Yes (indirectly as it is understood that people who take responsibility for their own development, who keep skills up to date, who are flexible and can change to keep pace with organisational requirements will get on, but nothing overt)
Yes (started ACII)

No (7)
No (Most training recently has been in connection with project management and process management, just being able to do the job better.)
No (2) (training provided to do present job)

Male respondents

No (17)
Training is largely a self-development exercise as baked by the company (1)

No direct link to a qualification or promotion although in the long term most training in a soft skill nature adds skills which help promotion

No (the only link is to one's own development and learning)
CONCLUSIONS ON RESPONSES TO 5D

The question is admittedly ambiguous as some respondents related it to whether the training led onto a promotion while others gave examples of training provided as a consequence of a promotion.

However it is still interesting to note that no male respondents saw an overt link between training and promotion. It is also interesting to note that both comments about training improving one's profile and therefore leading indirectly to improved promotion prospects came from training officers.

5E)(INDEPENDENT TRAINING UNDERTAKEN)

Female respondents:
Yes (studied A-level psychology and worked with voluntary organisations)
Yes (studying for a degree with the Open University)
Yes (voluntary sector training as part of a management committee)
Yes (external training on process management and attended external seminars)

No (10)
One respondent commented that training and development takes up too much time. Many weekends are given over to assignments and projects and these commitments are difficult for others.

Male respondents:
Yes (4)
(General industrial relations training, Employment Law update, Health and Safety update)
(one-day external course on training the trainer)
(BTEC Graphic Design course)
(Continuous Professional Development: books and tapes)

No (16)
One added that opportunity was available if required

CONCLUSIONS ON RESPONSES TO QUESTION 5E
Those pursuing independent training are in the minority, as would be expected (4 out of 15 females and 4 out of 20 males) Figures here are broadly comparable between males and females as was also the case in company A whereas in company C a much larger percentage of males than females were pursuing independent study.
Q.6 USEFUL TRAINING IN THE FUTURE

FEMALE RESPONDENTS made the following comments.

Mainly computer based training - eg for Lotus Macros.

Internal training courses. Job rotation and some professional study would be useful.

On the job training needed to feel comfortable with the work load.

Work based training - as more legislation applies to corporate pensions it is necessary to keep up to be able to do a proper job.

Further training in pensions background and legislation needed.

Professional study at degree level (in medicine) (!).

Job rotation is an excellent way to learn, also some seminars if well organised or focused on the appropriate issue

Funding for BSc in psychology. Funding for external course in job evaluation. Funding for external course in psychological profiling. (MBTI)

None. (2)

Computer training.

Having recently been promoted, most relevant training has been provided. Experience is now required.

More training relating to HR work (e.g. employment law) either employer sponsored or self-funded.

NOT distance learning as you cannot ask questions in order to draw conclusions from experts in their fields.

MALE EMPLOYEES responded as follows.

Computer training on Lotus 123 and Ami Pro.

On the job training at a personal level. We often have training in groups which helps as we can learn from other's experiences.

Facilitating, counselling.

Management. (2)

Soft skills linked with the opportunity to actually come back to the workplace and put the skills into practice.

NEBOSH Health and Safety diploma.

Professional study to achieve FPC.
Internal and external training courses, job rotation.

Internal courses.

Professional study - certificate of training practice of financial planning certificate. Internal courses, external course and seminars in leadership skills and personal development programmes.

Personal study in the form of Personnel Management Institute qualification. Internal training course in how to maximise effectiveness of teams with limited resources.

Job rotation to broaden marketability.

Equal benefit from courses, seminars, reading.

Training in marketing techniques, computer graphic packages.

Training courses available from external bodies.

Senior management programme with particular focus on personal development needs.

Practical management development training.

More practical exercises in training sessions. Further studying for professional exams such as the FCP.

Q6 CONCLUSIONS

There were a wide variety of responses and each response is interesting in itself.

Software training and updating on legislation were mentioned by male and female employees. Although it is difficult to draw any general conclusions about this section, it can be seen than quite a few of the male employees mentioned management training. 2 of the female employees could think of no opportunities to benefit them but none of the male employees were in this category.

In company 3 sales techniques and product knowledge were mentioned by female respondents and management training by males. In company 1 computer training was mentioned by females and management training by a small number of male respondents.

Q.7. FACTORS LIMITING OR INFLUENCING ABILITY TO TAKE UP TRAINING IN THE COMPANY

FEMALE RESPONDENTS

No answer (2)

One employee hoped to go on to do an MBA but felt the imminent launch of a major change programme would mean delaying it.

Another intended to leave when the company relocated in
September.

With a young child at home another employee felt it was difficult to attend training which involves overnight stays away from home.

Budgets (3) and actual time to do the training (7) as the company is short-staffed (2).

Another employee intended to move jobs as she would not be funded to undertake expensive training for a degree course which she could not fund privately.

Current workload (2). Pressure of extra-curricular projects. Appropriate training is not always publicised.

MALE RESPONDENTS

No answer (3)

Time (8) - need to take account of benefit of training against time spent. One employee however felt that time can always be found if one's career is a priority.

One employee went to college after working hours in order to gain skills for a move to another area.

Pressure of work (3). This can limit enthusiasm which is needed for self study.

Funding and support (4). Availability of modules (2)

Not offered any training (2)

Lack of personal motivation.

Having obtained qualifications previously one employee felt discouraged and had seen no benefit or encouragement from others in helping to use knowledge gained.

The reputation of the course would influence one employee's decision to devote his time to it.

CONCLUSIONS on Q7

The majority of both male and female employees feel that they are constrained by time, budgets and lack of staff to cover for them.

However a minority feel that they are not encouraged to train. A number of female employees were intending to change jobs to companies which they hoped would fund their desire for professional qualifications.

In company 1 the majority of male employees felt they had no constraints as opposed to only one female employee. Female
respondents appeared more diffident and mentioned a list of reasons such as workload whereas more male respondents appeared confident that they could take up training without any constraints.

In company 3 the majority of employees felt they were not constrained by anything other than time with a minority feeling that they were not encouraged to seek training.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

While job satisfaction is the major area of importance in working life for both male and female respondents, it is interesting to note that pay is more important for male respondents whereas flexibility is important for women. However, flexitime was the preferred mode of working for most employees. Training only rates in 5th place, which is lower than for company 3 and company 1. This is particularly surprising as Company 2 considers itself to be one of the leaders in the industry regarding training. However it was included in many of the responses on the 5 important areas.

There was no significant difference between male and female respondents’ responses to internal promotion prospects and transfer to another job in the same area. This contrasts with Company 3 where females were far more pessimistic than males. Females tended to express their reasons for moving jobs in negative terms more often than the male respondents. This gave a picture of some female respondents seeking other jobs because they were disgruntled whereas male respondents gave a picture of pursuing a career path onwards and upwards.

A slightly higher percentage of female than males had received training on external courses and had participated in job rotation and distance learning, whereas a slightly higher percentage of male respondents had received internal training.

3 female respondents had received an exceptionally large number of training hours whereas no male respondents had done so. This could be an indication of the determination of certain females to obtain qualifications or it could be company policy of encouraging high-flying women. Research has shown that external qualifications are highly valued by women as they are seen as objective indicators of ability in a patriarchal and hierarchical system. A slightly higher proportion of male respondents than female respondents had funded their own development.

The majority of respondents were highly complimentary about training provided, finding it to be interesting, well-structured and well-delivered. A higher proportion of female than male respondents made negative comments about their experience of training. A recurrent negative comment was that courses were too theoretical.

While 5 out of 15 female respondents described a link between
training and development and promotion, none of the male respondents did so. This could be interpreted as the female respondents being more aware of the importance of training and further qualifications in obtaining promotion. 2 respondents stressed the link between improving one's profile through training and obtaining promotion even though this was not overt.

Software training and updates on legislation were mentioned by a number of participants. Management training was mentioned more often by male respondents.

Time and budget constraints and being short staffed were major elements restricting ability to take up training. Some employees felt they were not encouraged to train and some female respondents were preparing to change jobs to seek increased support and funding for training.

In comparison to company 3, I found company 2 to have a more equal situation in terms of access to training. In company 1 at first female respondents seemed to have received more training than male respondents but this was seen to be basic training rather than grooming for promotion.
Catherine Génisson
Députée du Pas-de-Calais

Davantage de mixité professionnelle pour plus d'égalité entre hommes et femmes

Rapport à Monsieur le Premier Ministre

2/9/99

Résumé
30 propositions pour une égalité dans les faits

Proposition 1 :
Moduler les crédits de formation des syndicats attribués par l'Etat en fonction de la prise en compte de l'objectif de mixité. Un groupe de travail avec les partenaires sociaux pourrait étudier la faisabilité de cette proposition, et de façon générale les moyens d'améliorer la mixité dans les différentes institutions syndicales.

Proposition 2 :
Veiller à une représentation équilibrée des femmes et des hommes dans les nominations par le Gouvernement des représentants des syndicats dans les organismes paritaires et tripartites.

Veiller à l'équilibre dans les nominations des représentants de l'Etat dans les institutions tripartites.

Proposition 3 :
RésERVER l'accès à l'aide structurelle accordée pour le passage aux 35h aux entreprises qui appliquent et respectent des accords collectifs prévoyant les clauses obligatoires concernant les conséquences de la réduction du temps de travail en matière d'emploi (qu'il fixe le nombre et la nature des emplois créés), les conditions de mise en œuvre pour les cadres et la situation des salariés à temps partiel.

Proposition 4 :
Etudier la création d'une aide forfaitaire s'ajoutant à l'aide structurelle qui sera mise en place pour le passage aux 35h pour aider les entreprises qui choisissent une durée du travail encore inférieure et créent des emplois.

Proposition 5 :
RésERVER l'accès à l'aide au temps partiel aux entreprises qui appliquent -et respectent- un accord de temps partiel choisi.

Un accord de temps partiel choisi pourrait être défini par un strict respect de l'égalité de traitement entre salariés à temps plein et à temps partiel et par la mise en place d'une procédure favorisant le choix du salarié (durée déterminée du passage à temps partiel, répartition des horaires de travail, avis des représentants du personnel).

Proposition 6 :
Intégrer dans la législation relative à la modulation du temps de travail un délai de prévenance de 7 jours pour toute modification des horaires, pouvant être ramené à 3 jours dans des cas d'urgence précisément définis par un accord collectif.
**Proposition 7 :**
Permettre une réduction effective du temps de travail des cadres.
L'encadrement d'un décompte en jours, souhaité par les syndicats, pourrait prendre les formes suivantes :

- subordonner cette possibilité à la négociation d'un accord
- définir de façon limitative les cadres concernés
- maintenir un décompte horaire, avec les moyens appropriés, qui permet d'assurer le respect des durées maximales du travail (notamment la limite de 10h par jour, qui peut être portée à 12h par accord).
- fixer dans la loi un nombre significatif de jours de congés équivalent à la réduction.

Le passage de 39 à 35 heures permet environ 23 jours de congés supplémentaires par rapport aux congés payés et jours fériés.

**Proposition 8 :**
Encadrer le travail de nuit, tant pour les femmes que pour les hommes, dans l'ensemble des secteurs d'activité. La loi pourrait fixer les principes suivants et renvoyer à la négociation collective les modalités :

- d'abord justifier la nécessité du travail de nuit dans l'activité considérée, puis s'efforcer d'épuiser les autres modalités d'organisation.
- retenir le principe du volontariat (sauf pour les entreprises qui fonctionnent entièrement en continu) pour les salariés qui ont des charges de famille.
- prévoir des contreparties pour les salariés, notamment en terme de réduction du temps de travail.

Il serait souhaitable d'adhérer à la convention n°171 de l'OIT qui prescrit ces précautions et ces contreparties.

Par ailleurs il serait utile que l'État réalise avec les partenaires sociaux des études afin de rechercher les organisations du travail les moins pénalisantes pour l'organisme humain.

**Proposition 9 :**
Développer la validation des acquis professionnels pour l'accès aux diplômes, aux titres délivrés par le ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité, aux Certificats de Qualification Professionnelle (CQP) délivrés par les branches professionnelles. Des objectifs quantifiés destinés à garantir la juste représentation des femmes dans ces dispositifs pourraient être déterminés.

**Proposition 10 :**
Les aides publiques à la formation, notamment les engagements de développement de la formation (EDDF) ne doivent plus financer des formations non validées. Il serait utile de financer des expérimentations pour aider l'offre de formation à s'adapter et à développer de modalités de validation souples pour les entreprises.
Proposition 11 :  
Pour avancer vers une égalité d'accès à la formation continue dans le cadre du système actuel on peut d'ores et déjà envisager :

• de renforcer le bilan de compétences, qui pourrait constituer un bon instrument pour évaluer régulièrement les acquis et les besoins.

• d'imposer que le bilan social donne régulièrement le nombre de salariés ayant ou n'ayant pas en accès à une formation au cours des cinq dernières années par sexe et catégorie.

• de conditionner les aides publiques à la formation au respect de cette obligation de diagnostic de l'égalité d'accès à la formation.

• s'agissant des fonds mutualisés, des conventions entre l'Etat et les organismes collecteurs volontaires pourraient fixer des objectifs particuliers concernant l'accès des femmes aux formations, en contrepartie d'aides publiques.

Proposition 12 :  
L'obligation de verser une contribution financière pour la formation des salariés qui pèse sur les entreprises pourrait plus efficacement être associée à une obligation de maintenir et de valider la compétence de ses salariés.

Proposition 13 :  
Renforcer l'offre publique de formation à distance et soutenir les actions innovantes des organismes privés en la matière.

Proposition 14 :  
Déplacer la charge de la preuve de la discrimination en matière civile.  
La preuve devrait être mise à la charge de l'ensemble des parties pour tous les sujets de discrimination (recrutement, formation, promotion), comme d'ailleurs pour toutes les causes de discrimination en fonction de l'âge, de l'origine et de l'appartenance syndicale.

Proposition 15 :  
Renover le rapport de situation comparée entre les femmes et les hommes.  
Le contenu du rapport annuel étant fixé de façon ambitieuse, quoique générale, dans l'article L.432.3.1 du code du travail, il devrait être possible de préciser par décret des indicateurs qui permettent d'apprécier l'analyse et les objectifs de l'entreprise.

• fixer des indicateurs minimaux dynamiques et ajouter une obligation de fournir les éléments pertinents d'information supplémentaires souhaités par les représentants des salariés.

Ces indicateurs pourraient reprendre ceux déterminés en concertation avec les partenaires sociaux dans le cadre du guide de la négociation collective sur l'égalité en matière de rémunération. On peut aussi envisager des indicateurs dynamiques comme par exemple les pourcentages comparés de femmes et d'hommes qui n'ont pas eu accès à une formation, à une promotion depuis 5 ans, ou encore le pourcentage de candidatures et d'embauches féminines par catégories d'emplois.
• mettre en application les dispositions de l'article consacré au rapport annuel qui imposent des objectifs de progression et des mesures de rattrapage, en prévoyant que tout ou partie des indicateurs du bilan doivent être assortis d'un objectif de progression pour l'année.

**Proposition 16 :**
Intégrer le rapport sur la situation comparée des femmes et des hommes au bilan social dans l'hypothèse d'une rénovation de ce dernier.

**Proposition 17 :**
Assouplir les contrats d'égalité.

- Supprimer le lien obligatoire avec les plans d'égalités. L'accord devrait dégager un objectif d'égalité des chances et une amélioration du fonctionnement de l'entreprise. Des accords portant sur l'aménagement et la réduction du temps de travail principalement, mais aussi sur l'évolution du système de recrutement, le développement de la mobilité interne, l'évolution des conditions de travail pourraient être aidés après une analyse conjointe des services du travail et du droit des femmes. Les actions aidées doivent dépasser le seul champ de la formation.

Il est nécessaire de modifier l'article 18 de la loi du 13 juillet 1983 afin de supprimer la mention "au titre des plans mentionnés à l'article L.123-4 du code du travail" qui est trop restrictive.

- Assouplir l'accès en permettant le mandatement pour la conclusion des accords collectifs (plans d'égalité, accord de réduction du temps de travail) pour lesquels un contrat d'égalité est sollicité.

- Ouvrir le champ d'application du contrat d'égalité aux associations.

- Affecter les moyens financiers correspondant à ces élargissements. Un objectif de 50 contrats d'égalité peut être fixé d'ici la fin de l'année 2000. Compté tenu du coût moyen d'un contrat d'égalité, l'effort budgétaire représenterait environ 20 MF.

**Proposition 18 :**
Engager l'ANPE dans une démarche plus volontariste de lutte contre les discriminations :

- mentionner H/F sur l'ensemble des offres d'emploi déposées à l'ANPE

- augmenter l'effort de requalification des offres d'emploi déposées par les entreprises en améliorant la définition des compétences recherchées

**Proposition 19 :**
Sensibiliser le service public de l'emploi à l'égalité des chances :

- Mobiliser davantage les acteurs spécialisés dans l'insertion des femmes bien implantés localement : bureaux d'accueil et d'information sur l'emploi (BAIE), centres d'information sur les droits des femmes (CIDF), associations d'insertion, organismes de formation.

- former les conseillers ANPE, les psychologues et les formateurs de l'AFPA, ainsi que les correspondants emploi formation, aux difficultés spécifiques rencontrées par les femmes : orientation, environnement familial...
Proposition 20 :
- les orientations nationales pour l'exercice 2000 de la "globalisation" doivent rappeler la part prépondérante des femmes dans le public cible et la nécessité qu'elles soient représentées à la mesure de leur poids dans chacune des différentes mesures, et en particulier le Contrat Initiative Emploi (CIE) et le stage d'accès à l'emploi (SAE).

- Les actions en faveur des femmes et les engagements précis doivent être déterminés dans les plans d'action locaux, qui supposent des statistiques sexuées pour l'établissement du diagnostic. Des objectifs de résultats en matière de réduction du chômage des femmes visées par la "globalisation" doivent être fixés localement et faire l'objet d'un suivi national.

- dans l'ensemble des mesures d'aide à l'emploi les mères isolées doivent constituer une catégorie spécifique de public prioritaire.

- Les mesures d'accompagnement de la ligne "action spécifique" doivent être plus clairement mobilisées en faveur des femmes. Les procédures de gestion doivent également être assouplies (éviter le circuit "trésor public", forfaitiser les frais de garde) car elles sont inadaptées à une aide à la personne. Si ces modifications ne sont pas conduites il sera alors préférable de revenir à une ligne spécifique.

Il faut enfin mettre en place un suivi qui permette de vérifier que les femmes sont justement représentées dans les bénéficiaires des actions spécifiques.

Proposition 21 :
Développer l'accès des femmes aux formations en alternance : agir sur la demande en améliorant l'orientation des filles notamment vers les nouvelles filières industrielles porteuses d'emploi, mais également sur l'offre (développer l'apprentissage dans le tertiaire, développer l'alternance pour les formations très qualifiées) et fixer des objectifs de progression pour l'entrée des filles dans les mesures.

Proposition 22 :
Développer les aides à la création d'entreprise pour les adultes, ainsi que les mesures d'accompagnement spécifiques pour les femmes dans le cadre des contrats de plan État-région.

Proposition 23 :
Améliorer l'accompagnement de l'orientation scolaire des élèves.

- un rapport annuel au Conseil d'administration, intégré ou non au rapport général sur l'orientation, pourrait faire apparaître les résultats scolaires des filles, leurs choix d'orientation, ainsi que les actions conduites pour aider à diversifier leurs souhaits. Au-delà de l'analyse, il faut agir à temps sur l'orientation des élèves:

- le conseil de classe du 2ème trimestre en classe de 5ème, 3ème et 2de doit s'attacher à réfléchir sur les choix et les possibilités d'orientation des filles.

- une action systématique auprès de tous les élèves filles et garçons des classes importantes en terme d'orientation (5ème, 3ème, 2de et Terminale) menée par le professeur principal et le cas échéant le conseiller d'orientation, devrait contribuer à éviter les automatismes.
Proposition 24 :
Travailler avec les éditeurs pour leur donner une grille d'analyse simple des éléments sexistes pouvant être contenus dans les manuels scolaires.

Proposition 25 :
Rendre obligatoire et plus complète la formation initiale et continue, aujourd'hui optionnelle, de l'ensemble du corps enseignant à l'égalité des chances.

Proposition 26 :
Concernant les crèches, il serait utile d'augmenter les places dans certaines agglomérations, notamment en région parisienne, car la crèche correspond à la demande.

Les tarifs restent élevés pour les femmes dont les ressources sont très faibles. Il faudrait envisager la diminution des tranches les plus basses (entre 0 et 200F maximum) afin d'inciter les femmes, notamment qui bénéficient de l'Allocation Parent Isolé (API) ou du Revenu Minimum d'Insertion (RMI), à reprendre une activité.

Une amélioration de la souplesse de fonctionnement, en particulier concernant les horaires pour amener et reprendre les enfants, pourrait faciliter pour les parents la conciliation avec la vie professionnelle.

Proposition 27 :
Le rôle des assistantes maternelles, qui constituent une solution adaptée en zone rurale ou, en complément des modes de garde collectifs en zone urbaine, doit être développé :

- développer l'encadrement dans un "lieu ressource"
- assouplir les horaires des assistantes maternelles compte tenu du développement des horaires atypiques.
- Professionnaliser les systèmes de garde d'enfants et de personnes âgées.
- Créer des dispositifs de garde d'urgence, accessibles en priorité aux mères isolées.
- Soutenir les mères en difficulté, notamment lorsqu'elles sont isolées.
- Moduler davantage les tarifs comme c'est le cas pour les crèches

Proposition 28 :
Permettre un fractionnement du congé parental jusqu'à ce que l'enfant ait atteint l'âge de 16 ans.

Proposition 29 :
Diminuer la durée de l'Allocation Parentale d'Education (APE) à 6 mois et partager ce temps de congé rémunéré entre les deux parents (1/3 de la durée du congé rémunéré non transférable). La question d'une extension au premier enfant pourrait être posée de façon plus légitime si le congé rémunéré n'est plus que de quelques mois.

Proposition 30 :
La dernière année, conditionner l'API au suivi des prestations de l'ANPE et à la préparation d'un retour vers l'emploi.