

**Report of the**  
***WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION***  
**research project**  
**1988 - 90**

**Written and edited by**  
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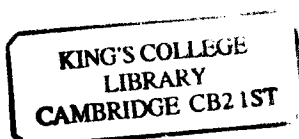
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## IN MEMORIAM

*(In a Suffolk church)*

*Beneath the cov'ring of this little Stone  
Lye the poor Shrunk, yet dear Remains of one,  
With Merit humble and with Virtue fair,  
With Knowledge modest & with wit Sincere,  
Upright in all the Social Pathes of Life,  
The Friend, the Daughter, Sister & the Wife.  
So Just the Deposition of her Soul  
Nature left Reason nothing to Control:  
Firm, Pious, Patient, affable of Mind,  
Happy in Life, yet in Death resign'd.  
Just in the Zenith of those Golden Days  
When the Mind ripens, e'er the Form decays,  
The Hand of Fate untimely cut her Thread  
and left the world to weep that Virtue fled  
It's Pride when living & it's Grief when dead.*

*Lady Elizabeth wife of Honble Bussy Mansell  
and daughter of Earl of Bristol d. 3 / 9 / 1727*

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***The Friend, the Daughter, Sister and the Wife***

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#### **Key:**

W = woman	M = man	F = Fellow of King's
U = undergraduate	1,2,3 = year of study	PG = graduate student
UTO = University Teaching Officer	NUTO = Non-University Teaching Officer	
JRF = Junior Research Fellow		

#### ***Fellows***

Academics may be appointed directly to the Fellowship of King's primarily to research or to teach, but are actually expected to be involved in both. Academics who are appointed by a University faculty or department as Lecturers or Assistant Lecturers (UTOs) may be invited to join a fellowship by a college that needs teachers in their subject. (This is not automatic.) What the college offers in return varies from one college to another. Academics appointed primarily by a college to teach (NUTOs) are on fixed term contracts.

Research Fellows in King's may hold their fellowships as the result of success in an internal or external competition; they may be funded externally and be primarily concerned with work in a University department or laboratory. Junior Research Fellows have to compete for a Senior Research Fellowship; it is not the result of systematic 'promotion'.

#### ***Supervision***

1) of undergraduates: the system of subject-based teaching of undergraduates, singly or in groups of two or three, on a termly basis. It is arranged by Directors of Studies in each Cambridge college for the undergraduates in their subject.

2) of graduate students: the University's Board of Graduate Studies is responsible for the selection of research supervisors for graduate students.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the imagination, initiative and courage of the Provost and Fellows of King's this project would never have been possible. I owe thanks to very many members of the College and University for acts of kindness and assistance, but for help and patience beyond the call of duty I am especially indebted to: Tess Adkins, Elizabeth Archibald, Rosemarie Baines, Marilyn Butler, Pat Cornthwaite, Naomi Eilan, Jane Gilbert, Stephen Hugh-Jones, Martin Hyland, Alex Kacelnik, Catherine Marinkovic, Colin Sparrow, and the staff of the Tutorial Office. Wilf Knowles of the Equal Opportunities Commission has been a source of expertise and guidance on many occasions.

I am indebted to Beryl Jones for her encouragement at critical moments and her determination at all times. To my husband, David Spurling, who has shared with me the weekly separation that this project has entailed, and whose help with untangling ideas has been unfailing, very special thanks are due.

Andrea Spurling  
28 May 1990

## FOREWORD

This is a report of the *Women in Higher Education* project based in the King's College Research Centre. It consists of two parts: the first contains the findings and recommendations of the project, and the second presents material on the background to the project and the College's response to it. The Managers of the Research Centre would like to take this opportunity to express their thanks to Andrea Spurling, who conducted the research and wrote the main body of the report. The Managers are very conscious that Mrs Spurling has faced conflicting pressures both on her time and on her judgement, and appreciate the skilful way in which she has brought a difficult project to a conclusion.

The Research Centre generally supports purely academic research of an interdisciplinary and collaborative nature. Unusually then, the *Women in Higher Education* project was designed from the start to produce information and insights which could form the basis for structural changes within the College; and it has been collaborative only in the problematic sense that Andrea Spurling has needed the collaboration of the College as a whole in order to conduct the research. As a piece of action research the report highlights negative aspects of academic life at King's, and its function is to serve as a basis for change within the College. However it necessarily considers the problems of *Women in Higher Education* in a wider context. It seems possible that the report will be of interest to those concerned with Higher Education and Education in general. The Managers of the Research Centre have therefore decided to make copies of the report available. *Further copies may be obtained (price £15, cheques payable to King's College, Cambridge) on application to the Administrative Secretary, The Research Centre, King's College, Cambridge CB2 1ST (tel. 0223 - 350411 ex 420).*

J M E Hyland, *Convener*  
(on behalf of The Managers of the Research Centre)

## PREFACE

This report on the *Women in Higher Education* research project is both a landmark in itself and also part of an ongoing process. In one sense it had its beginnings in 1988 when the College decided to commission practically-oriented research into the factors inhibiting the academic careers of women at Cambridge and at King's. Since the presentation of the interim report to the College in October 1989, events have moved on. The report led to the setting up of an Equal Opportunities Steering Committee whose own report, in its turn, led to the College's Governing Body adopting a series of measures designed to create and put into practice an effective policy on equal opportunities.

In another sense however the report has a much longer history and represents the culmination of a process that was begun in the late sixties and early seventies when King's College, along with Clare and Churchill, decided to admit women as Students and Fellows. With hindsight, one could argue that a report of this kind should have been commissioned at the time and that an equal opportunities policy, at least one concerning women, should have been adopted then.

To some extent at least, this is in effect what happened in that the College Statutes were changed and considerable thought was given to the nature and values of the College, to the likely impact of women on its life and activities, and to ways in which an all-male institution could change its structure and ethos to welcome women to its midst. This process of self-examination and structural change went hand in hand with a longer term hope that the numbers of women Students and Fellows would gradually increase through time.

Although this hope was largely justified at an undergraduate level, it was only partially fulfilled for graduates, and as far as women Fellows were concerned it was dashed entirely and this despite a series of efforts to bring it about. The present report is thus the product of this hindsight together with that of the nearly twenty years of practical experience of living in a mixed community, hindsight which was required both to reveal the need for further action and to make that action possible. For the present, the report is a landmark both as an achievement in itself and as a clear sign of the College's commitment to bring itself into line with developments in the world at large. Andrea Spurling has worked hard and under difficult circumstances to produce not only a series of valuable findings and recommendations but also an insightful ethnography of a Cambridge College in its own right. Higher education and Cambridge in particular, has been recently singled out as having an especially poor record in opportunities for women at, or anywhere near, the "top" and there are signs that, unless they do it for themselves, initiatives of the kind implied by this report may be forced upon Cambridge and its Colleges.

Looking forward from the past and present towards the future, it is clear that a great deal remains to be done in King's, in Cambridge and in higher education in Britain as a whole. Like the research project itself, this report is addressed to the specific question of women in higher education and it identifies a series of attitudinal and structural factors which inhibit their academic careers. To alter these factors and to further opportunities for women will require a series of measures affecting the different stages of their educational and academic careers and at both local and national levels. Whilst some of these changes are planned or already under way, the need for others has yet to be even recognized.

Some of the problems identified in the report, as well as many of its recommendations, apply not only to issues of gender but also to those of class and race as well. The problems affecting women must be set in the wider context of equal opportunities more generally; significantly enough, the brief of the College's Equal Opportunities Officer, a post created in February 1990 after the adoption of the report of the Equal Opportunities Steering Committee, concerns not simply equal opportunities for women but for people of all social categories.

Moves to admit women to men's colleges and to integrate women more fully into the academic life of the University have gone hand-in-hand with efforts to admit more students from state schools and progress has been made on both fronts. But if they are becoming less dominated by men and male values, the Colleges and the University have hardly begun to address themselves to the issues of discrimination against ethnic minorities, discrimination which, like that against women, affects all stages of the academic career, from primary schools to professorships.

In the United States, the movement for Women's liberation grew out of the Civil Rights movement - a movement to give blacks their full civil rights one hundred years after their emancipation from slavery. In British universities it may be that things will go the other way round, that a long-overdue concern about their position in higher education will not only give women a greater equality of opportunity, but will also lay the foundations for tackling the issue of equal opportunities for ethnic minorities as well. For Andrea Spurling this report presents a task completed; for King's and for Cambridge it represents an important step in a process which must go on.

Stephen Hugh-Jones, *University Lecturer in Social Anthropology*,  
Cambridge, 5 May 1990.

## PART I

*Women in Higher Education:  
The Friend, the Daughter, Sister and the Wife.*

## INTRODUCTION

### **Action research and the development of policy for equal opportunities**

Thinking back to the beginning of the project it is clear that two decisions taken right at the start strongly influenced the outcome: firstly that it should be run as a programme of action research, and secondly that it should be carried out on the basis of equal opportunities in its broadest sense, taking women as a minority group in King's College and Cambridge University. Although, as researcher, I took these decisions when designing the project, the committee of King's Fellows who considered the details welcomed the implications. Action research itself seemed to be unfamiliar to many people in King's; but, as the ultimate aim of this project was to recommend changes in policy and practice, members of the consultative committee readily agreed that the more that members of the College could be involved in the process the better. There was some criticism (mostly from outside King's) of the second decision - some seeing it as the rejection of an opportunity for specifically feminist research. Even on a slight acquaintance with Cambridge University however I felt that the question, "Why don't women get further here?" was only one of a series in the larger set, "Why are most people here male, white, middle-class, and from the Home Counties?" My intention has been not only to carry out the brief as set, but to do so in a way that provides a model for thinking about the University and its institutions in relation to the full range of human diversity.

### **Gender, class and locality**

In examining the attitudes and behaviour of women and men at Cambridge this report distinguishes between 'sex' as biologically constructed, and 'gender' as socially constructed. 'Gender' relates to qualities ascribed to men and to women in a particular culture. Gender stereotypes, as rigid forms, may conflict with people's experience of how women and men actually are, but for some they serve as ideals of how men and women might be - especially in relation to each other. The polarized gender stereotypes of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' used here are those that associate 'masculinity' with activity, competitiveness, and ambition, especially in public spheres, and 'femininity' with passivity, cooperation and little ambition other than in the domestic sphere. These were the stereotypes used by many of the respondents themselves, and they are gender stereotypes current in British middle-class society. This is the source from which Cambridge draws the majority of its students, and therefore - as it reproduces itself largely by appointing its own graduates - also the majority of its teachers. The stereotypes may be even more geographically and socially specific, relating especially to the South East of England, and to that sector of society where social position is



based on a combination of parental ambition and success in a 'traditional' (i.e. historically male, classical) system of secondary education. According to such stereotyping, those qualities identified as masculine mesh more comfortably with qualities leading to academic success at Cambridge than qualities conforming to the feminine stereotype. This creates a dilemma for many women.

### **Personal and professional careers**

A professional career does not exist in a vacuum. It forms only part of a life, and the academic careers of women have or do not have existence in the context of other social and cultural constructs. That is why the project collected data on the non-professional areas of respondents' lives and examined the mutual constraints of academic and personal careers. The result was that the area under examination seemed often to have the quality of a black hole - a region defined by *absence* and packed with potentially destructive forces. It was striking how often during interviews men and women connected the development of their careers with stress in personal relationships, broken marriages, separation from children, children wanted and not conceived, or children conceived and not born. The research indicates that the largest obstacle to the development of women's academic careers, regardless of the colleges or departments in which they work, is the profession itself. Its academic conventions, phasing, criteria and promotional structure are all still based on the myth of the unattached male - a monastic ghost.

An examination based on sex difference has identified the fundamental significance of gender difference. A genuine desire to allow women access throughout higher education anywhere, and in Cambridge in particular, requires a comprehensive review of professional structures. Some of these will need to be changed to acknowledge not only that women need time to be partners and mothers but also that men need time to be partners and fathers.

### **Inhibitors**

The findings fall into two interacting categories of inhibition: structural and attitudinal. The first is associated with institutional parameters, and the second with social and personal expectations. Most of the first relate to the conflicting interests of career development and the care of dependents, and affect those academic men who take on major family responsibilities as well as women. Findings in the attitudinal category show above all that the problems highlighted by the presence of women in King's are those of *class, status* and *occupational gender*.

Many of the inhibiting factors identified by the research are associated with men at Cambridge - their traditions, attitudes and behaviour. Men frequently appear in this report as the agents of inhibition, sometimes unintentionally and sometimes not,

because they are the agents of almost everything non-domestic at Cambridge, and because Cambridge has been designed for their needs. But there was also evidence in the interviews of men playing crucially supportive roles in the lives of women, and of men working positively to adapt their own lives and ways of thinking to changing social attitudes and the needs of their partners. If such efforts, made in people's personal lives, had been reflected in the College and the University the situation for women at Cambridge would be very different.

### **The Project and the College's Response**

This report is the product of eighteen months acquaintance with King's, examining it from a very particular perspective. One of the tricky aspects of running such a project on the basis of action research is the problem it presents in compiling a report. If action really does take place during the research period, as it has in King's, reporting on it is like trying to catch a likeness from a moving subject. The research brief was such that the project has focused on aspects of the working conditions, practices and environment of Cambridge and King's that are not among the most attractive of their features, and this is naturally reflected in the report. Readers should remember that this is a survey of views collected in early 1989 to which Fellows - jointly and individually - have responded promptly and positively. Discussion of the project's main findings shows that the main issues are still very much alive, not only in Cambridge but also in more recently established institutions of higher education elsewhere, also affecting academic-related and administrative staff.

The Fellowship's initiative in setting up the project, their generosity in the funding of it, and their response to its findings, are signs of the genuine desire of the majority to work for a greater equality of opportunity. The cooperation of members of the College has been unequivocal. King's has a long tradition of corporate charity, but the willingness of members individually to contribute as much of their personal experience as they have to this project indicates real generosity of spirit.

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# 1: CONTEXT

## 1.1 ACADEMIC CAREERS

### Academic work and careers

Research into the employment of academics shows that they have concentrated more on the 'academic' aspect than on the 'employment'. As the focus of the profession is learning, and the early stages overlap the end of compulsory education, entry into the profession is not clearly marked. Initial career-qualification is usually the result of subject-based rather than career-based choices.

The awarding of degrees is still associated with conventions of honour. For many academics and universities the dynamics of career progress are still confused with those governing the bestowing of honour. The confusion can jeopardize the realization of personal potential, for the dynamics do not coincide: career progress in a competitive world needs to be self-motivated, whereas decisions controlling the distribution of honour are made by the awarding institution. The result is that those whose lives conform most closely to the conventional pattern of a successful academic, easily recognized according to established criteria, will make more progress more quickly and with less effort than those whose lives do not. This general pattern is reinforced in Cambridge by a constant recycling of the same criteria through the same institution via the appointment of people who earned their honours at Cambridge. Or Oxford.

This is basically why women have not progressed to the top of the academic profession in any numbers anywhere, least of all in Cambridge, for *women* obviously do not conform to a stereotype for *men*. In institutions that have been male-dominated for centuries, and which reproduce themselves by cloning, men have a natural advantage. This is because higher education has not been fundamentally changed since women began to be involved. The establishing of equal opportunities can only be achieved by redefining the very criteria that govern the existing stereotypes of "professionalism". The only standard that needs to be lowered in this exercise is the standard of advantage.

### Status

Higher education in Britain is managed according to an elaborate hierarchy. The security and privileges of the most elevated posts are maintained by the manipulation not only of the line separating primary sector (permanent, protected) from secondary sector (short-term, insecure) employment, but also of a line dividing subjects into categories of primary and secondary political interest. Those most vulnerable to

demotion from one sector to another are posts and subjects at the margins: short-term appointments and 'minority' subjects.

The situation is complicated in Cambridge by the overlapping of University and college employment structures and the use of freelance supervisors for teaching in minority subjects. There appear to be no comprehensive statistics relating to freelance supervisors, though the widely-held belief is that a great deal of such work is undertaken by "a vast army of people's wives" [*sic.* Male academic]. High levels of professional dissatisfaction and frustration among women at Cambridge indicate that this position does not result so much from lack of career motivation as from lack of career opportunity.

### Gender stereotypes

"We cannot understand the place of gender in social process by drawing a line around a set of 'gender institutions'. Gender relations are present in *all* types of institutions. They may not be the most important structure in a particular case, but they are certainly a major structure of most."

[Connell, 1987]

Female and male respondents in interview, in discussion and in answers to the questionnaire, indicated that traditional gender stereotyping - some of fairly crude - is 'still very powerful in forming attitudes and influencing ambition. In particular, the social expectations confronting girls and women affect their own expectations of themselves, and influence the choices they make. Women traditionally hold positions of responsibility and power (personal power, if not economic power) in the domestic domain. Increasingly they have been able to develop ambition to do so beyond the home, and much of the frustration they express is the result of a conflict between this and the traditional structures in the environments where their ambitions lie. The need for such change in the interests of genuine equality of opportunity, and the strength of resistance to it, is an indication of the institutionalized masculinity of those structures.

Gender-stereotyping can be so strong that some women feel they cannot challenge it. In our culture a deep-seated differentiation identifies nature, emotion, and intuition as feminine, and therefore associated with women, and invention, objectivity and conceptualization as masculine, and therefore associated with men.

Research is the bedrock of an academic career. In an attempt to assess whether research demands gender-specific qualities Fellows were asked in interview to identify those attributes which they felt were especially desirable in students aiming to read for higher degrees. Two qualities were more frequently mentioned than others as the most desirable and important. The first was described in terms such as 'passion',

'excitement', 'focused enthusiasm', and the second was 'intuition', 'flair', 'having a nose for what to look for and where to look for it'. The full list of identified qualities is:

adequate but not exceptional intelligence	independence
analytical skills	intuition
bravery	originality
commitment	passion
curiosity	persistence
determination	resourcefulness
energy	self-confidence
excitement about the subject	self-direction
flair	self-motivation
focused enthusiasm	self-reliance
having a 'nose' for things	stability
imagination	

There is nothing in the list to suggest that women are naturally less suited to higher academic study than men. On the other hand women respondents frequently described how they felt that living and working in Cambridge University undermined their self-confidence and affected their self-motivation.

### **Point of entry**

Conflicts resulting from the career motivation of women in higher education are at the centre of this research. In order to understand personal attitudinal blocks, institutional inertia, and the difficulties of recognising structural barriers, it is necessary to consider the historic differences of initial career motivation commonly found between women and men.

For most Fellows in King's the first formal step in an academic career, going to university as an undergraduate, had been a natural progression from the kind of school they attended. It was effectively a decision taken by parents and teachers, needing only complaisance on the part of the student:

"It was assumed by all my family and teachers that this is what would happen, and I just accepted the assumption..." [MF]

"We had a careers master at school. He told us we were going to Cambridge." [MF]

"... it was assumed that 95% of the intake would end up at university, and more or less in the first form they were looking for people who would go to Oxbridge." [MF]

Several respondents referred to their parents as members of a generation blighted by war, and saw this as an influence on their own options:

"Like many people around this place, the extent to which their parents probably bred them like greyhounds in order to succeed was quite strong... [they] felt you had to sit the boy down at the table every night when the supper had been cleared away and make him do his physics, if he was going to better himself and the family... My parents didn't go to university, though I think my father could have done. He was the wrong generation - the Lost Generation." [MF]

" My mother was determined... The family in general saw themselves as upwardly mobile... they wanted to move upwards and I was one of the means of those aspirations being realised." [WF]

Occasionally they had identified higher education as an escape route themselves:

"I was in the last year to be obliged to do [National Service]... so I ended up going to university and doing a degree, as a way of getting out of it." [MF]

"[University] was a way out, ... of escaping from surrounding reality... it seemed to me a way of escaping from my social and personal environment." [WF]

### **Motivation / complaisance**

There were striking differences in the interviews between female and male Fellows' descriptions of becoming involved in an academic career beyond graduation. For most of the men, going on to a higher degree had meant little more than riding with the current. Those who had resisted it had done so on the whole because they did not find the life attractive, not because they doubted their intellectual capacity:

"Drifted into it, totally. Really by mistake... 'Making a decision' makes it sound rather grand and considered, but it's not." [MF]

"Oh, pure sloth, I think. Short-term interest. I drifted into it... I don't have a career path planned out, and I don't wish to be a professor." [MF]

"I went into research in a rather negative way, because I couldn't see anything I preferred to do... I didn't know what part of the real world to go into... It was the absence of a very strong pull in any other direction... It's only when you reach middle age that you think of all the paths you could have gone down." [MF]

At all stages, women had needed to be far more positively self-motivated than their male colleagues, if only to cope with lack of interest or discouragement from others.

"... the careers adviser was very hostile. He told me I was wasting my time and actually said, when I told him my Director of Studies had been encouraging, 'Well I think I'd better talk to this person.' So it was as off-putting as it could be." [WF]

"... my father only took my intellectual endeavours seriously when he saw them printed and bound. There it was, and he didn't understand what I was doing, really, so he thought, 'Well, I suppose there must be something here.'" [WF]

"I wasn't encouraged by anybody to do research. Nobody said, 'Why don't you?'" [WF]

## Career progress

Male Fellows commonly described their academic progress only in terms of personal development, although "the obvious thing to do" at each stage of intellectual enquiry simultaneously drew them further into the professional structure. Some still claim (in their forties) that they are not developing an academic career but are just doing what interests them most, or what they do best. Nonetheless, however negative in character, the choice *not* to look for some other occupation is a career-related choice, especially when appointments exist as part of a hierarchically structured profession. Several Fellows described how they only realised that they had become entangled in a career when they began to consider alternatives. As subject-interest is sufficiently motivating in the early stages this may not happen until an age when personal and financial commitments make transition to another occupation impossible.

Middle- and upper-management positions in Cambridge faculties are often reached as the result of academics concentrating on their own interests within a narrow subject framework. Greater professional rewards are earned by academic publication than by teaching and advising. This is emphasized by a sense of competition among peers:

"There's a big pressure here to publish and to be seen - there's a peer pressure because, in a sense, we are 'the chosen few'. Those who become a UTO member of the Department are under enormous pressure to publish, to be seen to be doing work..." [MF]

Visibility is crucial to academic progress - that, and audibility. Those who stand the best chance of gaining the security of a University post are those who can devote their time to publishing, and to being seen and heard.

## Occupational gender

The division between professional and domestic spheres is so deep that anybody who tries to develop an academic career simultaneously with taking the major family responsibility experiences professional frustration and high levels of stress. Functioning according to a masculine occupational gender is open to people of either sex:

"...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time..."

[Butler, 1988]

However, women have to adapt their lives more radically than men to develop a career fully in a society which still expects them to carry the major responsibility for the care of dependents (younger and older generations) with decreasing levels of state assistance. The profession expects proof through publications, lectures and attendance

at conferences of a history of continuous attention to academic research. Women and men of the Fellowship who had combined academic work with practical domestic responsibility felt their efficiency in each area had been seriously compromised. Regardless of their sex, their occupational gender - as far as the academic profession is concerned - is feminine and therefore irrelevant in academic career terms. Men testified to this:

"In the beginning I felt quite relaxed because I had just published a book and it was quite successful, so there wasn't some desperate competition to prove myself by writing something, as against bringing up children - it gave me that space... There was a five or seven year patch... and having started off feeling fairly relaxed about it all I then began to feel there were both more demands on me here...and beginning to feel, 'God! Maybe I am getting a bit behind.'" [MF]

"The major impact it's had is simply on time, and the amount that I've devoted to my own particular work... my thesis was published as a book [five years after completion] ... It was that sort of impact which was quite profound... It wasn't until [six years later] that I woke up and realized just how far behind I'd got... one lives a life in faculty and college which more or less completely ignores that other side of one... there's pressure to be up-to-date, and keep up with one's subject. That pressure and competition operate irrespective of one's domestic circumstances...the structure in which you operate doesn't change at all to accommodate that." [MF]

Although many find the regular timetables of teaching fit in with family life better than writing, it is research-based publication that earns promotion. Respondents estimated that the level of domestic help and child care that allows academics to publish while there are young children in the home cost most of a professional salary either directly, or indirectly by preventing one partner from earning at full potential. Single parents described how they had found it possible to just about maintain an academic job under these conditions, but not to develop their career.

"I'd rush back and pick up [his son] and get tea... I really didn't write anything very much during that period - just about managed the lectures. My Head of Department was very tactful." [MF]

### **Family planning *versus* career planning**

The late teens and early twenties are the stage at which students make influential decisions about academic ambitions, and self-confidence plays an important role in this. It is also the time when women find they have to take responsibility for decisions about contraception and abortion. The process often leads to a realization of the potential conflict for women of long-term career and family ambitions, with no obvious solution in the case of a conventional academic career. The effect of such a realization can be either to reduce interest in academic work, because of the anticipated conflict, or to



increase commitment. Encouragement is critical at this stage. Recent King's women graduate students described feeling that their tutors had not taken their academic ambitions seriously, and that they did not receive the same encouragement as their male contemporaries (*see 2.2.2: Students*). Women students discussed their observations of decisions and paths taken by older generations of women, indicating a comprehensive and mature appreciation of the problems of conflict between family and career development.

### **Career *versus* family**

Women and men spoke of the strain on relationships resulting from conflicts between professional and domestic interests. The areas of conflict most frequently highlighted include:

- for a woman, establishing an academic career and a family in the 25 to 35 age decade;
- absences from home to attend and address conferences;
- the regular timetables of the mundane world and the erratic phasing of creativity / research / writing;
- the changing needs of (women) partners who have developed professional ambitions of their own;
- the difficulty facing couples looking for professional employment in the same locality, especially for two academics, above all if they work in the same subject area.

The importance of these factors as career obstacles is recognized in higher education elsewhere:

"The Australian government has told universities and colleges that it will evaluate their progress towards offering equal opportunities to female students and staff. All institutions are required by law to appoint equal opportunities officers. Senior staff in Australian universities are emphatic... that all academic appointments will be made on merit - but that by provision of child care, parental leave, training, mentors, clearer definition of appointment criteria and encouraging women to apply, there will be structural change to give women an equal chance."

[Gold, in *New Scientist*, April 1990]

In Cambridge the severe shortage of childcare facilities and the cost of those that are available prevent some of those women who could work from doing so. The situation also means that women who become pregnant while they are studying may not be able to complete their courses. The University has no part-time academic posts because statutes - dictating that a post is a full-time post or not at all - have not been changed to

reflect changing social patterns, and there are no family-related leave schemes. Women who are able to plan their families accurately have timed the births of their children by careful juggling of sabbatical leave and vacations - time otherwise available for the research that underpins qualification for promotion.

The pressure of laboratory work was mentioned by respondents as causing particularly sharp conflicts with domestic life, for both women and men:

"... the only way you can be an experimental [scientist] is to spend very long hours in the lab... it's just Sod's Law that the time that you've got to be in the lab all hours of the day and night is also the time for being with your children."  
[WF]

[About women in science] "... you do your PhD, then you have to do a post-doctoral, and that's about three years after PhD... If you don't make it then, you've had it, because that's where you're tested for tenure. Then another five years, and that brings you up to thirty-four. It becomes impossible for [women] to raise a family and do all this... It makes it very very hard for women to be anything else but men in this situation... That is, they just have to forget about everything else... [To improve the situation] would mean doing science in a *very* different way... You'd have to change the pace of the twenty-five to thirty-five decade into your thirty-five to forty-five decade" [MF]

In the case of academic women, the advantage of partnership / marriage with a man several years older than themselves was underlined by respondents of each sex. A woman academic at a women's college observed that it was no coincidence that "so many of us in this room are not first wives," and several King's Fellows made similar points in interview.

"... we're at different stages... I'm in my middle career while she's still in the early phase of it... We started off with me having got past all those insecurities about, 'Am I going to make it?'... I might be able to understand that bit better than I otherwise would do the sort of pressures on [his wife] - a young academic - the sort of insecurities that at the time you may misinterpret... But I can sympathize and do something to help." [MF]

"He was well established as an academic when I met him. That has made *so* much difference." [WF]

"I am now truly middle aged, and established, and I've got to be thinking about the quality of my life as well as the quality of my career... I want to be able to go out with the family at weekends, not be stuck in the lab." [MF]

### **Stereotypes and atypical behaviour**

Women academics are caught in a paradox which restricts the effective use they can make of the professional qualifications they do gain. In theory the closer academics conform to an ideal professional stereotype the better chance they have of professional advancement, but the model is characterized by :

- distance from domestic concerns ("You can't be in the lab watching an experiment and in the kitchen getting supper at the same time." [MF]);
- the separation of intellectual and emotional life ("... women aren't *objective* about their work." [MF]);
- the separation of emotional life and sexual activity ("Women get so much more *involved* in a relationship than men." [MF]).

Even in women's colleges the indications are that the masculine model of academic professionalism is the validated model. Researchers collecting relevant preliminary data from women's colleges in Oxford and Cambridge have found that, "... the same comment comes up time and time again: 'You've got to pretend to be a man.'" (*Private communication*). Women who imitate the masculine professional stereotype in male-dominated environments make their colleagues uneasy. Such a community may well come to terms with that unease by marginalizing the individual to a lesser or greater extent. Women's concentration on research and publication, therefore, will not necessarily earn them the same promotional opportunities that it does their male colleagues. There is a basic attitudinal dilemma: as women they are expected to conform to a feminine (domestic / nurturing) model, not to a masculine (academic / competitive) one; but promotion is associated with the conventional academic (masculine / competitive) model. No professional allowance is made for functioning according to the popular stereotype of womanhood, which includes motherhood. Disclaiming one model and imitating the other is not enough. The profession is structured in such a way that the only kind of parenthood that does not conflict with it is a traditional and frequently disrupted fatherhood, or a well subsidized motherhood bolstered by domestic help and additional child-care.

For a discussion of aspects of gender and academic subject directly relevant to the wider background of this report Kim Thomas's *Gender and Subject in Higher Education*, published as this report was being written, is recommended.

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## 1.2 INSTITUTIONAL OBSTACLES

### Cambridge University and career / family conflict

There are institutional aspects of Cambridge that make employment especially problematic for academic women. Over three-quarters of women are employed in short, fixed-term appointments, compared with 39% of men; women represent 31% of contract researchers, and hold 7.1% of tenured posts (*Whitehead, CUWAG Report, 1988*). Many of the women constitute "a huge helot class of women teaching for the

colleges" [WF]. This is one of the most obvious differences between Cambridge and Oxford, where University tenure is linked to college teaching posts. As in other areas of women's employment, Cambridge provides the maximum flexibility with minimum commitment for the employer, coupled with minimum protection for the employee. Opportunities for promotion are non-existent in many posts, and people holding them seldom become members of influential academic bodies. Decision-making takes place predominantly among those with the security of protected, pensioned employment - beyond the reach of most women in Cambridge. (The fact that fellows of colleges are technically *members* and not *employees* of their colleges does not undermine the employee status of those who have no University post: if the college pays the fellow's National Insurance contribution the college is the fellow's employer, for the purposes of equal opportunities legislation.)

Employment-related factors affecting parents with practical responsibility for children include:

- lack of assistance with the practicalities or costs of childcare;
- lack of part-time academic posts;
- academic and administrative meetings in the late afternoon, evening, and at the weekend;
- age restrictions, affecting access to funding or to posts for those whose careers have been delayed or interrupted.

The ideal candidate for a post in the University is defined, *de facto*, as somebody without major responsibility for the practical aspects of family care. There is not yet any University provision for, or help with, childcare. Women's difficulties in returning to employment with the University once they have children has led to moves to establish a 50-place nursery, with the needs of Assistant Staff particularly in mind. Some of the colleges have been involved in initiatives such as the Joint Colleges Nursery. (This is now a victim of its own success, and the cost of places is beyond the reach of many of the parents who need them most, single parents especially.) Such nurseries as there are have waiting lists longer than the period of human gestation - twice as long, in some cases. It is not only new appointees who have no chance of entering their children; even people who have worked in the University for years cannot be sure that there will be places for their children. The cost of childcare of any kind means that undergraduates who become pregnant are likely to be faced with the choice of having a degree or having the baby. It is not uncommon for them to reason that the chances of having a baby at another time are greater than the chances of having a

second opportunity to do a degree, and to choose to abort the foetus rather than the course. Graduate women feel even closer to the conflict.

Many parents would prefer not to put their children into creches or nurseries for long periods at a very early age, yet do not have sufficient income to employ a nanny. At Cambridge there is little option for women academics except to return to full-time work as quickly as possible, if they do not want their careers to suffer. Some would prefer to return to fully-protected part-time work (not sacrificing employment rights and pension payments), but the University does not make such work available at academic grades. Women who have, by choice or of necessity, taken time out of their careers for family care are trebly penalized: loss of earnings while they are not working, loss of potential status by taking time out, and loss of opportunity when they are over-age for appointments controlled by age-barriers.

In the past all students and academics at Cambridge were men, and parenthood did not of itself prevent them from working. There have been women studying and teaching in Cambridge for several generations, but the statutes controlling employment have not been changed.

"We believe that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge should investigate urgently the ways in which their practices put women at a disadvantage; and that in the absence of such investigations, women's under-representation in each of these universities is worthy of attention by the Equal Opportunities Commission."

[Hansard, 1990. p.68]

The Hansard Commission's table of *Strategies for Change* is included as *Appendix 6*. It is based on an industrial model, but serves well enough for educational institutions in the role of employer.

### **Exemplar: UCL**

By contrast University College London (UCL), which has three times the national average number of women professors (9% against 3%), was cited in the Hansard Report as an example of what might be achieved. The former Provost of UCL, Sir James Lighthill, put this down to a "simple refusal to be blinkered by traditional preconceptions and misconceptions". To help identify the relevant preconceptions and misconceptions, and to find out why the attempts of King's had been less successful than those at UCL, Sir James was interviewed for this project. He described a positive corporate will on appointment committees to increase the participation of women at senior levels, and spoke with pride of having chaired three committees which appointed women who were pregnant at the time of appointment. Further enquiry made it clear that success was due not only to a "simple refusal to be

blinkered" but that lack of prejudice was supported rather than sabotaged by institutional factors, both cultural and structural. This results in the appointment of women at UCL being a great deal less problematic both for the women and for the College than is the case at Cambridge.

The history of UCL is very different from that of Cambridge. It has been genuinely mixed (in that men and women have been taught together) for over a century, and in 1878 women already represented 25% of the student body. It has had "a firm policy on equal promotion opportunities" for over a decade, which succeeded in raising the percentage of women in the Reader / Senior Lecturer grade to 24% by 1983.

### *Policies and practices*

- Women are appointed when they are the best candidates: UCL does not have a policy of positive discrimination. Applications from able women are forthcoming, probably because UCL positively helps parents to be working members of the College in every category.

- Maternity leave is more than the statutory minimum.

- UCL provides rent-free premises for a College creche. Creche fees paid by academics are not subsidized. The fees for students' children are subsidized indirectly by those paid by academics. The creche is small, but its existence is an important signal of an institutional attitude to the involvement of women with children in higher education.

- As a way of absorbing financial cuts without losing posts altogether UCL has converted some posts from full-time to part-time, accommodating women academics who have had children while in post. Sir James emphasized the importance of such part-time work having fully protected status, so that such moves function as opportunities to retain experienced academics in post. UCL's practice is to give such people letters of guarantee that their tenured position is maintained, despite working part-time.

- UCL has a Schools Liaison Officer whose responsibility is the arranging and coordinating of visits to schools by lecturers. It is policy for such visits to highlight the success of women as junior and senior members at UCL, and to encourage women to apply, especially in subjects where they are under-represented, such as mathematics, science and engineering.

### ***Academic Women's Achievement Group***

The College is also the base for the energetic *Academic Women's Achievement Group* whose membership includes women in academic and academic-related posts. It meets twice a term, usually with guest speakers,

"... to gather facts (e.g. on distribution and the professions, the problems, of non-tenured staff, the role of women on official bodies, on nursery facilities and on equal opportunities in general), to keep up with current events affecting women in higher education, and, above all, to draw the results of these activities to the attention of people who make decisions."

Steinberg, *UCL News*, 1989

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## **1.3 TEACHING, LEARNING, AND RESEARCH**

### **Relevance**

This section does not appear under a 'King's' heading because more than three-quarters of the people involved in teaching for the College are not members of King's (see below). The category of 'non-King's supervisors' includes fellows and graduate students of other colleges, members of faculties who may not be members of any college, and people who have no-status in any college, faculty, or department in the University. This last sub-category includes the "vast army of people's wives" [sic] described by a male academic. It represents the means by which many otherwise unemployed graduate women, including those formerly in academic posts, retain some involvement with academic work.

Supervisors for King's in 1988 - 89 consisted of:

King's graduate students	=	7.6%
King's Fellows	=	14.6%
Non-King's supervisors	=	77.8%

These figures do not show the number of hours of supervision, or the number of students supervised by each supervisor, so they do not indicate the proportion of total supervision done by each category. But they do show the extent to which teaching - even in a college with a large fellowship - involves the work of non-members. They indicate something of the nature of the problem facing a college that wishes to improve the teaching it provides for its students. People who teach in King's are more likely than not also teaching for other colleges, faculties or departments. The experiences

described by respondents relate to teaching in the University at large, not just in King's (see also 1.4.2: *Sexism in supervision*).

### **Teaching versus research**

Success in research is a prerequisite for opportunities to teach in higher education and is usually the main criterion. Even somebody appointed to a teaching post is expected to have done good research, to be involved in continuing research, and to have a history of publication. Evidence of training in the professional skills of teaching - which shift the focus from the academic subject to the student - is seldom, if ever, actually required. This is reflected in Cambridge in the arrogance with which the University's Department of Education is often regarded by members of other sectors of the University, but above all in the way that research students pay for the privilege of researching while nobody is paid a specific fee for the privilege of teaching them.

### **Education versus training**

Some student respondents felt that the teaching they receive as undergraduates is simply "training for Tripos" and is in conflict with the interests of education:

"... unfortunately this place... isn't about education. It's about training to answer Tripos questions, so there isn't time to go into any greater depth or read around a subject... Unless you can sort out the problems for yourself and make time for bouncing ideas around there's a great loss." [UG2M]

Both female and male students complained about forms of teaching concentrating on fact-based instruction, especially in mathematics, the sciences and engineering. Some Fellows saw this as unavoidable in subjects with a high content base, but students felt that opportunities for more personal involvement in the subjects (not to be confused with personal involvement with the student), and in the learning process, are commonly ignored.

"We have supervisors who have great difficulty even saying 'Hello' to you when they pass you in the street." [UG3M]

Complaints from women students about sexism in supervision was associated most often with science subjects (see 1.4.2 *Women and science*).

### **Competition versus collaboration**

The theme of peer-competition recurred throughout the interviews. Gender stereotyping associates competitive behaviour with masculinity and cooperative behaviour with femininity, ignoring - as stereotyping so often does - the fact that some of men's greatest achievements have been the result of extended teamwork, and that women are capable of being fiercely competitive on behalf of, or through the



achievements of, their children. During this research women and men, senior and junior, described competitiveness as a particular feature of the behaviour of male students:

"... this incredibly intense environment where competition is almost the only feature of behaviour [in the learning group]... [Male students] very often make comments that are destructive, that prevent other people from speaking. They very often attempt to present themselves as having knowledge that they don't have, in not very sophisticated ways such as naming books and authors that they haven't actually read, but they know that other people will know enough to recognize as, 'I should have read that'... Very often people will shout over other people - especially women. They will not allow women to speak." [MF]

Discussion of supervision experience with students and supervisors from several colleges indicates the role of the supervisor in setting the tone for the supervision discussion. If the initial input sets up an overt or implied challenge, it strongly influences the nature of the response. Several Fellows discussed competitiveness it as an integral part of the Cambridge academic environment.

"If I have an idea I look around for people I can do it *with*, because I just like working that way. It's very difficult in Cambridge, because they really frown on that sort of thing. There is a big prejudice - going for jobs and things: the thing that I get time after time is, 'Well, how much of this work *did you do*? Can you point to the bit you're responsible for?'...It's not a meaningful question as far as I'm concerned. But for the Cambridge people it is a Big Thing...that working with someone implies that you're not good enough to have done it yourself." [MF]

"[At another British university] they were more collective. They helped each other a great deal. It was an object lesson in cooperation, which I'd never had before. People - the whole time - would be showing each other their work, and asking for comments on it... [In Cambridge] it's almost an inserting of a competitive element in the process, so that showing someone else your work can actually damage your own chances... It's not helped by the ethos, which I think is very individualistic and competitive..." [MF]

An environment of individualistic competition results in an emphasis on differences of people's status (marked by their possession of varying degrees of validated knowledge) and an inhibition of presenting work with anything less than a highly-polished finish:

"... there's a sort of teaching paradigm: you teach [the subject], which means teaching theories whilst saying that these theories don't really work. But you teach them as the history of the discipline, you don't cooperate with the people. There is a teacher / student frame, and that's the context in which ideas can be transmitted... When we called a seminar 'Work in Progress Seminar' most of the staff didn't turn up at the first session because they said, 'It's work-in-progress stuff. We'll come and join in when the stuff is finished.'" [MF]

The importance of competing successfully on behalf of a group was underlined by senior academics, in the context of winning grants to fund research.

### 'The Cambridge Style'

Both senior and junior members in interview used the phrase 'The Cambridge Style' spontaneously when asked to identify any specific features of the working environment or culture that might cause difficulties for women. Requests for a definition drew descriptions which varied from a minimal "classic Socratic dialogue" [MF] to accounts of something sounding more like the Spanish Inquisition. This is not to say that there is not also supportive and encouraging teaching taking place, but such teaching would not be identified by respondents as representing a difficulty. The following definition was by a Fellow who had himself been exposed to the process as a student:

"There is a whole traditional ethos (at least I think there's a traditional ethos) which is the student coming in with an essay... and you say, 'What's wrong with the essay is the following eighty-four things. Now let's take it from there and see where we can go.' Which for an intellectually robust person is extremely stimulating but it's quite clearly wrong for lots of people... For me the Cambridge Style is a commitment to critical argumentation and following points through to the end... I'm giving it a positive gloss." [MF]

The description of the technique as being in the tradition of Socratic dialogue recalls a common ancestry with the traditions of rhetorical address and is an indication of the continuing influence of a 'classical education' at Cambridge (*see also 2.1: King's : the culture*).

"With its agonistic heritage, rhetorical teaching assumed that the aim of more or less all discourse was to prove or disprove a point, against some opposition... for the orator speaks in the face of at least implied adversaries. Oratory has deep agonistic roots... The development of the vast rhetorical tradition was distinctive of the West and was related, whether as cause or effect or both, to the tendency among the Greeks and their cultural epigoni to maximize oppositions, in the mental as in the extramental world..."

[Ong, 1982, pp.110-111]

Respondents - Fellows as well as students - used words such as "confrontation", "challenge", "attack", "shredding", "slamming", "stamping", "tough", "vicious" to describe the process as experienced at Cambridge. Desirable qualities in students were identified by Fellows as "robustness", "self-confidence", "resilience", "toughness" and "a healthy degree of cockyness".

"I had a supervisor... that I asked to swap because I thought I was either going to shout at him or burst into tears. He was very, very sharp with me, and whenever I'd done anything wrong in a question he'd say, 'Well that was the most stupid thing to do in the world! How could you *possibly* have ever thought that that would get you the answer?' And in fact when he'd gone through the explanation I'd find that I was more or less on the right tracks, but I'd made a silly mistake. All he had to say was, 'That was a silly mistake, but you were getting there.' But he didn't. I was being supervised with a bloke

then, and they got on really well - they were very jokey together, and I felt really uncomfortable. [UG3W]

One Fellow described the system in terms of one which preselects and prepares people for roles in national government, a task which Cambridge has fulfilled successfully for generations. At the time of writing, 41% of Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet are Cambridge graduates.

"The way that people do teach here is extremely tough... there's no leeway given for you as a person...this slamming in on you and saying, 'This is a load of rubbish'... It's a vicious technique... [but] people have got this amazing ability at the end of three years, to put together what the important points of something are, which they use for the rest of their lives... Having to produce a piece of work which you are going to have criticized regularly... then you've got appear in front of somebody else and argue your case - on your feet - about why you said that. And then get into the wider discussion of what you put in and left out, and what other people thought was good and bad... [In] the Civil Service where you constantly have to produce reports - they've just got it at their fingertips... They have a tremendous advantage, people who've been taught that." [WF]

The advantages of this system over other forms of teaching were identified by Fellows as the concentrated attention of an expert academic and an opportunity to question authority under guidance. This latter point was not made by any of the student respondents, who more often described supervisions as exposure to interrogation followed by mini-lectures. One male Fellow recalled his initial concern about the effect of the technique on women students:

"The way I teach is governed almost entirely by the way I was taught, which was always by men. I sometimes get nervous that the very way in which I'm teaching is something that's so governed by my own environment that I'm not aware that I'm affecting women in ways that I don't want... The first time I supervised a woman I was very nervous that the criticism - I mean, often one is quite hard in supervisions. You say, 'This answer is *wrong*, it's absolutely *stupid*, ' and I was nervous about how the woman would react if I started doing that. It took me some time to stop feeling that I had consciously to treat women differently." [MF]

Another described what he saw as an advantage of the technique, although he acknowledged the risk:

" I can actually get one person in here and say, 'When you said that, the implications are the following. And what it means for you as a person as well are [the following].' You can actually do that in a way you can't in a lecture, and you can't do that in a seminar... that's the value in it for me. It's also the danger... it's sometimes important for the sake of argument... to take things to a position that one wouldn't necessarily oneself agree with, but as an actual process it seems to me that...what one's trying to do is to introduce self-criticism into other areas of life as well." [MF]

The problem about the style of teaching described above is its destructive effect on those students in more urgent need of having their self-confidence encouraged than of having self-criticism induced. Both men and women fall into this category, but a higher proportion of the women than the men.

Two senior men in interview referred to "fragile male egos" in the University, and although women did not use the phrase they did describe the symptoms. For many of them the phenomenon complicates the problem of authority in the faculties. An older man may resist a challenge from a younger man, yet identify with the challenger sufficiently to see in him the continuity of ideas. He may knock him around a bit to toughen him up but also be prepared to act as mentor to make sure he survives. That same academic may find a similar level of empathy impossible when the challenge comes from a young woman.

### Mentors

Academics in the role of mentor can exert an especially powerful influence. This is an area in which the shortage of senior women represents a very real disadvantage in the development of women's academic careers, for students learn more than academic information from a supervisor acting as mentor.

"You take a lot of your cues from that one supervisor. That person doesn't just tell you about your subject. It's probably more important that they tell you how to be an academic... I want to know how the system works, and how you work within that system." [PGM]

Some felt that it was important for graduate student and supervisor / mentor to be of the same sex, but others implied that a continuum of gender was just as desirable, to allow for a sufficient degree of identification to take place.

Development of strategies for equal opportunities in some universities and colleges in Australia has led to the development of much more conscious systems of 'mentoring'.

"Australian educationalists coined the word 'mentorship' to describe a process of positive sponsorship by older patrons - teachers, managers, trainers. Mentors recommend their proteges for awards and scholarships, advise and encourage them, discuss new work in their fields, and enhance their visibility through joint papers or seminars."

[Gold, in *New Scientist*, 1990]

The relationship calls for generosity and tact on the part of the mentor. It is one in which the balance has constantly to be adjusted to allow for the student's growth and development, otherwise it can shade into a kind of intellectual and psychological domination which might last for years, especially between a woman student and a male academic. This was described by several of the women Fellows as an aspect of

relationships with male mentors. They acknowledged that they had learned a great deal in the process, but some also felt that it had taken them years to extricate themselves from a powerful influence. It was not clear how much, if at all, they had actually wanted to throw off the influence before they finally did so. Two women who described this also spoke of a difficulty in "finding my own voice" in writing, describing it as an aspect of their own academic development.

Mentor relationships which become sexual relationships put the student in an especially vulnerable position professionally (*see 2.2.3: Harassment - sexual and otherwise*).

### Research councils

Several Fellows described the role of the British Academy and research councils, as controllers of funds, as very influential in deciding who has an opportunity to do research and therefore to develop an academic career. Researchers described a difference between qualities that gain a First Class honours degree, and those necessary for research (*see also 1.1: Academic careers*).

"Rather like entrance to university's got all Totting-up-A-Levels-bound, so entrance to research is too much The-People-Who-Get-The-Firsts. Time and again you hear [academics] saying, 'But they wouldn't be any good at research. They're high-fliers; they're very quick; they absorb information very fast; but they wouldn't have the patience or the interest or the persistence to do it.' So in a way the system is preventing some of the people who would be the better researchers from getting into it by saying, 'You have to have a First...' Some of the people with Firsts, of course, have got all of that. But some of them haven't." [WF]

The influence of age-related conditions attached to grants from research councils causes indirect discrimination against people whose careers have been delayed or interrupted. This makes particular difficulties for people trying to construct and maintain a research team in the sciences.

"The research councils don't like appointing people who are too old. They say, 'Here's the grant for three years. This is how much salary is involved.' Now if you're going to appoint somebody over twenty-seven (because that's the cut-off point) you'll get so many what they call man-months reduced: they'll say, 'Here's thirty-six months of a salary of someone who's twenty-four years old. If somebody's older and you have to pay them more, then the time's reduced'... It's my decision to say, 'Well I've got a more experienced Post Doc. who might be able to work faster.' Also I have a responsibility to these people because they might have been in the lab three or four years already, and I can't just throw them out - especially if they're married... Someone should challenge the research councils... like the New Blood thing. It's an ageism problem. The research councils definitely have the responsibility, because they control all post doctoral work in the country.

[Q] CAN THE UNIVERSITY DO ANYTHING TO HELP WITH THAT?

... I don't think they have any power at all. The CVCP is an august body. If they really thought about this problem and saw the implications of it carefully, I'm sure they could do something about it...in educating the research councils. Because often it's just changing hats, for some of these people - they're on all the advisory bodies for the research councils... They're all senior academics anyway in the research councils, so they'll know the problem." [MF]

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#### 1.4 WOMEN AND CAMBRIDGE

"Women encounter explicit discrimination and chauvinism at all university levels, from students and academic staff. On a more subtle level, the absence of female lecturers and tutors in many faculties creates the assumption for both male and female undergraduates that this is natural and expected, thus reinforcing the views which perpetuate female under-representation on high academic levels."

[CUSU, 1990. p.15]

##### Women in a mixed college

Part of the initiative to set up the research project in King's came from Fellows who saw the pattern of a declining percentage of women graduate students (*see 2.2: Where are the women in King's?*), and a proportion of women students steadily losing confidence and suffering for much of their time at Cambridge in a state sufficiently depressed to prevent them from realizing their potential. Women who recognize that the source of the problem is in the environment rather than in themselves, but who feel they can do nothing about it, find their own frustration and anger increasingly difficult to endure. Their self-confidence dwindles in a downward spiral as they see that of their male contemporaries apparently increasing. The realization that men's confidence is boosted by a masculine environment, and is not necessarily the result of greater intellectual ability, often only serves to increase resentment and frustration.

"Achievement for women is not determined solely by discrimination or lack of opportunity, nor by their reversal. Deterrents to female achievement can emerge from developmental and intrapsychic elements, interwoven with socialization and its internalization."

[Kreuger, 1984]

Despite differences of generation and background, women students and Fellows talked in interview of a common problem, especially acute for those in male-dominated subjects. They described the way that men in the University assess them according to their sex before all else. It is a qualitative, not a quantitative, assessment. Not, 'How sexy is this person?' but, 'This person is not a man *therefore* ...'

"... the men are much more interested in us as *women* or *people* than as *intellect*, and therefore they can't believe that here's somebody who's rather more interested in talking about politics or the state of their own research."  
[WF]

This kind of assessment affects women's sense of their own identity, and maintains their position as members of a cultural minority in Cambridge. Attitudes to identity are also expressed through academic subjects. Whether a text is considered as the work of a writer, or a 'women' or 'black' writer, depends on the cultural definition of a writer. If courses studying literature written from a white, male perspective are not identified specifically as such, it underlines the idea that white men are the cultural norm.

The consequence of a sex-based assessment is only problematic for women when it conflicts with more desirable bases of appraisal, and Cambridge provides several fields for such conflict.

### Role models

The few female professors and heads of houses at Cambridge are cited - by women as well as men - as an indication that the mere fact of being female is not a barrier in itself. These examples form the basis of argument for those who claim that any obstacles to women's academic careers are created by women themselves. Such argument is specious and the result of selective vision. In assessing opportunities for women's progress in the academic profession what needs to be registered is not simply the sex of senior academics, but *the gender of their occupational lives* - professional and private. Most of the women who have reached the upper echelons of the profession by an exclusively academic route have been able to bolster parenthood with a level of domestic help only available to high-income households, or with an uncommon degree of help from their partners in day-to-day family care, or they are childless.

"There is more difference in terms of opportunity between a single woman and a married woman than there is between a single woman and a man."

[Nancy Seear, in Holdsworth, 1987]

People function most powerfully as role models not through what they do but through what they are. They provide an example not so much of somebody *doing* but of somebody *being* : having life more abundantly where they are not prevented by institutional forces from being honest about the kinds of people they are.

#### 1.4.1 WOMEN'S INTEGRITY AS WOMEN

##### Clever or female?

"Women are taught from childhood that they should not excel; proficiency is sufficient...success and womanhood are felt to be orthogonal axes. As Margaret Mead put it in 1950, 'success is unsexing'. To choose success, is to lose some essential ingredient of femininity."

[Breakwell, 1985. pp.58-9]

Women spoke of having had to come to terms with the polarization of choices between being clever *or* being female that they felt they had been offered as girls. Women Fellows spoke of the isolating effects of being labelled as 'clever' at school, and of the refusal of male contemporaries and colleagues to cooperate with a 'bright' woman, especially at student or post doctoral level. (See also *Thomas, 1990*, for a discussion of this).

The manpower needs of the British Empire and two world wars affected the career orientation of two or three generations of middle-class women. Social attitudes to those who chose to remain single and pursue a career were less critical than for earlier and for later generations, when women were subjected to propaganda to keep them in the home. Some who chose to enter predominantly male professions came to terms themselves with the cross-gender conflict of work and sex not only by remaining single but also by adopting a masculine style. Ultimately, as far as pupils' perceptions are concerned, the gender choice of a teacher is as important as his or her sex (*See also below: Ambitions and imposture, and 2.2.3: Role models*). Many women look not only at the professional success of putative role models, but also examine the personal cost. For women to have been taught by women at school is positive, unless those teachers are seen as having paid for their career by giving up the option of marrying and having a family. This can simply reinforce the sense of cross-gender conflict: that being female means marrying and having a family, but being clever means staying single and having a career:

"There is the phenomenon of the 1940s and '50s woman spinster who made it, who didn't have a family and so on, and several of the prominent women in our profession have been like that. I do remember people saying to me, 'Well that's a very good model to follow, why don't you be like old so-and-so?' (and they always called them 'old' so-and-so)... And you say, 'Well haven't you noticed: no husband, no children - what kind of life is that?' And they say, 'Oh *that* doesn't matter!' But in fact none of them are prepared to have that kind of life." [WF]

"The generation in Newnham... of Fellows whom I knew when I was first here... were an extraordinary group of women... quite a lot of them weren't married, and had made a decision that you can't be an academic and married... there was a real sense of that. Whereas this generation is trying to do it all..." [WF]



Women respondents who had spent several years abroad saw the problem as a feature of an Anglo-Saxon culture, aggravated in Britain by other social attitudes:

"... by having been abroad so long I hadn't realized that I function in a different way from women who've been brow-beaten by various aspects of British class, sex - and the rest of it: society ." [WF]

" ... in childhood [mostly spent out of Britain] it never occurred to me to distinguish between prettiness and cleverness - sexiness and cleverness." [WF]

Others felt it to be an especially marked feature of the behaviour of men and women in Cambridge:

" ... it's as though that is the one thing you should never remind them of... the unspoken imperative here is not to draw attention to your sexuality and to your femaleness... But why should I not be the person I want to be?... I don't understand why - what's going on.... But occasionally I think, 'What the hell!' And the men notice it... and they quite like it. But then, *are you really an academic if you've got lipstick on?! ...* I thought things were changing, but looking around at the women in Cambridge I think a lot have chosen to censor something - and have been rewarded for that." [WF]

Some members of the University Counselling Service see a connection between the *clever or female* dilemma and eating disorders. A serious degree of anorexia in women causes the cessation of the incontrovertible sign of femaleness, menstruation.

### Dissembling

"... if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief."

[Butler, 1988. *Original italics.*]

The data collected during fieldwork in Cambridge, especially those provided by women, contain spontaneously recurring images of masking, disguise, puppetry and ventriloquism in descriptions of academic conventions of oral and written performance. Some women felt this to be antagonistic to their aim of working with integrity as women. At a meeting of women from different colleges people discussed what was perceived as a need to learn to "manipulate masks" in the University, and an academic commented, "The danger of using a mask is that eventually it becomes reality". The use of the masking image is an important indicator. In cultures, including our own, where physical masks are used other than for merely decorative purposes they are personified, the persona of the mask being substituted for that of the wearer. The possibility of the wearer becoming distressed by a psychological confusion between self and mask is recognized (Johnstone, 1979. pp 192-200).

A greater proportion of men than women seem to have developed a performance style to disguise their shortcomings by the time they are undergraduates, without distress:

"They've been taught to give the illusion of being able to think, and they actually can't. It's not that they've been taught to think as well as they can: they just know how to trundle out the answers in a rather self-confident way... you realize that actually they're talking absolute nonsense, and they haven't thought at all. But they manage to make it look like they're doing rational thinking... it's the Public School Confidence Trick. People really do get taught to do it, and they do it very well. It just doesn't happen to be correlated in any way with ability." [MF]

"There is a certain kind of self-confidence which is particularly visible in a place like this which in one sense is pleasant theatre, but bears no relation to what people are capable of thinking at all." [MF].

Discussions during post mortems on interviews for undergraduate admissions showed that Fellows in King's make a clear distinction between candidates who are very able and those who are very well taught, recognising the role of overt self-confidence. Nonetheless, women students and younger women Fellows complained of the inhibiting effects on them of such behaviour on the part of their male colleagues:

[A] "I found the male students were a lot more cocky - tended to pretend that they knew things if they didn't, more than the women. Were more likely to do you down, as well. I didn't know how to cope with it at the time. I didn't react in a positive way and say, 'That's stupid'. I thought, 'Well maybe I am a bit dim, and maybe I didn't really understand that and everybody else does'. Nobody prepares you for that ...

[Q] HOW DID YOU COPE WITH IT?

[A] I just kept quiet. My exam results just surprised me every time ...

[B]... although there were more women than men [doing the subject] the men were more audible. I did assume that they really were cleverer and really did know more... Even now, because they're more audible and can express themselves better in public, they can basically make you shut up.

[C] I always think of men as more articulate, as well, yet I'm sure they're not." [PGW]

"I feel the College doesn't value my integrity... the sort of honesty, and willingness to commit oneself - quite stoically, really expose oneself on behalf of the College almost - is not valued at all... I see more and more people who are... just bluffing their way through. It's just their manner, it's their confidence. There's no substance to it whatsoever.

[Q] WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE?

Well, mostly male academics who look very impressive. But when you go away and think about it you realize there's no content to what they've said at

all. It's just a sort of brilliant style, a confident manner. And I start thinking that I don't have this brilliant style, but if I work at something and I get the content right - you know?" [WF]

"... the pressure is to be interesting, witty, confident, lively, sexy, all the time. And especially the 'witty, interesting' bit. It's not really my temperament. It's not really my character, and I don't know how much that's got to do with being a woman and how much is me... That is the very basic thing that makes me feel that I just do not belong here... Of course it partly attracts me, because if you're in something you want to be in it. But I know that I'm not in that - I operate very much on the periphery of that." [WF]

### **'Fear of success' and fail-safe strategies**

Some women also felt the need to remain wary of recognizing their own achievements, ascribing it to anxiety about becoming complacent. Complacency was a quality identified by Fellows of both sexes as a feature of life at Cambridge among older tenured academics.

"I undervalue myself all the time, I know that. But... what's so difficult is to break out of that and see what it is you are, and I find that very difficult to do... If you discover that you're good at something that's complex...or difficult you don't think of it as 'being able'... I'm scared about complacency... there is a kind of fear that prevents you from really looking at [what you do] and saying, 'Well O.K., I can really do that'. [WF]

Without further detailed research it is difficult to tell whether something straightforward, such as concern about complacency, is the only reason, or whether the refusal to recognize success represents a fear of the demands of ability and success - or, as a senior woman from another college described it, of not being able to meet the expectations that result from public recognition and success.

"A fear of success - recoiling from that which one is constantly striving for and values - seems paradoxical. It may be difficult to comprehend the fear of achieving what has long been desired. Nonetheless, this fear is quite prevalent among contemporary women."

[Kreuger, 1984]

This reluctance to acknowledge personal achievements, sometimes in the face of quite overwhelming proof, reduces the potential of success as a reinforcement for self-confidence. It was most in evidence among those doing graduate and post-doctoral work, some of whom recognized in retrospect that they had become very involved in welfare work as undergraduates as a psychological fail-safe:

"I built it in, so that if my Tripos results were awful I'd have a really good excuse - an *acceptable* excuse." [PGW]

## Ambitions and imposture

It is difficult to tell how much the attitudinal difference between younger and older women in King's is an aspect of age and how much an aspect of generation, but there is nothing to indicate that they are different from their contemporaries in British universities elsewhere in this respect. Most of the established women in King's explained their professional position in terms of their having been "very, very lucky".

It is not uncommon for women wanting to move up the promotional structure of male-dominated professions to suffer from the symptom of cross-gender stress known as the *impostor complex*. Younger women often try to distance themselves from the problems inherent in professional ambition by trying to convince themselves that the institution admitted or appointed them by mistake:

"I think actually that I don't really think that I ought to be here! Or at least it goes in phases. Sometimes I do. Sometimes I think, 'I'm O.K., I can do this,' but quite a lot of the time I think, 'One day they're going to wake up and realize what they've done!' " [WF]

"...I love the way you [the researcher] say, 'You must be quite bright to be here', because there are still days when I think that I'm going to be found out at some stage...that I shouldn't be here!" [WF]

Attempts to rationalize this feeling centre on an argument of the kind: *I feel as if I don't belong here. Cambridge is for clever people. If I were clever I would feel at home here. I don't feel at home here therefore I am not clever enough to be here.* This is the kind of self-thwarting referred to by the respondent who said:

"... there's a sort of sense of - being really pissed off with it all, and annoyed by the blocks that I can see within *me*, more than the blocks that I see around me, really. Annoyed with myself for being conned, I suppose, for so long... And the sense, really, that I'm not going to take this any more.

[Q] NOT TAKE IT FROM WHOM? DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE NOT GOING TO TAKE IT *FROM YOURSELF* ANY MORE?

Yes! Yes." [WF]

## Women, class and Cambridge

American research into the 'fear of success' phenomenon indicates that it may be correlated with the socio-economic class from which a woman comes.

"The achievement of girls of low socio-economic status seem to be less affected by 'fear of success'... than in the case of middle and upper-middle class girls. Thus, in Horner's study, 78 per cent of the 59 girls who scored high on 'fear of success' came from middle and upper-middle class homes and had predominantly successful business or professional fathers, while two thirds of the thirty-one subjects who scored low came from lower-middle and working-class homes [Horner, 1972]. A replication of Horner's study, with a high

proportion of women from lower-middle class families, reported a lower percentage of women responding with fear of success stories - 48 per cent instead of 65 per cent in Horner's original study [Robbins & Robbins, 1973]. It is possible that women from less privileged backgrounds, who may well be the first in their families to go to college, are highly selected in that they are especially talented and determined. They would thus be highly motivated to succeed... Intelligence or scholastic ability have not been controlled for in these studies... "

[Safilios-Rothschild in OECD, 1986.]

It is above all the middle classes that prevail in Cambridge. The list of occupations of Fellows' parents (*see Appendix 4: Questionnaire analysis*) shows a sprinkling of manual occupations, but by and large it was professional and commercial employment, often at management level, that funded their childhood and part or all of their schooling. Middle-class expectations helped to shape their aspirations and ambitions. For many of the men this set them on a route that ran with scarcely a hiccup through student life at Cambridge and Oxford, to an eventual Cambridge University post and a Fellowship at King's. The evidence is that, from graduation onwards, many of the women had to fight against discouragement - internal as well as external - and although they have made the Fellowship, a University post is still little more than a hope. Whether the quality or the pedigree of academic degrees has more influence on the chances of gaining a University post or a Fellowship at King's, and whether it is different for men and for women, is unclear. Responses to the Fellows' Questionnaire show that a higher percentage of the women respondents than of the men gained Firsts (64.3% against 59%), but a higher percentage of the men than of the women took their first degree at Oxbridge (83.6% against 50%). More influential, perhaps, is the fact that 44.3% of the male respondents had done their doctorates at Cambridge compared with 21.4% of the women. This certainly gives the men an advantage in terms of networks, both the formal (mentor) and the informal (Old Boy).

### **Performance *versus* integrity**

There was a perceptible difference between the attitudes of senior and junior women to conventions of academic work. Younger women spoke of a conflict between the demands of academic conventions and the sense of their own integrity whereas established women concentrated more on discussing ways and means of operating the conventions. What senior women presented as the establishing of a professional identity, separable from private identity, some of the younger women described as unacceptable, involving a denial of their own perspectives on the subject as women. Several, including graduate students, saw compliance with the conventions as a requirement for professional advancement, but could not see how to reconcile such compliance with challenge in other private and public areas of their lives. They

described the resulting sense of conflict between their intellectual ambitions and personal aims as women as "stultifying". A senior woman described how this conflict is reflected in the writing of some women students:

"... many women find the essays more difficult than the men. They do feel that somehow an essay has to be absolutely sincere in respect of themselves, and at the same time very good. They feel enormously judged by each of the productions, but they can't flannel, or pretend, or simply imitate a pretentious style, as boys frequently can. Many boys get out of it by an act of ventriloquism - they pretend to be someone else speaking pretentiously! " [WF]

She identified this as creating particular problems in graduate work:

"The defect of [women graduate students'] work, even though they are among the most able, is that they tend to work to an ideal which is purely in their mind, and to the product that *they* want. You can't really tell them that that isn't what somebody really wants to read, or that it would really be more interesting if they injected such-and-such a line into it. That's "impure", somehow... It's something about sincerity... There's a growing desire that the thing should be yours, and only yours, and no pretentiousness about it, or affectation, or borrowing... By the time they've got to this stage there's a huge emotional investment in the thing... A lot of them are writing on feminist topics and in some ways this can be a bit of a trap, because if they're going to get emotionally involved... the problem is going to be to cast the beginning and end in a light that makes it look objective and general." [WF]

### Challenge or sabotage

In conversations with women from different colleges, about what they wanted in terms of career development, there was the constantly recurring refrain, "...sometimes I do and sometimes I don't". This does not indicate indecision but reflects the internal struggle described above. It is part of the dilemma of identity underlying a prioritizing of integrity, a reluctance to make judgements and come to conclusions, and a resistance to adopting conventions of objectivity (*see 1.5: Women's academic work*). Men at Cambridge have their psychological sense of self and place reinforced by a masculine culture and environment. Women in the same situation are faced with choices about every little aspect of life and thought. They describe dynamics which they feel threaten their identity with fragmentation and disorientation, and which can undermine previously secure psychological certainties.

Many of the younger women reject the solutions of those women of earlier generations whom they see as having become, in the stance of their work if not always in their personal lives, surrogate males. Yet the problem of how to remain functioning intellectually and psychically as a woman without being judged academically ineffectual remains unresolved for many, posing the threat of a loss of confidence. Even women who are perceived as robust when they are interviewed for admission are liable to suffer from a dwindling of confidence in themselves in the Cambridge environment.

Confidence developed in an environment of encouragement is not necessarily sufficient to withstand aggressive competition and a style of teaching which, according to respondents, may feature challenge, ridicule and abuse.

### **Aggression and assertiveness**

There was a confusion in the minds of many about the difference between aggression and assertiveness, and assertiveness was said to prompt an aggressive response from men. At the same time women may be told that aggression is *necessary*:

"[Women students] need training to be more articulate and more expansive - more aggressive... [Not talking] can have a very negative effect, particularly in the literary world where an awful lot depends on your performance..." [MF]

It was often said among women from coeducational schools that, "At least forewarned is forearmed" [UGW] and women from single-sex schools - especially if they have not had a period of employment or travel before coming up to Cambridge - can be especially vulnerable even if they are confident at the stage of admissions interview, because they are not used to working in a male-dominated environment.

"I'm not aggressive by nature and to have to cultivate the kind of aggression [the men] display is rather horrifying. I saw a woman... display this aggression at a seminar... and it was so masculine... I thought, 'Is that the only way I can indicate my intellectual achievement?'" [WF]

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## **1.4.2 WOMEN AND DISCRIMINATION**

### **Sexism in supervision**

Women academics reported the most *overtly* sexist attitudes to be current among their colleagues in faculties, rather than in the College. Their experience reinforced observations already made about sexism in Cambridge.

"Overtly discriminatory comments by male academics are still surprisingly prevalent and are reported by women undergraduates in Cambridge with disturbing frequency... Subtle behaviour is both more prevalent and more problematic than overtly discriminatory behaviour. Often inadvertent, sometimes well intentioned, it often seems so 'normal' as to be virtually invisible, yet creates an environment that wastes women's resources, for it takes time and energy to ignore or deal with this behaviour [Rowe, 1977]. It undermines self-esteem and damages professional morale, leaving women professionally and socially isolated and restricting their opportunities to make professional contributions."

[CUWAG Report, 1988]

Respondents of both sexes described blatant sexism in the treatment of women students in supervisions:

"The number of seminars I've sat through where people have said, 'This [work] could not have been learned off by heart by a woman because a woman does not have that sort of mental capability.' That sort of thing. Absolutely gross." [MF]

"In my supervisions there's the supervisor, me and two girls. The supervisor's asked the girls out about three times - he doesn't ask me out! It's very, very blatant, and it disgusts the girls." [UG3M]

Women generally felt that the frequency of sexist incidents is so high that to challenge every occasion would disrupt the process of education beyond a tolerable level, especially in faculties where the culture is so thoroughly masculine that women are made to feel interlopers, and are even likely to get the response, "Well what can you expect?" from academics, rather than support. The result is exasperation among women at all levels:

"For God's sake, this is the best you're going to get! These are the men who are independent, who are educated, who have access to a hell of a lot of information... and they *still* can't see this sort of thing." [UG2W]

Particularly bitter complaints about the sexist attitudes of supervisors came from women studying science subjects:

"Having done science and then swapped to [a social science] the difference is simply amazing in supervisions. In science they're all like that... I was asked once, 'Have you got a mirror in your handbag?' which really annoyed me because it was to establish, 'Do you carry a mirror around with you in your handbag?' And asking you out - that sort of stuff, which is really horrible and puts the whole thing on a different footing. Changing to [a social science] and being able to talk to a supervisor - it's just made so much difference... The idea that your ideas are just as valid as anyone else's and you can talk about them - it's just changed the way I think about education completely." [UG3W]

The behaviour of supervisors to women can also cause male supervision partners discomfort:

"There's the occasional male, over-forty, supervisor who tends to be embarrassingly leerish... The supervisor will be quite critical of anything anybody says - very instructive - but as soon the female says anything that's wrong, or where you might criticize it, it's, 'Oh never mind deary!' and a pat on the leg. Very, very patronizing." [UG3M]

Several respondents identified the unease exhibited by such academics as the result of lack of experience in relating to women, and some labelled it "aggressive" whatever the cause (*see also 2.2.3 Harassment - sexual and otherwise*).



"One story I get time and time again from women students in the College is this sense of aggression from a man. Whether it's aggressive throwing away, or aggressive drawing in - either way it's a very aggressive sort of thing, which must come from an inability to relax, and a definite feeling of the thing just being difficult. You can't talk because there are far too many things working on far too many levels... But just because I say these things it doesn't mean to say that I'm any better in that way. I don't know. I haven't had that sort of feedback." [MF]

"It's as much that [the men] have difficulties in coping with you as that you do with them, and that makes it difficult for you again. Especially in science, a lot of the Fellows can't cope with the idea of teaching women... They'll either try and over-compensate by being really 'nice' to you, and ask you if you're having any problems and 'Do you understand that?' - that sort of thing. Or they'll go to other extremes and they just won't talk to you at all, or they'll be really nasty to you." [WF]

This frustration is the foundation of what builds up every day, leading to a sense among many women of resentment and of being oppressed by deliberate misconceptions. It isn't hands-on harassment, but the effect is just as destructive in the long run. Women spoke of the need to "do something" about it, but also of the resentment they feel in having to take the responsibility personally, and the "burden" this represents:

"There's still the effort - it's another burden. Not only are you dealing with the problem as it exists, but you are the one that is actually going to have to say, 'Don't you realize what you've just said is sexist?' They're never going to see it spontaneously." [UG2W]

"I do have a level of resenting the fact that, as a woman, I have this sort of obligation to do it for the future generations, whereas all these men can put their energies straight off into doing their research. You know - it feels like *another* burden." [WF]

### **Women and science and engineering**

The responses of women students made it clear that the image of science, and their experience of studying it, is still positively masculine. What they seemed to resent was that they had constantly to resist forces of alienation to study a subject in which they were interested and - presumably - in which they also had positive ability. These forces appear to be expressed sometimes through direct personal discrimination (see below) and sometimes indirectly through the subject itself.

"... girls are presented with a dilemma between maintaining their feminine identities or becoming closely identified with the study of physics."  
(Lewis, 1984, p 110. )

A form of discrimination that is very damaging is that associated with or expressed through the academic subject itself. Attempts have been made in the

structuring of GCSE examinations and the National Curriculum to provide more encouragement for girls to study science, but these have been criticized from within the profession (Murphy, 1990).

There were reports from respondents indicating that the gender bias of subject matter, or teachers' prejudiced attitudes, still affect students applying for undergraduate admission.

"I can remember being told by my physics teacher [at school]... 'Oh, I'll set up that circuit: women have problems with electricity.' I'm completely outraged by the idea now. But I didn't take physics after that. I just felt I was useless. It's a problem that goes so far back." [UG3W]

"Certainly [at admission interviews] last year we were having girls saying that their headmistress had told them that mathematics wasn't a subject that girls studied. Clearly they'd been given the impression that there was something odd about them wanting to do this." [MF]

"They go on about girls in science at school, but if I think of something like A-level Physics, all the things are in what you might call a predominantly masculine context: cranes lifting things, four-stroke engines. I remember being told about vibrations and the concrete block in washing machines and thinking, 'Oh, that's why washing machines are so so big: they've got this flipping great concrete block in them!' And you could go on about the mechanics of sewing machines... You could make science so much more relevant to women's experience. You get, 'Girls don't do science,' and all the fact-pushing, and before you're at a stage to push the boundaries you're reinforcing all the assumptions." [UG3W]

Some Fellows placed the responsibility for the problems of prejudice essentially with people in secondary education, referring to, "...attitudes in schools, which are probably beyond our control" [MF]. But university teachers can help influence girls' attitudes to science before they leave schools in two ways: looking at attitudes to science and the way it is taught in universities will eventually have some effect on what goes on in schools, through those graduates who go into teaching, and universities can become involved more directly with school pupils.

"Several colleges now run 'taster' weekends or day-schools for fifth and sixth-form girls without the competing presence of boys, so that they can sample undergraduate science. Researchers at the University of Manchester have even made a video for girls contemplating studying physics."

[Gold, in *New Scientist*, April 1990]

Research in secondary schools shows the problems to be slightly different in single-sex and in coeducational environments:

"A survey carried out in the United Kingdom showed that although fewer girls had the opportunity to study physics in single-sex schools, nearly a quarter of them chose to study it in years four and five of the secondary school (for pupils aged 14 to 16) when it was actually available... Harding (1981) concludes that

performance in science is strongly influenced by the school 'ethos' and the expectations about girls that this subtly conveys."

[Whyte in OECD, 1986]

The Fellows interviewed were familiar with research into gender differences relevant to the study of mathematics, science and engineering. Students' comments on teaching implied, however, that there are people supervising who either do not know or do not care about the findings of such research, although some of the consequent recommendations are highly relevant to Cambridge supervision:

"...attempt to bring a 'social' (perceived as 'female') element to the teaching. Introduce group work and co-operative teaching styles; do not allow boys to dominate discussion in mixed groups or girls to defer to boys in discussion."

[Royal Society, 1986]

The argument put forward by several male Fellows, that women will have "overcome such differences" by the time they are admitted as undergraduates, implies two influential assumptions. First, that students should be expected necessarily to conform to what many women feel are male perspectives and masculine academic conventions in studying science. Secondly, that there is nothing of implicit interest to scientists in a view of the world from a female perspective. If these are not the assumptions (and comments from senior scientists indicate that some do not accept that they are) there would seem at least to be a lack of communication. Such complaints by women are too common in higher education for the problem to be seen as individual cases.

## Discrimination

Two science Fellows mentioned a particularly insidious form of discrimination. It related to differing degrees of encouragement according to the sex of the student, reinforcing observations made by many women:

"...in the sciences it's so unexpected that a woman might be good at something, and want to pursue it, that I don't think there's much encouragement... there's the pressure of the peer group, and the pressure of their teachers. I heard from various students that some of their supervisors will teach the man and will hardly notice the woman, and they kept rationalizing, 'Well, maybe it's because he's done more work than me so therefore he's been rewarded, or maybe it's because he needs more attention than I do.' It takes them a long time to realize it's because he's a man and they're a woman." [WF]

"There's a lack of reinforcement that is massive... It's very much the case that a woman who is here as an undergraduate is told, 'Well, O.K.... if you *really* want to do research, why not?' Whereas ... the message for a man would be, 'O.K., if you want to do research it's good - if you're brilliant we'll try and push you.' And it's really, 'We shouldn't miss them - We shouldn't miss out on this'... The young man will be *embraced* [gestures], brought in, whereas a

woman will still seem slightly scary. 'There's this Rather Bright Woman who we ought to have here - perhaps. Er - does anyone want to supervise her?' "[MF]

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### 1.4.3 WOMEN , FEMINISM AND FEMINIZATION

#### Gender at work

The common fiction in Cambridge is still that women are just men with something missing. In some subjects students feel they jeopardize their degrees by choosing courses which recognize feminist academic research and criticism, the content of many courses is dictated by an examination syllabus that ignores women's perspectives, and women have to cope with constant low-level antagonism and abuse. As the people in the community most stressed by the circumstances in which they are expected to function they are the most vulnerable. As such they are the first to indicate tensions that are intolerable, for men who reject exclusively masculine criteria also, and measures taken to alleviate the situation for women will ultimately improve the environment for everybody.

"I'd like to do a PhD, but not here. I couldn't take the pressure on women. I'd like to go somewhere with more women - more enlightenment." [UG3W]

In the context of women's experience in mixed communities an assumption that where there are more women there might also be "more enlightenment", in this respect, is understandable. But this ignores the performative quality of gender (*Butler, 1988*). It is not only women who value the feminine, and not all women *do* value the feminine.

Among women who have succeeded in masculine environments is the professional personality popularly known as the Queen Bee:

"She is deemed to have determination and single-mindedness and, above all, she is hard. She is hard to please, hard to beat, and hard to understand. She is an exacting taskmaster to herself and to anyone who works for her. She makes no concessions for weakness and expects everyone to work as hard as she does... Her central philosophy is simple: the only way to succeed is through superhuman effort and self-control. She, therefore, has no brief to help other women struggling to follow in her footsteps... She is just as likely as a male manager to discriminate against them."

[*Breakwell, 1985. p.98*]

Respondents, describing this phenomenon, commonly referred to it as "the Thatcher type", for obvious reasons. Women students described its features as among some of the most confusing aspects of identifying what 'being a female academic' really entails.

It is a set of characteristics that prevent some women who do achieve the status of senior academic posts from functioning effectively as role models, or even as mentors, for younger women with different ideals (*see 1.3: Mentors; and Women's response, below*). The association of academic success with unsympathetic or overbearing social behaviour acts as a strong disincentive among women students, just as much as an association of academic success in women with lack of children. Discussion among women with experience of working (either as students or teachers) in all-female schools and colleges indicates that although they recognize Queen Bee characteristics immediately, some find it difficult to disentangle such features from what necessarily constitutes 'professionalism'. It is also evident that the implications of the difference between sex and gender in all-female academic contexts has not been widely discussed in Cambridge, even in all-female colleges.

### Attitudes to feminism

Discussions with women's groups and with groups of women ("we aren't a Women's Group, we just like to meet regularly without the chaps") in various colleges indicated a confused image of feminism among students in Cambridge. There is a widespread attitude that Nice Girls Aren't Feminists - but an enquiry into what Nice Girls *are* shows that the only alternatives involve an acceptance of the situations that women complain about: being ignored, patronized and steam-rollered by men, and being treated as not intellectually serious. There is also confusion about what constitutes a feminist, and the term is often used synonymously with 'trouble-maker' and as a term of abuse. Much of this is the result of ignorance and the rest pure prejudice. The idea that, "You can't be a feminist and want to be attractive" [Non-King's UGW] was frequently expressed one way or another and creates a stumbling block, for younger women undergraduates especially. The telling phantom that lurked behind many statements was described by a male undergraduate as an "aggressive loud-mouth who might be lesbian". It is a stereotype that helps to keep many women muted in behaviour and dress, especially when combined with the you-can't-be-clever-and-female fallacy. Many young women showed signs of being caught in the interstices of these two powerful myths, adding to the identity dilemma. They feel that whichever way they move they are trapped. American women - students and visiting fellows - expressed amazement :

"What is it with these guys? Haven't they ever met women who *talk* before? They look at you like you're something from another planet!" [PGW]

"Everybody seems to think there's something wrong with being a feminist. It's really *weird* - out of the ark." [UGW]

"I know some very clever women here, but they creep about and hardly open their mouths when there are men around." [Visiting fellow]

Women said that learning about the history of feminism and feminist traditions of thought and knowledge had restored and improved their self-confidence. It had also made them impatient with the material they have to use, and motivated them towards wanting to "get women into higher education as *women* " [PGW].

"In the whole of my first year I can't remember having been given a book to read that was written by a woman... I think I've come up with one that was edited by a woman." [UG2W]

"...in my subject [feminism] has been a very strong new current, theoretically, questioning a lot of assumptions. A lot of the [earlier] work that was done has an implicit male bias... There's a danger of wanting to just redress the balance rather than wanting to change the approach right across the spectrum. It's probably much more difficult to achieve the second, but it would be much more desirable if that could be done." [UG3W]

"[Cambridge] admits women as a glamorous appendage... to succeed as a woman you must become someone else - an honorary male... women arrived late in the day, and have yet to find their own place, on their own terms."

[Finningham, in *Varsity Yearbook*, 1989]

Recognition of the gender bias in attitudes pervading the University system angered them, but helped to reduce the personal dilemma of identity:

"My supervisor said I had to make a choice: either go on and do a course that really interests me, *or* do one that stands a chance of getting a 2.1 or even a First... She said it's three times as hard to do well in the exams if you work from a feminist viewpoint. But why shouldn't I? After all, I am a woman!" [UG3W]

They rationalized the feeling, 'I don't belong here' quite differently from women experiencing the Impostor Complex, with a much more positive result. By identifying the alienating factor as their gender, rather than their intellectual ability, they retain their self-confidence. The realization that the institution does not on the whole recognize their efforts and reward them with good grades creates new dilemmas, but with less potential for psychological sabotage.

### Men in feminist studies

Confusing the picture for students is the fact that men's interest, or even involvement, in academic studies from a feminist perspective does not necessarily lead them to behave in ways that encourage and enable women. Students commented that such men were, "... simply trying to solve their problems intellectually" [UG3W] and that men in feminist studies were not necessarily feminist men. "The ones who think of

themselves as not chauvinistic... are actually the worst." [WF]. Their own confusion can lead to a degree of active intervention on their part which they may intend as supportive of women, but which in fact helps them to retain the initiative as men and inhibits the development of women's competence and self-confidence, rather than encouraging it.

"My supervisor [a King's Fellow] says he's receptive to feminist ideas, but he just can't cope with it if you're not someone who is prepared to be really *vociferous* about it, and to be very very *blatantly* feminist. He just seems to be doing it to get on the bandwaggon... even though he can talk as much as he wants he doesn't see how people are affected by it. His manner of teaching is very anti-women... Women aren't receptive to his aggressive approach." [UG3W]

One result of such a response is that men who feel sympathetic find themselves sometimes incomprehensibly rebuffed when women tell them in desperation not to interfere. Women students described their attempts to explain the situation to male contemporaries more often than women academics did.

### Gender and power

The resistance of individuals and sectors in the University to acknowledging subjects and ways of working identified with women, as proper areas of academic interest, indicates anxiety. If this were not so, there would be no need for the resistance. The anxiety is caused by the gender of power relations, in which masculinity represents the possession of power, and femininity the lack of it. Some of the most senior Fellows described the threat to the status of academic work that is perceived as having a feminine gender, either by intent or as the result of attracting a high proportion of women students:

"...in SPS where they do have a Women's Paper... it's on sufferance." [MF]

"Cambridge has a paper on the 'Representation of Women'... The whole point about the representation of women is that it's usually in the writing of men, so Cambridge is opting for the more up-market, more academically respectable way of expressing it... In Oxford they took a vote on what the women who wanted this paper wanted, and they wanted 'Women Writers' because they wanted to emphasize *women writers*." [WF]

"I think the Faculty has remained relatively impervious. I don't think people at an individual level are antagonistic, but there is a collective inertia... I just wonder... if there isn't a fear deep down that if the subject becomes too feminized - or becomes too popular with women - it would somehow be a downward slope, in terms of power and prestige." [MF]

This speaker described the attitude of his faculty to feminist work, and his own response, in some detail. He said that what might be described as "women's questions" appeared each year in the finals papers:

"[Q] IS THERE ANY SENSE THAT IF CANDIDATES ANSWER WHAT APPEARS TO BE A "WOMAN'S QUESTION" THEY'RE NOT GOING TO DO AS WELL?

I think that might well be the silent fear... I am very struck at how few people take up the option by answering anything.

[Q] HAS THIS EVER BEEN DISCUSSED AT FACULTY LEVEL?

No, not as far as I know. And on the whole the student representatives they've had have nearly always been men. And if there have been women, they haven't been vocal - at least...in making these sorts of points. Very neutered... as far as I'm aware nobody has wanted to push this issue very far - or to raise it.

[Q] HAVE *YOU* ACTUALLY RAISED ANYTHING LIKE THIS, AND HAD ANY RESPONSE?

No... [The academic subject] tends to attract people who are conservative, people who don't want to make a great deal of trouble... I'm not aware of there being a strong discontent from a feminist area about the nature of the course, which mildly surprises me. I suspect half the faculty would immediately say, 'Fine, if that's what you want to do, do it.' Once upon a time they would have gnashed their teeth, but they've become much more acclimatized... In that sense [the feminist lobby] would be banging at an open door.

[Q] AND IS THIS SOMETHING THAT HAS TO BE RAISED BY WOMEN, OR BY STUDENTS - OR IS THERE A POINT AT WHICH MEN WHO ARE AWARE OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS KIND OF THING CAN RAISE IT AMONG COLLEAGUES?

Certainly it *ought* to be the latter. Certainly there's no reason why this subject should be brought up only by a woman or a student... I don't feel a burning desire to put on anything like this myself, so in that sense the initiative would probably have to come from somewhere else - if it did I would probably chip in with some words of support... One of the reasons I've never raised it very strongly is purely prudential - that there's the danger that you might be laughed at - that the discourse would not be 'this is dangerous' but more 'this isn't intellectually serious stuff'. And no-one wants to be thought of as not being of sufficient intellectual weight." [MF]

This speaker equates a subject's popularity with women with the loss of power and prestige, indicating that such an association emasculates a subject institutionally and affects academics connected with it. If the professional ideologies were genuinely neuter - equally available to women and men - the interest of women would not threaten them. But in most subjects they are so masculine that apparently even men with established academic reputations feel themselves to be professionally vulnerable through identification with theories that have acquired a feminine gender. In ideological environments of that kind it is virtually impossible for women to establish themselves at all as academically 'serious' - except by adopting a male intellectual persona.

There is a parallel in the development of literary criticism:



"... what is it about literary theory that is so threatening that it provokes such strong resistances and attacks? It upsets rooted ideologies by revealing the mechanics of their workings; it goes against a powerful philosophical tradition of which aesthetics is a prominent part; it upsets the established canon of literary works and blurs the borderlines between literary and non-literary discourse. By implication, it may also reveal the links between ideologies and philosophy."

[Paul De Man, 1988]

Those whose interests are served by the "rooted ideology" will attempt to discredit what threatens it.

### Gender and change

These complaints by women about men's action, and men's observations about women's inaction, illustrate the nature of the stalemate that threatens to keep the imbalance of gender and of power as it is. Only by working together can women and men, representing a sharing of masculine and feminine interests across differences of sex, change the balance. Women by themselves do not have sufficient power, and men by themselves have too much. In such a situation if women do nothing, anything that men do is men's action and reinforces the existing imbalance. And if women do nothing, they will continue to represent powerlessness. Men's action is defined by women's inaction. Women hold the key to changing the situation, for only by taking the initiative can they enable action to be joint action, leading to a redistribution of the power to change the status quo.

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### Women's response

The discussion of *fear of success*, *imposture* and *fail-safe strategies* has caused an immediate and widespread response of recognition among British academic women in Cambridge and elsewhere, including those from single-sex colleges:

"I was particularly interested/amused/saddened by the 'imposter complex' - which was all too familiar"

[Letter from a graduate of a single-sex Oxford college.]

Many have attested to a continuing, long-term battle with such tendencies within themselves. One Cambridge academic - recently appointed to a professorship elsewhere - remembered her disbelief, as a child, on opening the notification of her 11-plus results:

"I actually thought they'd sent me somebody else's results!"

There have also been one or two angry rejections of such findings by senior women, expressed in terms such as:

"If women choose to join rich mixed colleges in the middle of town they shouldn't whinge about the conditions they find there."

The response of other women to such remarks has been that they typify behaviour that tries to, "out-men the men" [UG1W], and to see it as symptomatic of the aggression which enables people of either sex to thrive in Cambridge, but which they themselves reject.

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## 1.5 WOMEN'S ACADEMIC WORK

### Objectivity

Men are frequently described as having a greater ability generally than women to be objective, and some psychologists have associated this with boys' early experience of individuating from a parent of the opposite sex. The individuation theory represents an authoritative element in the construction of a non-emotional masculinity, and serves to perpetuate the popular myth that work is more important in a man's life than his personal relationships. Many women have questioned the value of the objective stance, often as the result of their experience of living and working with men, and increasing numbers of men are questioning it also, drawing on their own experience of professional and non-professional roles. In this respect the New Man, as a creation rooted in ideology, is often less reliable and more ineffectual than the Reconstructed Man who emerges from the ravel of experience.

The division between the professional and personal is an image of the old division between the rational and the emotional, and it is against this kind of artificiality that many women protest. Some simply feel intuitively that it is a betrayal of integrity, and others recognize it as lying behind the history of the validation of scientific investigation against empirical experience as the basis of approved knowledge.

"The association of rationality with masculinity is a familiar theme... There is something about 'reason' which [male philosophers] believe is genderless, not contaminated by emotion and passion... To be rational in our society is to be impartial and objective - it implies a distancing of the observer from the object of his research, or policy. The canons of reason, objectivity and clarity are built into our educational practices, and into our scientific discourse. Yet [the] commitment [of men] to reason is a form of exclusion, a denial of certain kinds of experience."

[Brittan, 1989 . pp 198-9]

Some women reject more than the objective mode of working, as if becoming voluntarily involved in such processes represents a real threat to them.

"There are ways in which women students develop that are very different from the ways in which men develop... by the end of their three years here you could pretty much guarantee that some women in any one year-group will be displaying very strong marks of anti-intellectualism...'Oh I'm not interested in reading or anything like that.'... Sometimes I think it's for very good and right reasons: that they have been badly treated by the institution and in some cases the individuals concerned have enough inner resource to get over that and to make that productive... So far it hasn't been the case that male students coming out of their three years here have generated a deep loathing and fear of things intellectual." [MF]

Women students who want to protest indirectly about the way they feel they have been treated by the institution are likely to have the greatest effect if they do it through their work, because that is where people in authority look. What seems to be academic stubbornness or disaffection may be a sign of personal distress. It is institutional conventions that separate the person and her work. Women who protest through their work are imaging what others might do through their bodies in eating disorders or self mutilation. It is less life-threatening, but just as effective in an academic context as any other self-thwarting device.

The language of personal attack in teaching makes no distinction between a student and her work:

"[A] You go into your supervision, and however nice basically the supervisor is they are going to attack *you*... And it's going to be, rather than a synthesis of ideas, it's going to be an attack... somebody saying, 'No. You're totally wrong. This is the line you have got to take if you want to do your exams.' And I'm finding it increasingly frustrating.

[B]... the male ethos of teaching... The male supervisor actually said, 'This is wrong. This is an error. *You* are wrong.'... [A female supervisor] has just got such a different approach to teaching, she'll go through your essay and say, 'You could actually have thought about it in this way as well... That was a good line you took here, perhaps it was weakened by this link here, and you could have thought about adding this to it'... she gives really constructive criticism all the way through... Of *course* [essays] need to be criticized, but there are such different ways of doing it." [UG2W]

Several Fellows described problems with the separation of identity and ideas as a feature of women's academic work, especially acute at the graduate stage:

"In my experience, it's more difficult for a woman doing a doctoral degree to get her preoccupations with her identity and with her cognitive development reasonably sorted out from one another... [A woman is more likely to] get in a bit of a mess about who she thinks she is and what she thinks she's doing, and how the work is coming on... there are difficulties of that kind that are closer to the surface with women...than with most male students... Post-graduate work, except in small labs, is so privatized it puts a tremendous strain on the personality... In the case of women sometimes even if, in fact, quite an effort is being put into helping them [by the supervisor] it doesn't work in some way. There seems to be something psychic rather than environmental that's going on... and it probably is important to understand it, because even the things that

you can't do a great deal about affect the way you behave in relation to the things that you *can* do something about." [MF]

The confusion of "identity and...cognitive development" described in some women graduates reflects several external conflicts:

- the distancing effect of academic conventions of objectivity *versus* the student's need to examine and validate her subjective experience as a woman in a male-dominated environment, for the sake of her psychological health;
- the role of objectivity as an academic convention *versus* its role as academic validator;
- the role of objectivity as a convention *versus* its status in scientific practice.

There were complaints from women students, in the sciences especially, that they themselves had been objectified through the processes of being patronized, propositioned or ignored by male supervisors. They described the depressing and tiring effects of coping daily with such attitudes, and the need to work constantly at maintaining the validity of their own identity.

"... we have not recognized our masculinism, our commitment to gender inequality, our sexual objectification of women. The university is no different in this respect than any other institution, except that it glosses violence more successfully. Violence is often hidden behind a rhetorical smokescreen - it is couched in the language of academic 'one upmanship', but this is not a harmless little game - its aim is to hurt and diminish its object."

[Brittan, 1989. p 204]

### **Risk-taking**

Women students were often described as being too deferential to authority, whether embodied in a person or in a text. A woman Fellow who had spent most of her childhood abroad felt the problems to be aspects of British formal education and social schooling:

"There's a sense that women students tend to be less independent in their thought... With women students there's this deference to the authority of the text. So that you write down what [X] said and what [Y] said, and that's it. The fact that they're different doesn't even spark you into anything! So I say, 'Look, here are two people disagreeing and at least one of them's got to be wrong, so why don't you join the fray? There's no great holiness in being [X]!' That strikes me very much as a function of schooling... It's been a very consistent and worrying thing... They write these dutiful essays... You don't get that lap-dog, 'My-job-is-to-learn-the-information-and-put-it-down' with male students... There's just an intuition that there is something about English girls." [WF]

Listening to men and women in interview in quick succession it became clear that most of the men had picked up something early on about approaching academic work: that the process of taking a risk and setting up your own ideas beside those of the published 'authorities' can earn credit, even if the ideas themselves are shot down in flames. In hierarchical and patriarchal cultures there is an approved role for young men to play in challenging authority and proving themselves. It represents regeneration. If men generally seem to be more capable of mustering a challenge than women, they do so in a culture that encourages them - just as it also teaches them to withstand any uncomfortable consequences as a rite of passage. Women whose experience has been that society has passed judgement on their interests and ambitions and concluded that they are irrelevant, or secondary at best, might well regard judgements and conclusions warily. That does not mean that women are incapable of committing themselves but that they may need to have the process articulated in a way that men do not.

"The First Class category is the more autonomous thinking person. Even if you often think that they're wrong, the fact that a spirited argument has been maintained - some sort of independent, spirited argument moving towards a conclusion - [is rewarded]... The profile of a First's personality is somehow more masculine than feminine. This doesn't necessarily rule out girls at all, because you can easily tell them when you're teaching them that they must come to conclusions, and that they've got a very good case and they must just make it clear that they believe in it. You can teach them the small rhetorical devices that enable them to give that look of being autonomous... If you're a woman teaching women almost entirely it's so familiar to you that this is a problem with more than half your students that you spend a lot of time on it... I think it's absolutely certain that most of [the male supervisors] aren't aware of it... they will get as far as saying, 'Girls make good Seconds, but not Firsts,'... but they're not putting their finger tactically on it - they're not doing anything about it... and a lot of the girls are going to just miss their Firsts... because they're not having the right analyses made of their work." [WF]

They are also likely to need more overt encouragement and the acknowledgement of success:

"I think we're brought up to get approval and people pat us on the head when we're little, and if we don't have that something's missing... We have to be given permission for things: we have to be given permission to do well, and then we have to be told that we have." [WF]

One Fellow described strategies for helping women to get used to projecting their ideas into a public arena:

"Those who are teaching ought to be more aware of the possibility that girls have certain difficulties which maybe could be met by all sorts of strategies, like producing a page of notes, or writing a letter... [or other ways of] somehow producing half-way house versions of the essay that don't seem quite so *committing*." [WF]

Many women put more effort into finding obstacles to improving their situation than into identifying and developing possible strategies. The experience of even small success can quickly change this, but a risk has to be taken to achieve even small success.

### Commitment

This is related to another powerful social convention that defines women as the guardians of the nation's morals. Current male undergraduates confirmed Fellows' descriptions of women students as 'conscientious':

[A] "... if I don't know something - if I haven't done the work that I should have done for a supervision - then I'm more likely to say, 'Can you explain this? I should have learnt this, but I can't under-stand what you're saying because I haven't done the work'. Maybe the girls resent that - that they've done the work and I'm having it all explained to me again because I haven't done it. That may be why they think I should do my work! ... The other week I didn't have an essay to hand in and they had both done it. After the supervision was over they were saying, 'Wow! You did really well. We thought he was going to be really angry!' There seemed to be the idea that it wasn't something that they would ever have done. They were quite - not angry, but *astonished* that I hadn't done the essay. They would have expected me to do it. It was a strange and unusual thing that I hadn't done it. A different expectation.

[B] Last term we had a situation when everyone's attitude towards Christmas got, 'Sod this, I'm not going to do it,' because we thought the supervisor wasn't up to much. And the chaps first of all stopped doing their work, and *then* the girls... packed up. [UG2M]

"There's a notion of a well-prepared female student who reads everything very assiduously, and then puts it together in a very neat little round hand, and everything is there that has to be there. But somehow it doesn't go beyond that. There's a stereotype of that sort of middle-range female student who does the work in an incredibly dutiful and concerned and precise and methodical way. Women are more conscientious. They won't default in quite the same way. Men are more lackadaisical, more self-confident... Women are more engaged somehow." [MF]

It was noticeable that only the younger women (students and Fellows) seemed to assume a proportional correlation between the amount of time spent on academic work and the degree of success achieved:

"When men have trouble with their personal relationships they just bury themselves in their work... [X] was working sixteen hours a day and he produced this enormous book. Well if we all worked like that like that we could all do it!" [WF]

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## 1.6 MORALE

### The role of self-confidence in Cambridge

The degree of self-confidence people feel directly affects their morale, and self-confidence was a subject that generated a great deal of discussion in the interviews. Without exception respondents felt that lack of it seriously undermines academic performance, especially in Cambridge (and at Oxford also, according to some of those who had studied and worked there). The Shorter Oxford Dictionary's definition, "...arrogant or impudent reliance on one's own powers", reflects a quality of self-confidence implied by many respondents: that is associated in some way with perspective. It is necessary in some measure to establish an individual's relationship to the environment and others in it, yet the judgement of what degree constitutes enough and what too much depends on where you stand in that environment. Similarly the definition of 'arrogant' as "making unwarrantable claims to... authority or knowledge; aggressively... overbearing", and of 'impudent' as "wanting in modesty; shameless, unblushing; indelicate" casts an interesting light on gender stereotypes in Cambridge. Although the general bearing of most women in King's is more robust than courtly ideals of feminine gentility might imply, women respondents did say that they are sometimes reluctant in formal groups to behave in a manner that men might call merely self-confident for fear of being in reality impudent. Impudence in men, however, is seen as a "healthy degree of cockyness" [MF]. Some of the younger women Fellows appear to be more subject to this inhibition than women students. They feel doubly vulnerable through their position at the bottom of the professional hierarchy, and as a result of their fragile employment status on short-term appointments. They are dependent for career establishment and progress on the good opinion of senior tenured academics, the vast majority of whom are older men (*See also 1.4.3: Gender and power*). It is easy for long-established senior Fellows to underestimate the effect of the professional hierarchy on younger members, and some evidently have no wish to do so.

### Confidence and / or aggression

Respondents of all kinds described "unwarrantable claims to knowledge" as a specific feature of male undergraduates' behaviour in attempting to gain authority in supervision and seminar groups (*See also 1.3: Teaching, learning, and research*). Significantly, although male academics commented on it as much as women, more women than men actually complained about its unwarrantable aspect. It seemed that men were more inclined than women to classify such behaviour as acceptable. For one thing, several Fellows did not know how to cope with it :

"[It] puts the teacher in the situation of either challenging the student and showing the student up - which can be equally destructive - or letting it pass by, hoping that someone in the room will challenge the person." [MF]

The description of this kind of dilemma and this speaker's suggested solution illustrate two features of supervision described repeatedly by student respondents. First, the competitive and confrontational nature of the dynamics at work: the male student is browbeating the group with unwarrantable claims to knowledge, and the only way the teacher can see to control the student is to "destroy" him. Secondly, the lack of specific training of those in the teaching role. Managing groups which do not themselves establish mutually supportive dynamics is a teaching skill. Some will always be better at it than others, but any attempt is better than none. The speaker above does not suggest the solution of talking to the student on his own out of supervision time (see the quotation from a woman Fellow below); or - as another male Fellow does - routinely warn new supervision and seminar groups about common problems of conflicting gender-behaviour in mixed discussion groups: those unwilling to put themselves forward being 'steamrollered' by those who 'hog the the space'.

For behaviour to be described as "aggressively overbearing" implies the presence of some other(s) to be aggressed and overborne, and both women and men described such experiences when referring to the behaviour both of male students and supervisors / seminar leaders. One academic reflecting on his own experience of supervising said:

"[To begin with] I was being too Cambridgely-aggressive in ripping essays apart... It's a question of your psychological skills... I haven't found any tricks for doing it. All I can say is that some people I can get on with when I'm teaching them and some I don't - and that personal level is what makes Cambridge great and fun, but what can make it absolutely disastrous." [MF]

Behaviour which seems to the subject to be a necessary display of self-confidence, but is experienced by others as overbearingly aggressive, is a symptom of a mis-match between the individual and the group. It may be that the individual is not genuinely self-confident and is over-compensating, using academic knowledge as a prop. Or it may be that they are genuinely self-confident but not sufficiently socialized to recognize how an overt display can undermine self-confidence in others.

"One of the men told me [a woman student] was in tears after an examination - (I can't imagine any of them *ever* being in tears!)... Rationally she'd have said that she didn't think they were better than her, but it began to wear her down - the fact that they were so much more articulate. I think she began to have doubts, about whether in fact they were better than her - or that they were better at the particular exercise they were all engaged in: passing examinations. They're all aware...that part of this is a kind of exercise in confidence... If you're surrounded by people who are totally self-confident - even though you



know your material, and you're intellectually better than them - you're still going to feel that they will do better than you." [WF]

As far as finding a solution is concerned it is not so much a question of whose 'fault' the mis-match is, but of who takes responsibility to do something about it.

"I just discussed it. I told her I had no doubt that of all the students I was supervising she was probably the best, and that it seemed to me very clear that she was being weighed down by these attributes that really had nothing to do with the ability that was going to be tested. I think pointing out that her greatest weakness was going to be her state of mind... and the ability to discuss this with [one of the other female Fellows] was a great help." [WF]

Men were more often accused by women respondents of imposing exaggerated signs of self-confidence on other members of a group than *vice versa*. Men spoke of particular women who could "give as good as they get" in supervision, and there were also descriptions by some women of overbearing behaviour by some women supervisors, interpreted by those students as the confusion of an aggressively masculine style with academic professionalism. The source and content of complaints made it clear that although men more often manifest aggressive behaviour in an academic setting it is not a feature of male behaviour exclusively, rather an indicator of the masculine gender of certain traditions of teaching and learning. At the same time it is very difficult, in a competitive environment of this kind, for a woman to display the same degree of confidence as her male colleagues without raising the comment that she is "too confident". Too confident for a woman, that is.

### **Collapse of confidence**

Fellows described an apparently spontaneous collapse of self-confidence in graduate students as not uncommon. Again, it was not seen as a problem specific to women, though the impression was that a higher proportion of the women than of the men suffer from it. It was felt by respondents of each sex that women supervisors were more likely to be better at coping with it, in the case of women students, than some male supervisors. This seems to be due partly to a difference in the quality of counselling skills and partly to the confidence of individual supervisors in their own ability to help. It is also that it is likely to be easier for a woman to comfort a female student psychologically and physically than it is for a man, without a confusion of intent. That is not to say that the abuse of authority only exists between members of different sexes, but several men spoke of not knowing how to cope with distressed women students. Women students felt, in the current environment, that it was easier for a woman in distress to consult another woman than to consult a man. It is a question of intent, attention and professional skill:

"[About a woman graduate] She's stopped writing, and the last session I saw her she said, 'Well, it's clear that you despise me,' and she hasn't appeared since. And I've been worrying about what to do about that... I'm not terribly good at holding people up if there's nothing else to hold them up... I've had two or three, or perhaps three or four... and if it goes into that sort of spiral I just don't know what to do about it. If I start saying, 'But your work is interesting,' it either sounds insincere, or for the wrong reasons. So I just don't know what to do about that. But I've also had one or two men graduates whose confidence has just collapsed - it hasn't taken the same behavioural form, but it's been just as drastic: the withdrawal in not wanting to see me, of evading me... I wouldn't like to say that this is particularly a woman's problem." [MF]

Research carried out in the States indicates that there is a gender-linked element in subjects where women are in a minority, at least.

"The collapse in confidence is a crucial indicator of why women fail to enter the research degrees that will establish them in the scientific workforce. Women are much more likely to stop at the level of master's degree than men, and to have severe doubts about their right to be at graduate school at all..."

*[Gold, in New Scientist, April 1990]*

The dwindling of confidence itself may not be a woman's problem especially, but they are more seriously affected than men by the fact that most supervisors are male, and that many seem unmotivated towards developing skills beyond subject-centred expertise. While research and publication remain the main criteria for professional validation and promotion, quality of teaching and the active supervision of graduate students is likely to remain patchy. Supervisors who are not Fellows are even further from any kind of institutional influence.

### **Self-esteem**

Self-esteem is the foundation of self-confidence, and there are strategies for improving and maintaining self-esteem when it is at risk of sinking to a level where it represents a threat to psychological health. Some of the most successful of these involve steps to reduce isolation. Several Fellows described the fragility of their own self-confidence (very often at odds with their public personae and how they are perceived by others) and spoke of feeling unequal to the task of helping students who might be moving towards a crisis. Very few of them have had training in counselling and their expertise is often in the introverted field of academic study. Several with long tutorial experience spoke of picking up skills "on the job", but said also that it had made them aware of how helpful some form of training could be, and how much it is needed.

### **Cambridge University Senior Women's Committee**

This committee has faced the problems of communication and information flow that dog any attempts to work across formal boundaries in Cambridge. It started as a loosely defined group intending to meet twice a term - senior women in a different college to take responsibility for organizing meetings each term. It was initially described as an umbrella organization for smaller groups of women with particular aims, and as a support group of special importance to women isolated in male-dominated departments. It is seen as a potentially valuable support for all senior women, and especially for those who have no college fellowship. Membership is not restricted to women with academic posts only, though the majority of those who attend regularly do have such posts.

The Committee has provided a forum for senior women to discuss matters such as the implication of the Wass Report and its recommendations, and the development of policies at college and University level on matters such as childcare and sexual harassment. A major obstacle for women who would like to take a larger part in the administration of the University is their ignorance of how it works. Unofficial, informal networks and channels of information which help to educate men about such areas of responsibility are not easily available to women. This problem was identified at an early meeting and members have collected, Xeroxed and circulated articles and information among themselves. The Committee faces the classic dilemma of organizations its kind: the people who need it most have the least time and resources to administer it. Some of the most highly motivated have the least secure positions in the University - and also have family responsibilities in addition to full-time jobs. This group urgently needs occasional access to a secretariat, and funds. Given these, it could play a critical role in equipping women in Cambridge to function as fully participating members of their colleges and of the University.

## 2: KING'S COLLEGE

### 2.1 KING'S: THE CULTURE

#### Speech and silence

A retired Fellow said of the culture of Cambridge between the wars:

"... it was the Cambridge tradition: great silence... Housman and others... had laid it down that you mustn't speak unless you were spoken to, or unless you had something to say... The silence of Cambridge was rather difficult and antisocial... Not a bit hostile - just, 'If you haven't got anything to say, don't say it; if you have, say it and I'll consider it.'... and there would be great silences... Of course, at Oxford... people spoke as if they had been in the Cabinet! " [MF]

Aspects of tradition are persistent in communities where elders have an active role, and although the tradition of silence itself in Cambridge may have weakened over the years the weight of qualitative judgement still makes speaking out in formal meetings difficult for many. Retired Fellows remain influential in the College through their attendance at Congregations, where they speak and exercise their voting rights. Their presence and the content of their speeches are influential politically, and the style of their rhetoric is influential culturally. A tradition that 'you only speak if you have something of value to say' can be a powerful inhibitor for newcomers and for anybody lacking in self-confidence. If they do decide to speak, the ability to do so in the terms of an established rhetoric makes the content more palatable and lends it the flavour of institutional authority.

The bringing together of verbal and formal conventions in meetings of the College's standing committees and Governing Body makes them doubly powerful occasions. It also increases the importance of developing the skills to take part. It is part of a continuous tradition in Cambridge and Oxford, being constantly recycled through generations of students and fellows in the colleges, with a version of it spreading into certain schools via graduate teachers. It is one of the factors that makes experience at such schools a valuable commodity on the educational market. For some Fellows the style that characterizes the formal culture of King's is intrinsic to their background - they arrive flush with the rhetorical currency. Some, who come across the need for the first time at Cambridge, develop an adequate facility, while others say they feel they have never done so.

"Accent isn't that important these days, but it's that confidence that comes if you come from certain places... it's the way you've been brought up... It's the way you've learnt to perform...the way in which you say it - the way you express yourself... Some people are so known for the way they say things that it's almost part of the entertainment value of the Congregation. When such-and-

such a person stands up you're waiting for the long elliptical sentences, and the beautiful phraseology, and the lilt of the voice. And the clever-clever remarks. But when it comes down to it they're saying something ordinary that many of us could have said in half as many words and a much blunter way. A more crude, Anglo-Saxon way." [MF]

Fellows who have worked in the States spoke of national differences:

"Americans are more confident about public speaking - it's a sort of quasi-constitutional cultural right... I remember the United States before feminism was a matter of *public* speech there, and it was true even then that American women talked much more [than British women] in academic settings... It's very striking how reluctant English students generally are to speak publicly... It's still true that the great majority of those I teach choose not to if they possibly can. They're very ill at ease - and principally ill at ease about how they would be 'casting' themselves by doing so." [MF]

"[Lack of training in public speaking] is a great defect in our system, especially if you compare it with America, where there's a premium on articulation. We're really failing in that respect." [MF]

### Styles of rhetoric

An aspect of the traditional King's rhetoric is the balance between vocabulary of differing cultural origins - a structure identified as "potent" in a lecture by the College's oldest resident Fellow, Dr (Dadie) Rylands, who described it as,

"... the combinations and discords of our native Anglo-Saxon stock with the naturalisation of mainly Latin polysyllables... an Elizabethan critic was acute enough to observe that 'the long words which we borrow being intermingled with the short of our own store make up a harmony'".

*The Pratt Lecture, University of Newfoundland, 1981.*

The same linguistic tension was described by Patrick Leigh Fermor in a television interview in 1989 as "...great ballooning Latinate sentences, pegged down with Anglo-Saxon..." When it is used naturally such a structure can be both powerful and persuasive, but it is a minefield for the unwary. For some Fellows it remains a foreign language. They can enter into a passive enjoyment of it, but lack of fluency in this particular lingua franca inhibits their participation in the governance of the College. Women Fellows identified it as an aspect of a masculine public culture and felt especially inhibited by it, but men were definite that it was not only women who suffered from such problems:

"... it applies to many of the men too. There are a hundred, after all... and there are at least thirty men who never say anything. There are some men who are at least as much if not even more terrified when they actually do get up to speak as the women are..." [MF]

"The Council did feel oppressive to me when I was on it... not an easy place for people who aren't confident to express themselves.

[Q] AND WHAT ABOUT CONGREGATION?

OH!! I've tried to talk at Congregation, but it's always come out as a kind of rattle of mumbo-jumbo. *Never* an easy thing to do. Particularly at the Annual Congregation: an amazing thing, but quite overpowering and oppressive..." [MF]

"It's just as bad for men who are timid as for women." [MF]

" I [don't know] whether the women have a problem in thinking that they can't express themselves like the men - but it's certainly sure that a lot of the men can't express themselves like The Men!... I don't think it's gender-based. I actually do decide not to say things. Even on the verge of wanting to say something, my heart starts pounding, and I think, 'I'm *not* going to say anything because I *know* I'll get flustered', because I have a style where I tend to talk and I stop a sentence because I bring in a minor qualification, or some sub-clause somewhere - that's my style of talking. And I tend to talk fast. And if I feel uneasy with the listeners and I'm not sure if I'm accepted - because I'm not a College Man and they're not used to me the way they're used to me in the Department - then I consciously decide not to say things, although I feel I've got something important to say. And I've been around a long time... I have strong views about lots of things in this college but I just decided not to get involved... because I feel self-conscious about the way I talk. I'm English - it's not a language problem: it's just the style... Instead of making straightforward intelligent remarks, it's the way of dressing it out to be more clever than it really is... When other people are doing it I can spot it, and laugh with the rest, and appreciate what that person's doing... the inverted sentences and the double negatives." [MF]

The language being described also contains structural echoes of the formal rhetoric of a classical education. It is that, especially, that enables speakers to perform spontaneously and skilfully. The discomfort caused by the use of such a language, as described by women and men, was associated with its powers of exclusion. It has the effect of any jargon by inhibiting those who feel they have an insufficient vocabulary, and through structural polemics keeps people unfamiliar with the rules out of the game. This points to differences in the classical or vernacular origins of the educational systems in which Fellows had been schooled (*Ong, 1987, pp.111-2*), often coinciding with differences of gender, class or academic discipline (humanities *versus* sciences).

Divisions in British education continue to be marked by differences of language, and there are signs that the efforts of King's to attract students (and therefore also Fellows) from a wider spectrum of schools is sometimes audible in formal meetings. There is a newer and less awe-inspiring form of public speech used by some of the Fellows now in their thirties and forties. One respondent described the style as "stream-of-consciousness" and said in admiration of another Fellow's skill in using it:

"It's not assumed: it's that he gets up and thinks aloud... it's goldfish-bowl stuff. He has the confidence that his thinking is worth everybody's attention." [MF]

This last comment contains reverberations of the old tradition of silence and the speaker's responsibility for prior qualitative judgement. Although the language that typifies the newer style is less literary in form and more demotic in vocabulary it is distinguishable from colloquial speech by the order and balance of its syntax. It serves the same purpose in public utterance by controlling the pace of delivery of the speaker's ideas, giving the audience time to absorb the implications of one before presenting them with another.

### Gender and silence

A well-documented difference between masculine and feminine ways of functioning in mixed groups is related to the way that men and women tend to use the time available. As with most aspects of gender, the 'masculine' is seen to be associated with an active role and the 'feminine' with passivity. A speaker in the masculine mode will begin speaking before processes of conceptualization are complete, be ready to talk more frequently, at greater length, and interrupt others while they are speaking. If everybody is functioning in the same mode the result can be "an exciting debate" or "a lively supervision", but if some are functioning in the feminine mode it can result in active speakers "hogging the space". There is a common assumption among 'masculine' speakers that people who are not speaking do not want to take part.

"... the *amount* that men talk. It's actually something I draw attention to when I run seminars..." [MF]

"... it does seem to be the case among students that the male is much more ready to talk, to express an opinion without thinking about the objective value of that opinion ... he really doesn't care very much whether he's talking rubbish or not. He gets excited by a debate and will contribute - which is very good if we want a lively supervision. The woman is much more conscious about everything - much more self-doubting and anxious not to say something that will look foolish or isn't worth saying... The vast majority of the men I teach are self-confident..." [WF]

[A] "I've noticed [in seminars] the way a man... will jump in and interrupt the speaker... they butt in, and talk, and interrupt... and you can see all the women in the room getting really angry. I find it really frustrating and annoying."

[B] "In a way when you are in that seminar situation you often feel if only there was a little bit of space in which you could prepare yourself to ask, you would. But just as you're about to say something somebody butts in... You don't feel you've got that situation in which you can put yourself forward. Maybe a problem that women have is that men are better at pushing themselves forward, and that's why women-only groups work better - because you get that space. You get that little pause." [UG3W]

Although the statements above were made about students, women Fellows had much the same to say about their male colleagues.

"Silence is not well regarded here. It is not seen as making an elegant statement. It's not seen as making a statement of anything except ineffectuality. And [the men] don't understand what they're doing when they are this aggressive... Until they can listen to our silences... they're going to misunderstand." [WF]

One problem is that the skills of active listening are much more difficult to recognize and teach than the skills of public speaking. The culture of King's does expect greater and more immediate articulation than British women generally seem inclined to offer. In this respect women in King's are not different from women elsewhere in British higher education, but as articulation is particularly highly rated in both the College and the University, the handicapping effect of reticence in a mixed society is emphasized. Women's silence does not in fact go unremarked:

"It's in many ways a mystery to me that women say as little as they do... When [the Senior Tutor] first came... she never used to speak on Council... For the first eight years that she was here I barely heard her say a word in public in any meeting. I have a long picture of her being a reluctant speaker, even now, and not saying all that she means a lot of the time... I can't imagine a man as reticent as [her] in public meetings." [MF]

Some of the women Fellows consciously worked together at their participation in public meetings during the year.

" I hope we're getting better. I think I'm saying less and she's saying more!" [WF]

Part of the difficulty is that they are in such a minority on every committee, which "... means we've got to learn how to support each other even when we disagree." [WF] Formal meetings are the context in which the inter-connections and confusions of sex, gender and status can be clearly seen, through the agency of women students and women Fellows as members of the same committees. During the year when committees were being observed for the research 75% of KCSU student representatives were women. Several of the Fellows (including younger women Fellows) commented on the noticeable difference between the apparent ease with which these young women spoke at College meetings and the greater initial reluctance of some of the younger women Fellows. This emphasized contrasts in status between:

(a) the comparative security of students' position, compared with young women Fellows' insecure professional situation. Student representatives have the licence traditionally granted to them in liberal institutions, in the interests of their education, but they do not have voting rights on College committees. They can *only* affect the proceedings by speaking.

(b) the position of women students in groups where possession of knowledge is the apparent subject of evaluation (e.g. supervisions) and groups where their experience as people validates their contribution (e.g. College committees).



## Gender and voice

A difficulty discussed by some of the women Fellows was the problem of finding a public voice. Because men have been involved in education and public affairs for centuries their involvement in public speaking has laid down both a stylistic and aural inheritance. Women and oratory are not so easily associated. Women's traditional association with the private, domestic domain has resulted in a restricted range of tone and volume being identified as 'feminine'. Articulate females of any age are liable to have King Lear's comment on his daughter quoted at them - usually long before they find out he is actually referring to a corpse:

"Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman."

The dilemma is partly the lack of sympathetic role models, and partly the existence of Awful Warnings:

"The spectre of Maggie Thatcher!" [WF]

"I just see that Spitting Image puppet in my mind's eye..." [WF]

Women in King's described two distinct problems: the first is connected with the mechanical means of producing sufficient volume for addressing a large audience, such as for a lecture, and the second is the alteration of pitch and tone. The College is fortunate to have an expert in voice-production on the premises, and he clearly felt that the problem is not restricted to women:

"I've come to the conclusion that no professional lecturers have ever been taught how to speak, they simply don't know how to do it, so they're completely satisfied with their incompetence... they'd better come along and I'd rehearse them and try and make them do it better... I could teach any single one of them in an hour... None of them have the sense to say, 'Teach me how to breathe.'" [MF]

One woman did go to him for instruction before giving her first lecture and was delighted with the result, which not only affected her use of her voice but also increased her self-confidence. When the problem of volume has been solved by relaxation of the throat and proper use of the diaphragm to control the breath, the problem of pitch and tone usually also disappears. Another woman commented on the effect of emotion on the voice:

"It's when I'm angry, or frightened, that I lose control of the pitch. Those are the moments when I need to be able to bring it down to the diaphragm." [WF]

Anger, at least, is a familiar aspect of women's experience at Cambridge.

There are plenty of images, such as the 'shrill harridan' and 'hysterical woman', that help to make women self-conscious about the way they speak and the way they sound. That awareness alone can increase the tension, which tightens the throat, which produces the noise, which summons the image.... There is no shortage of men on the Fellowship who speak indistinctly or harshly, yet they are less immediately threatened than women by a range of derogatory, sound-associated images. Men also have environmental allies in the College buildings, which resonate at a low pitch. The music of boys' clear treble voices penetrates the Chapel walls, but deeper voices are an advantage in getting the spoken word to carry. The Director of Music observed that the chapel building assists deeper voices, and that women have a much wider range of pitch than they normally use. He also discussed the fact that pitch and tone can be affected by the menstrual cycle and menopause, and that many women simply are not aware of the sonority available to them.

### **Gender and status**

Although there is evidence to show that men are as liable as women Fellows to feel inhibited by the oratorical skills of others, there is an important difference between them:

"I think most *men* react by deciding they don't want to speak - they probably have somewhere else where they speak... In the department they have a place where they are important..." [MF]

A far smaller proportion of the women than the men "have a place where they are important" in departments and faculties. Of the women Fellows 21.4% had the status of University Lecturer or Professor compared with 57.3% male University Lecturers, Readers and Professors. If women are inhibited from contributing to College meetings, and do not have the authority of office in faculties or departments, they are in effect doubly silenced.

### **Performance and content**

In interview many respondents raised the subject of the difference between the quality of performance and the content of speeches at public meetings. One identified the nature of an ideal relationship between the two:

"It's a bit like parliament: there has to be a certain quality to the way you say things which complements the quality of what you're actually saying." [MF]

Many described the College's formal culture in theatrical terms, some saying that efficacy relies *more* on the quality of performance than on the content. Markers of quality, in this context, were said to be styles of rhetoric and being "witty and clever".

Fellows also felt that too often confidence of expression had little connection with the quality of what was being expressed. (*See also quotations in 1.4.1: Dissembling*)

"The kinds of ways in which one could recognize that [speakers] are actually thinking, as well as being confident, has very much more to do with ways in which they are able to articulate doubts, or difficulties, or uncertainties (which may also be a form of self-confidence) and the extent to which they do also have... a wide range of precise terms or capacities to express these rather small question marks." [MF]

There is a difference of kind and degree between the confidence needed to deliver a prepared speech convincingly, and that which enables other members of the meeting to articulate their doubts about the content of the speech spontaneously. A skilled performer can inhibit those who lack experience from making their own impromptu contribution.

"There's something very formal about the meetings of the Governing Body, the Council and all the other influential committees, where it's not so much a question of discussing questions as somehow people each playing a particular role - it's some sort of elaborate theatrical spectacle. If you haven't been socialized into this from an early age it can be very off-putting. Obviously the people do learn the roles themselves, but if you're coming from the outside into this it can be very daunting... Even if it's well-intentioned it can be quite stultifying... speaking at the Annual Congregation - terrifying!" [MF]

If the performance has been entertaining and overtly skilful a sense of increased inhibition can fuel resentment among less confident Fellows. Nevertheless, some of those expressing concern about the influence of performance in King's were themselves identified by others as skilful performers. They had no cause for anxiety on that score.

### **Wit and cleverness**

One role played by rhetoric in this context is as a marker identifying a speaker as witty and clever, and cleverness is highly prized in the cultures of the University and the College. When candidates for various posts in King's are considered for appointment their cleverness, and their potential for coping with the cleverness of others, are discussed as important factors. In College meetings it enables a Fellow to respond promptly to criticism of a proposal. The quality of performance is important because of the effect it has in encouraging or discouraging challenges from others, and in its effects on the cohesion of the Fellowship. Speeches in King's are characterized by a humour founded on the pleasurable enjoyment of irony and paradox - the more subtle the degree, the greater the pleasure. This allows the process of discussion itself to contain the potential for entertainment even if the subject is serious. People who are laughing together are confirming their sense of sharing a perspective on life, reinforcing

a sense of fellowship - which is why sexist humour is so destructive in a mixed group. But at the same time as reinforcing the group as a whole, the use of wit helps to sort members of the group into some kind of pecking order (Goodchilds, 1959). Some respondents felt that, in addition to other skills of performance, cleverness had become a goal in itself in King's:

"...erudition and scholarship and proficiency as a researcher are very much subordinate to the capacity to think clearly, be articulate, and present oneself as 'that kind of person'. Because of this emphasis on how ordinarily competent as an English Public Figure... one may be perceived as being, it's a very high standard to try to live up to." [MF]

"It's clear that this college suffers terribly...from, 'Who are the Clever People?' Some people are that, and some people aren't. It's only the clever ones who really count... there isn't really any clear content to this - it's just a question of people fitting this pictured thing... the external thing, the public performance... It's very clear here that there are 'Clever People'. I know... that it's quite widely resented by those who are *not* in that category, and that there are all sorts of tensions associated with that." [MF]

A criterion which restricts the number and kinds of people who can take an effective part in decision-making is discriminatory, and concern was expressed that a culture of cleverness had underlined a kind of elitism in the College. At the same time there was concern about the extent to which the discussion can be allowed to drift in meetings.

### **Ritual and entertainment**

When discussing the College's formal culture Fellows used images of the theatre more frequently than those of ceremonial. Nevertheless the conventions used by the Fellowship in public meetings relate to both ritual and theatre. It is an important distinction, for performance theory shows that ritual is associated with efficacy and theatre with entertainment [*Schechner, 1988, pp.114-15 and 120-21*]. The differences are of intention and effect, and for this reason it is helpful to analyse what is happening in cultures where performance plays an influential role in decision-making. The effect depends on the degrees of institutional and personal authority that a speaker commands and the balance between them as reflected in a performance, consciously or otherwise. This relates directly to the effective power structure in the institution.

"... the way that certain people get picked out as the people that are listened to, and the effect it has on them when they notice it. There can be Congregations where you could give me the list of the people who spoke, and in what order, and it would be possible just to cross some off and say, 'Well they had no effect on the way it went,' without knowing what any of them said. I don't know what the process is of reaching the point of being somebody who [when they speak] 'everybody's got to listen now because what this person is saying is what a lot of people think', and if they're against it then you've really got to

think about it before you support it... There are certain people who represent nobody, but who nonetheless have this effect... these people can make a difference to the way it happens." [MF]

In presenting ideas a speaker draws on institutional authority through ritualistic (formal) elements and reflects his or her personal authority in theatrical (witty / clever) elements. The quality of performance is important because by articulating conflicting points of view speakers themselves become involved in a contest of authority. In a culture of this kind displays of verbal wit and cleverness advertise ability, establish and maintain personal authority, and function as a means of gaining institutional authority for those who want it. Those who can combine a high level of personal authority *and* institutional authority have access to power. High institutional office is not enough and behaviour which reflects this alone is simply regarded as pompous. On the other hand, members who start low in the hierarchy but whose personal authority grows may be rewarded by offers of higher status. Quality of *academic* performance is not the criterion in this case, other than as a qualification for higher professional status, and respondents pointed out that this is one of the main differences between functioning as "a College man" or "a faculty man" (sic). Quality of oratorical performance is important, but when the quality of the performance really does become more influential than the content in an institution it is an indication that the contest for personal authority has become prioritized.

### Formality

There were complaints from some Fellows about the "artificiality" of formal behaviour and language at College meetings.

"It's the dead hand of tradition: we're still having our meetings in the same place that they have for a hundred and fifty years...and in much the same way. Although the people themselves may have different attitudes their mode of behaviour is obviously very conditioned by the structure... But an increasing number of people come from state schools where they wouldn't have had these kind of traditions planted... It certainly can't be functional for the institution to deprive three-quarters of its members from any practical possibility of expressing their ideas, or reacting to the ideas of others. The only purpose could be to maintain the authority of those running the place, to separate them off from the rest. But I would have thought that was unconscious in most cases, given the personalities of the people who are running King's... Perhaps we ought to be a bit more active in trying to knock down this kind of tradition!" [MF]

As a marker of the College's traditional culture formality was perceived by several women Fellows as an expression of its masculine gender and therefore as excluding them. The position of a female Senior Tutor in the College 'Establishment' is not seen to conflict with this but rather to exemplify it, for when she is functioning as

Senior Tutor on College committees she apparently cannot simultaneously function as a woman.

"Somebody said, 'We ought to have a woman on the [X] Committee,' and [Y] said, 'Well we've got the Senior Tutor'. Somebody actually said, 'Yes, but we need a *woman* as well' so they chose [Z]!" [WF]

This was not a comment on the Senior Tutor's personal gender - she was never described in any way as an unfeminine woman. It is simply an example of the way that one woman elected to a previously all-male structure cannot change the gender of that structure. The interplay of genders in the office of Senior Tutor, as it currently exists in King's, is more complex and acute than in any other. The female officer is effectively neutered when functioning in an official capacity at formal meetings, and yet has to be ready at any time to exercise the traditionally feminine role of comforting distressed members of the College or to overawe the masculine excesses of the rugby club. She, in common with other College officers, was very definite about the value of formal language and behaviour as markers which can help to separate them as individuals from their various official functions.

"You *have* to be able to separate one part of you from another. It's absolutely essential when it's your job to be tough with somebody who's been a colleague for years." [Senior Tutor]

The context of a statement as a personal or a representative opinion can be marked by formal modes of address - using titles of office rather than personal names. One College officer described such usage as, "a gentle reminder...of the constitutional arrangements" and saw any further reduction of formality as undesirable:

"... the very involved democratic process which we've evolved to conduct our affairs might be harder to recuperate." [MF]

The extent of the democracy in the process - or, indeed, of the possibility of real democracy - was questioned by some Fellows.

"... this whole question about just how undemocratic the College really is although it doesn't really want to be..." [MF]

Another aspect of formal language and titles is the way they mark different kinds of situation involving the same people. One Fellow pointed out the importance of having clear distinctions between the language and forms of address used between people across the Council table, and those the same people might share on the pillow.

As formal dress, academic gowns constitute an instantly recognizable and unambiguous marker, reminding everybody that whether they are speaker or audience,

they are functioning in an official, not a personal, capacity. A range of attitudes to the symbolic importance of gowns is clear from the way different Fellows wear them. Subtle degrees of envelopment and décolletage are displayed by the Fellowship at Congregation, and some have developed to a fine art the skill of a gown's being technically 'on' but physically virtually 'off'. (Some cut it a bit too fine: at one Congregation a retired Fellow prevented a younger colleague from speaking until he had put his gown on. The Professor clearly felt that the significance of the symbol outweighed the likely importance of the contribution.) When rituals such as the wearing of gowns at formal meetings are dispensed with there is likely to be a compensating adjustment in emphasis to symbolization elsewhere. If there is no visual sign to indicate whether a speaker is functioning in an official or a personal capacity less obvious markers, forms of language and styles of rhetoric, become more critical. It can be easier to move in and out of ritual, from one linguistic mode to another, than constantly to be donning and doffing caps and gowns. But using language alone to mark formality places greater emphasis on the oratorical skills of those involved. It can only work equitably if everybody understands the conventions and is skilled in using them.

Members of the most prestigious College standing committee, the Electors to Fellowships, manipulate (ungowned) a wide range of language and ritual, formal and personal, and move in and out of these conventions consciously but easily. The result of expertise developed on other committees is obvious. Before taking a vote the Provost asks a question such as, "Shall we go formal now, or does anybody want to say something else first?" There is no place for "anybody" in the formal mode, for it is a place where everybody has an official function. This is marked by the moment when each Elector stands and makes the formal declaration: "I do solemnly declare that I will vote for those candidates who are in my judgement the most fit to be Fellows of the College, as a place of education, religion, learning and research."

Much of the effective administration of King's is unofficial and not reflected in written policy. This makes it exceptionally flexible in the hands of those who know how to navigate around the rules, but enigmatic for others. In such a system the distinctions between personal and institutional power are easily blurred and personal qualities become especially important. Many ad hoc arrangements ('gentlemen's agreements') are not formally institutionalized, in order to avoid setting binding precedents. They become part of an elaborate oral tradition. One feature of oral memory is that it can be subject to expedient corporate amnesia.

## King's College Chapel and the Chapel Choir

The base for the most conscious symbolism and public ritual in the College is the Chapel. It is also the place where the College's responsibilities as a guardian of tradition are enacted daily, the Dean and Chaplain embodying religious tradition, and the Director of Music, Organ Scholar and Choir, musical tradition. The Chapel plays a complex and dynamic role in the life of the College, and not just in a religious context. It looms in the background of the collective consciousness in more than a physical sense. Nor is it simply part of a private institution open to the public; its image has passed into international iconography, registering not only a physical locality but cultural and psychological perspectives also. It epitomizes the achievement of European cultures of the past, setting standards in architecture, music and art, and constituting a powerful symbol of excellence. For this reason it presents, for the College, problems beyond the maintenance of the building's fabric alone.

King's has developed a particular institutional philosophy regarding standards. In assessing the academic ability of candidates applying for undergraduate admission Fellows question the routes by which levels of academic competence have been gained, and recognize the achievement of those who have reached a desirable standard without the benefits of advantage. Candidates are likely to be particularly advantaged if they have attended a school which has a selective intake, small classes and specialist teaching. King's has worked hard to increase its intake of undergraduates from the state sector (72% in 1989).

The Chapel Choir has different aims, needs and criteria. It has an unbroken tradition and hard-won reputation for excellence in the authentic performance of early church music - authentic to the extent of being a men-and-boys choir based on the highly specialized training of boy trebles. Such training is provided for the main part by independent schools. By prioritizing authenticity as a criterion for selecting its members the Choir therefore signifies the very educational philosophy from which the College wishes to distance itself. The performance of early church music could be continued with a mixed choir from a generally musical background, as happens in other colleges, but the emphasis on authenticity necessitates a men-and-boys choir. The core of musical activity in the Chapel is therefore exclusively and essentially male, as are the officers of religion.

"There is dramatic maleness in the Chapel - the clergy, the choral scholars, and the choristers. We try to counteract it by having female acolytes, readers and preachers and they have started to be much more noticeable in the last ten years or so. But there are all those men standing there - a vocal majority - and in the case of the choir the high quality of what they do keeps their historical *raison d'être* valid. And I suppose that the authenticity movement in modern music is decidedly in favour of boy choristers. It would be a help if the Church of England could stop being so feeble and dilatory and let women become priests.



Because until it does the Chaplain is likely to be male - simply so that he can have a strong stake in the sacramental worship." [Dean]

Several of the Fellows interviewed commented that the Dean and Director of Music had done much to draw the Chapel and College closer together in recent years; but, paradoxically, through the structural influences of religious and musical tradition the Chapel represents a combination of elitism and sexism, resulting in the best-known and most public face of King's being directly at odds with the College's educational philosophy.

"King's Choir is in public, making records, broadcasting, and all that non-stop. High quality is the watchword and if the social effect of that is elitism it does not make the quality less precious to us." [Dean]

"King's Chapel, probably alone among the Cambridge college chapels, is in a semi-public position... as many people as have heard of King's College have probably heard of it through the choir as through anything else. Members of the public think of it like they think of certain other national institutions - Westminster Abbey, or the Houses of Parliament..." [Director of Music]

"... it's terribly important that a few places somewhere keep that [musical tradition] going... To suppress it in any way would be very harmful. But on the other hand I think we keep it going at some cost in terms of what it implies for our public face." [MF]

### **King's College and King's Choir School**

The source of choristers for the Chapel Choir is King's Choir School. Although the College originally created the school as an educational base for its choristers in the nineteenth century, the actual relationship between the two institutions at the end of the twentieth century is ill-defined. The College is represented in the School's government through the presence of Fellows on its Board of Governors. The School's periodic appeals to the College for additional cash funding, over and above the regular support provided, focuses the conflict of ideologies in the Fellowship between a commitment to state education that is wholehearted, and one that is qualified according to the dictates of tradition. Whatever the technical relationship between the two establishments, the crocodile of choristers in miniature Etonian apparel making their way to and from Chapel is a daily reminder of the College's historic connection with public school education and the values of an exclusive system of education.

"The standard picture [of King's] I saw was of choirboys going across to choir. I really did think that was a far more important part of College than I've discovered it to be... the annual [Christmas] service, and all that." [PGM]

"The picture that academics and the general public have of it are completely different. 'King's: that's choirboys and Chapel and things'..." [UG3M]

The School's publicity directly affects the public perception of the College. The School's major appeal for funds in December 1989, for example, had all the appearance of an appeal by the College ("Light a candle for King's") although the College had not been consulted in its design. The publicity campaign constantly invoked the image of the Chapel and strongly reinforced the image of the College as a traditional, paternalist and masculine institution.

### **An alternative choir**

Several Fellows have suggested that a mixed choir could sing regularly, in addition to the men-and-boys choir. The focus of the problems associated with this is the correlation between frequency of practice and standards of performance. The Chapel Choir can function as well as it does, and attract the business it does, precisely because preparation for daily services means a large repertoire needs only extra polishing to reach concert pitch. A second choir already exists, consisting of the altos, tenors and basses without choristers. A further choir would therefore involve finding time for them to practice and perform, and simultaneously reduce the performance time for the existing choirs. The Director of Music considered the pros and cons of a specific possibility:

" If I had six or eight women of a comparable standard to the Choral Scholars then I couldn't see any reason why they shouldn't sing each Wednesday [with the tenors and basses]... No doubt the Organ Scholar could have as part of his duties taking rehearsals for that so they could be prepared for Wednesdays. But of course, singing once a week, they wouldn't very easily achieve the same standard of work - that isn't to say that by having a large amount of rehearsal you couldn't get them up to the same standard... as far as the Choral Scholars are concerned they are of a standard whereby they can do a different repertoire every day on the basis of one hour's rehearsal... One may find in practice that if one was to advertise for women Choral Scholars at King's, whose duties were going to be to sing once a week... that in fact you wouldn't attract sufficiently high calibre people because they'd want to go to Trinity or Clare where they sing three times a week, or more." [Director of Music]

### **Religious and musical offices in the Chapel**

Research included an examination of the statutory constraints, with the Dean, Chaplain, and Director of Music individually, to see what room for manoeuvre the College might have to reduce sexist aspects of the Chapel. This entailed looking at the responsibilities of each office and the routes by which candidates might reach them. It was clear that although individual holders of office are looking for ways to involve more women in the life of the Chapel, and are working towards this, they are constrained by the systemic sexism in social institutions beyond their control - the origins of church music, and the Synod of the Church of England.

## 2.2 KING'S: THE PEOPLE

### WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN KING'S? 1988-89

#### Non-academic staff

TOTAL	:	182		
women	:	109	=	60%
men	:	73	=	40%

#### Undergraduates

TOTAL	:	369		
women	:	155	=	42.0%
men	:	214	=	58.0%

#### Graduates

TOTAL	:	192		
women	:	42	=	21.9%
men	:	150	=	78.1%

#### Fellows

TOTAL	:	103		
women	:	14	=	13.6%
men	:	89	=	83.5%

#### Women as a percentage of King's students:

ac. years:	79-80	80-81	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88
undergraduate:	35	32	30	31	34	31	37	38	37
graduate:	30	30	27	27	25	24	21	21	22

#### Women as a percentage of graduate students entering King's:

	1987	1988	1989
all	15	31	22
sciences	10	23	6
arts	23	38	31

**Women as a percentage of King's Third Year Undergraduates (1989-1990):**

all	36
sciences	21
arts	50

**Women as a percentage of King's Undergraduates who became King's Graduate Students (1987-89):**

all	23
sciences	4
arts	41

**Women Fellows of King's, 1990:**

	All non-retired Fellows	Women Fellows
Professors and Readers	18	1
University Lecturers	33	3
Non-University Teaching Officers	6	3
Research Fellows	<u>26</u>	<u>8</u>
	83	15

**NB**

*In the absence of systematic monitoring of application and appointment data it is impossible to tell how the numbers or proportions of men and women compare historically at each stage of the processes of application, selection for interview, appointment and promotion. A general picture therefore has had to be identified from evidence supplied by the people who were in the College during the period of fieldwork.*

**2.2.1 FELLOWS**

**Fellowship**

In 1989-90 the Fellowship, excluding retired Fellows, consists of:

	men	women	women as % of total
Professors and Readers	17	1	5.6
University Lecturers	30	3	9.1
NUTOs	3	3	50.0
Research Fellows	18	8	44.4
College Officers	7	1	14.3

Apart from having in common the status of a King's Fellowship, it was clear that Fellows' actual situations, and the ways in which they relate to the College, vary widely. Some respondents spoke of King's as if it were little more than a convenient club, while for others it is their sole employer and the place where they live, work and sleep. A higher proportion of the women are in the latter category than of the men. A few people, who regard their fellowship as little more than jam in the butt of a University post, seemed to have difficulty in identifying with the anxiety of those dependent on fixed-term College appointments.

In theory, a group of colleagues provides mutual support for its members, and this is said to be one of the great advantages of a collegiate university. Fellows said that the Fellowship as a corporate body was friendly in principle, but that Fellows as individuals did not make much of an effort to welcome newcomers. Women felt especially that, "As a woman you're very visible" [WF].

"New Fellows are very much abandoned, and the fortunate ones swim and the others sink... It's a particular problem for women in that they tend to be easily recognizable, but that doesn't mean to say that people go out of their way to do anything about them...there's a masculine, and kind of public school attitude: that everybody's a fag at the beginning and then they work their way up." [WF]

Men and women both made this last point.

The King's Fellowship is so large that for practical purposes it is divided into three equal parts: the lower, middle and upper caucuses. The "public-school" and "regimental" stereotypes were also mentioned by male and female Fellows in descriptions of behaviour in caucus meetings in the Michaelmas Term. These occasions are for the election of members to College standing committees, but incidentally also seem to function as a rite of passage, both for new Fellows and for candidates. The suitability of individual candidates for election is frankly discussed at these meetings, while the candidate is asked to leave the room. Some new Fellows spoke of the "unkindness" and "gratuitous gossip" by colleagues about those standing for election. They were shocked that candidates were kept "hanging around outside in the freezing cold" for an unnecessary length of time while their merits and demerits were discussed by their fellows in comfort and at leisure.

Both junior and senior members spoke of the way that a myth of universal brilliance and the elitist Cambridge ethos have created an environment in which it is hard to admit to having real academic difficulties. A system in which reappointment and promotion depend on the opinions of colleagues, and in which NUTOs may well have to compete with their fellows for University posts, makes the possibility of using those same people as a support in times of difficulty or loss of confidence more remote. Several Fellows spoke of the intense sense of isolation at such times.

"... that awful sense that everybody is reading your work, tearing it to pieces, and talking about you behind your back. It's horrific!" [WF]

"King's certainly has... a nervous, edgy atmosphere that's there among the Fellows:

a competitive keeping-an-eye-out-for-who-all-the-rivals-are, and how you rate." [WF]

Any academic can be subject to this, but women are more affected by an environment in which as members of a minority they feel they have to prove themselves, where they are likely to be junior members in a subject run by older men and, in College-funded posts, where their continued presence in King's is dependent on their fellows. The younger women especially felt that this generally reduced the effective potential of the College as a support base.

"The thing of course is, 'They'll all be out on their ears in four years, so it doesn't really matter.' Presumably we'll just be constantly replaced. If none of us grows old in College... It would be nice to see more older women coming onto the Fellowship." [WF]

For this reason the creation of the King's Women Fellows Group has represented a significant improvement. Although its members are drawn from the Fellowship, they come together as women whose common difficulties in a male-dominated establishment override any subject-based differences.

### Marriage and Fellowship

Academic, administrative and College-based social life is scheduled as if King's were a residential community of people with no major domestic responsibilities or commitments outside the College, beyond those associated with a University appointment. The actual situation is different:

	<i>% of women Fellows</i>	<i>male Fellows</i>
Resident in College:	50%	19% of total male fellowship
Have/have had children:	28.6%	73.8% of male respondents
University appointments:	21.4%	66.3% of total male fellowship

Fellowship is institutionalized in Cambridge as a reflection of the colleges' origins in male-only residential communities. The nature of those communities has changed radically since the model was created, the majority of fellows now being married and spending most of their social lives elsewhere. King's acknowledges that its senior

members might be married by allowing spouses to sleep on the premises, and by inviting them to selected social occasions.

### **Dual-career households and 'telegamy'**

'Telegamy', a marriage existing over a distance (a word whose coinage is variously claimed by members of the Universities of Cambridge and Geneva), is a global academic speciality. During the fieldwork period of this project there were three intercontinental marriages in King's: three Fellows or their partners commuted severally between Cambridge and Spain on a weekly basis, Cambridge and Germany on a three-weekly basis, and Cambridge and Australia for months at a time. In all these marriages both partners are academics, and two involve children. It is common in such arrangements to find that one salary is virtually absorbed by the costs associated with the necessary support systems, especially when full-time help with childcare is necessary. This is also true of more localized dual-career households, whether for reasons of regular travel or because the earning potential of one partner has been depressed by the delay or interruption of an inflexible career pattern.

Several respondents who have had children and who are married to academics spoke of strategies that allowed both partners to write and publish. In all cases discussed the career of one partner had, according to standard career development, been either delayed or never fully developed. (The only exceptions to this were households involving men's second marriages. The fact that the men's careers were well established before children of a second marriage were born meant that the fathers were prepared to be very involved in family care. A sense of having "... missed out on the children..." or having "... messed it up the first time around..." was also an important factor.) Respondents all said that when the family had needed constant attention it had been impossible for both partners to be writing a book at the same time, and they had taken it in turns to "... have a book on the go"[MF]. Most who spoke of this had found it had more or less worked, except that in the case of sudden domestic urgencies (usually illness) the partner who was writing had also to be prepared "... to drop the book and help" [MF].

% % %

### **King's Women Fellows Group**

The King's women Fellows had met several times to set up the research project (see 3.1: *Background to the research project.*) At the beginning of the Michaelmas Term in the project's first year they agreed that to meet as a group helped to create a sense of mutual support among them, and decided to continue to meet twice a term.

Members of different ages were asked at the end of the year for their opinion of how the group was working. Although everybody agreed that it always seemed difficult to find time to meet, the occasions themselves were described as enjoyable, providing a "comforting" environment of a kind not otherwise available in the College and which the members welcomed. At this level it performs a valuable function as a support group. As usual with groups of this kind there was felt to be a sub-grouping of older and younger women, but this was seen to be a reflection of natural differences of age, generation and experience and not a source of friction. In fact women from both ends of the age spectrum felt that the group had improved communication between younger and older Fellows, and that this was of particular value to the younger Fellows.

"The College has actually been transformed for me by the Women's Group... It's made an enormous difference... When I get outside the College I realize how lucky we are." [WF]

At the beginning of the Michaelmas Term of the project's second year the group arranged a day of assertiveness training. Half the women Fellows attended, and described it as "very helpful indeed". The group is seen as playing an important role in making entry to the Fellowship potentially easier for new women Fellows than it has been in the past.

% % %

### 2.2.2 STUDENTS

In 1989-90 the student body consists of:

undergraduates	:	359
4th year	:	4
research students	:	167
other graduate students	:	31

#### Undergraduates

Comments by undergraduates about their experiences on Open Days and during the admissions process showed that many had come to Cambridge with no knowledge of the different traditions and reputations of the various colleges. On these occasions some students had happened on King's by accident (often in retreat from what they described as "heartier" or "more arrogant" colleges) and were struck by the friendliness of junior and senior members, some had come on the recommendation of former students, and a few came in direct contravention of their teachers' instructions. Those who did have prior information were not necessarily any better informed:



"My headmistress said, 'Try an Open Day in Cambridge - but don't try King's or Trinity', so I promptly came to King's... She told me it was full of Etonians and Harrovians and I wouldn't stand a chance." [UG3W]

"I had absolutely no intention of coming to Cambridge for ages. Somebody told me, when I was about fourteen, that everybody at Oxford and Cambridge paid for themselves, and this myth was built up that nobody went there with A-level grades - they just paid and went!" [UG3W]

Several felt that characteristic differences between colleges are becoming less marked as the result of an increase in the proportion of students from schools without a tradition of Oxbridge entry.

"[They] just don't know the traditional reputations...more people are making open applications and just want to come to Cambridge and don't care about the college, and then maybe the distinctions become blurred between colleges." [UG1M]

The King's Myth, referred to repeatedly by both Fellows and students in interview, is that members of the College are more tolerant, radical, left-wing and politically active than members of other colleges - giving rise to the optional usage of 'Kingsy-Lefty' as an adjective or noun. In addition to Kingsy-Lefties are those identified (essentially by others) as Trendy-Lefties.

[A]"The Trendy-Lefties in King's are almost invariably from independent schools.

[B] You can tell by how good their clothes are! There's no way that working class people can afford clothes like that - that look that trendy. They can't be surviving on their grants." [PGM]

Even those junior and senior members who spoke of a "myth" felt there had recently been a change in the student culture. Some saw this reflected in a shift among King's students away from an image of political activism.

[A]"There's been a shift not so much from left to right, but from left to total apathy.

[B] In our year everyone goes around in black and talks about Marx, and the year below everyone goes around in purple and talks about rowing!" [UG2M]

During the period of fieldwork the atmosphere in the College Bar was described as being somewhat less tolerant and occasionally more aggressive than formerly. Some identified it as a result of tension between the sexes, others of tension between social classes, yet others of conflict between political ideologies. The most common analysis was that the change is associated with an increase in the proportion of 'Thatcher's Children' among undergraduates: students typically interested in Cambridge as a route to the City, or in any case as a meal-ticket first. The presence in King's of students who are not primarily interested in higher education for its own sake, and essentially not as a

route to academic life, was not seen as a new phenomenon. But several Fellows felt that their influence was more marked than previously, either by force of numbers or through the influence of political factors external to the College. The aims of such undergraduates were said to be reflected in "mark-grubbing" and in the kind of competitive social behaviour which was seen to be advantageous in financial dealings. Others saw this simply as a form of aggressively masculine behaviour, common elsewhere in Cambridge but formerly - by tradition or myth - less common in King's. Several respondents associated its appearance in the College with the blurring of traditional distinctions between colleges mentioned earlier.

Whatever the cause or causes, during the first year of fieldwork both male and female students complained of antisocial behaviour by a minority that disrupted others' enjoyment of the main social area in the College. There were specific objections to "rugger buggers", the singing of sexist songs and various aspects of a "vomit culture". These specific complaints were less marked in the second year of fieldwork. The entry for King's in the *Cambridge University Alternative Prospectus 1991-93*, published by the Cambridge University Students' Union, contains the unambiguous statement,

"King's bar is not a haven for chauvinist boaties and rugby players."  
[CUSU, 1990. p.1]

Women complained about the masculinity of the environment of Cambridge in general, but men also objected to "... forms of masculine excess". It is not only women who are adversely affected in an environment organized to cater for a stereotyped masculinity:

"My boyfriend's quite quiet, and he feels we need something for the quiet not-very-confident men as well. He's a bit envious that there's so much going on to be supportive of women." [UG3W]

Enquiries about opportunities in King's for men to discuss gender or aspects of social conditioning, beyond an academic study, produced the information that:

"There was an... Anti-Sexist Group in King's. They said about the Women's Group, 'It's not fair. What do you talk about? Why can't we come?' and they decided to set up a men's group... There were about three joint meetings - it was a complete disaster! It just ended up with the blokes just spouting *all* the time and nobody else saying anything! At the second one there were two men there and about five or six women, and that was really good. But it died shortly after that." [UG3W]

At the time of writing (May 1990) there is a proposal to set up a University men's group, as the result of a successful seminar series on *Men and Feminism* in St John's College).

## Graduate students

Graduate students' descriptions of what and who had influenced their decision to read for a higher degree indicate that a general difference of experience between the sexes still exists - although none of the graduates interviewed spoke of "drifting" into graduate work in the way that several male Fellows remembered having done (*see 1.1: Point of entry*). For all of them, the decision had been a positive one. Men had tended to be more confident than women that their work would be of the necessary standard to attract funding, and they described having been more actively encouraged by academics than the women did. Some of the women said their academic ambitions had not been taken seriously. A typical story was,

"I said to my supervisor, 'I'm thinking of doing a PhD', and he just said, 'Oh yes?' and changed the subject." [PGW]

In addition, women's anxieties about the clash between the development of their own and a partner's career, and between establishing an academic career and a family, and in some cases pressure from their families to "settle down and produce children", all made the decision more problematic. In the very nature of such problems they tend to become more pressing rather than less, with the passage of time. Some male Fellows do not seem to appreciate this.

"Once you've decided to do another degree you might just as well get on with it" [MF]

Other seemed to accept it as inevitable:

"Only one of my graduate students has dropped out, and that was because of the needs - demands - of her husband. But we always knew she was locked into that problematic relationship." [MF]

Several women graduate students were involved in predicting in some detail the probable development of their lives over the next two decades, trying to work out how best to avoid the worst of the anticipated conflicts. They saw the academic profession as a rigidly structured career which makes no concessions to the needs of family life. On the whole they could not reconcile the idea of academic work with a career that had anything but a masculine, continuous pattern. The result was anxiety and resentment, and in a few cases a decision or prediction that they would not even try to establish an academic career. This is a point at which a graduate's whole self-confidence can be extremely vulnerable to collapse (*See 1.6: Collapse of confidence*). 'Domestic' causes might be disguised in a range of more academically acceptable reasons for not completing.

Some graduate students did speak of conscientious and supportive supervisors, but there were many complaints about both the quality and quantity of supervision. There was widespread dissatisfaction, especially among arts graduates (where most of the women graduates are), and a feeling that graduate students get a poor return for the money their presence provides. They tended to hold the College responsible for unsatisfactory supervisors. Common causes for complaint were:

- 1       that the College had accepted graduate students for whom it could not provide supervisors with relevant subject expertise (and that it would be "more honest" not to accept them);
- 2       lack of a clear explanation of the nature of graduate supervision and what both parties should expect from it (this echoed similar complaints from Fellows);
- 3       no discussion of common difficulties in working and writing, or suggestions for strategies to cope with them - rather the sense that such difficulties are necessary challenges to be overcome alone;
- 4       no forum for an informal discussion of tentative ideas during the process of writing, which some graduates expected supervisors to provide;
- 5       supervisors who say they are too busy to see graduates more than once a term / twice a year;
- 6       lack of useful responses by supervisors.

"Well I get... no comment at all, *ever*. He hasn't written a single thing on what I've written so far... With not having any help over a period you can lose confidence in what you're doing... he knows nothing of my [historical] period and I literally get sixteen pages of typos from him." [PGW]

Most arts graduate students interviewed worked in their own rooms for most of the time. For some, finding suitable accommodation within comparatively easy reach of the College had been a time-consuming and expensive problem. For non-King's graduate students in particular meals in Hall (lunch especially) provides a social focus. It is the time and place where they are most likely to "bump into people who might talk to you". Isolation still seems to be a major problem for many arts graduates.

"If you work in your room and don't get into the habit of coming in for meals you can really work your way into a depression very quickly. The tea-room in

the UL becomes a Mecca, too... For some reason the College Bar doesn't work like that... It smells too much like a pub out of opening hours." [PGW]

"[The Bar] reminds you that you're not one of the undergraduate crowd any more."  
[PGM]

The working conditions of science graduates were often quite different, providing them not only with a physical base - and therefore some visible status - in the department, but also with a group of colleagues.

"I have a desk in an office in the department that I share with three other PhD students, and there are ten others as well...we always talk to each other and it's far less intimidating with a fellow student than with a member of staff. That's really very helpful, very useful and very encouraging..." [PGW]

"...when your work's not going well then no amount of encouraging you and telling you it's all right and it will pick up will really change how you feel. But I think it's valuable to have lots of people around you who understand..."  
[PGW]

Comments such as these contrast markedly with complaints by undergraduate women that science is studied in an environment of strong individual competition.

Graduates had mixed feelings about the Graduate Room, and about the facilities provided for them generally. Several resented the removal by the College of rooms formerly designated for their use, without a comparable substitute. It was seen to epitomize the College's lack of real concern for the quality of their existence. Graduates generally felt the College could be more generous in the size of its budget for the Graduate Society. A meeting of graduate women also expressed impatience with what they saw as a College assumption that "parties are the answer to everything".

### **Mature students**

Mature undergraduates represent a very small proportion of the student body in King's - between two and three per cent. The College has a special competition for the entry of mature students and has used a quota system. Apart from these distinctions at the point of entry mature students are expected to function like "standard" students once they have been accepted. The academic structures of Cambridge University and King's, for nearly all courses, are designed as three consecutive years, each including three highly intensive, eight-week residential terms of full-time study. It is a congested and inflexible pattern, making no concessions to people who are not free to study full-time. Courses now being developed elsewhere in the country, with mature students specifically in mind, use models such as,

"...a flexible, coherent system offering a mix of modes of learning and teaching, full and part-time study, with a wide variety of opportunities to enter

and leave the system; where teaching and research, degree and short course opportunities are equally valued."

[NIACE, 1989 p6]

Such courses are likely to attract an increasing proportion of the growing numbers of mature students entering higher education nationally. Local people with families, for whom Cambridge is the nearest university, may continue to have to use the existing Cambridge format or none at all. It does not fit in with the routines of family life any more comfortably for a parent as non-resident student than it does for a parent as non-resident Fellow.

Problems highlighted by mature students were mostly financial, and those associated with maintaining established relationships as an independent adult outside the College while living as a junior (usually a "boarder") within it. The need to maintain an independent home, and to find reasonably paid work during the vacation to do so, were aspects of both these. The use by students of women as unofficial counsellors (*see 2.2.3: Stress*) can be especially marked in the case of mature women, with the risk that these can develop the role as part of a fail-safe strategy (*see 1.4.1: 'Fear of success' and fail-safe strategies*).

### **Student parents**

The problems of a clash between family and academic structures that affect Fellows are likely to be even greater for student parents. They are not involved in administration as much as Fellows, but neither do they have an academic salary to finance childcare. Although they may be able to negotiate the times of supervisions (given a cooperative supervisor and supervision partner/s) they have no control over the times of lectures. In any case, it was apparent that supervisors are not always cooperative. The cancellation at no notice of a supervision - for which a student parent may have had to make elaborate childcare and travel arrangements - increases students' frustrations and complications, especially if such childcare depends on the goodwill of neighbours or relatives. The feeling that they are constantly having to ask for special treatment can inhibit undergraduate parents from even attempting to negotiate a less conflicting timetable. The problem is especially acute for single parents, and is sometimes insoluble during school half-term holidays. One single-parent described the crisis when University exams coincided with her children's half term (a problem the College helped to alleviate on an individual basis). Both undergraduate and graduate parents spoke of the urgent need for flexible childcare schemes providing care for short-term (2/3 hours), after-school and half-term facilities at a reasonable price. The kind of childcare that may be both necessary and possible for a household financed by two professional salaries is likely to be beyond the reach of student parents.

### **KCSU Student Women's Group**

This group meets once a week during full term, attendance fluctuating between four and about fifteen according to the subject and competing attractions. Guest speakers are invited from within and outside the College, and subjects range from health issues, and aspects of the law that especially affect women, to discussions with senior women about academic careers and the experience of working at Cambridge. Although only a minority of women students attend its meetings the Group serves a useful 'networking' purpose, receiving and distributing information and publicity of particular interest to women students.

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### **2.2.3 COMMUNITY CARE**

#### **Pastoral care**

The safety-net provided by the College to help students with non-academic problems consists of the offices of Chaplain and Lay Dean, combined with a system of academics acting in the role of 'personal tutor'. It is an arrangement inherited from the past, and students' comments indicated the existence of a gap between what they felt their needs were and what personal tutors often actually provided. Most Fellows have little or no training in counselling, and were regarded generally by student respondents as useless as counsellors for personal problems. Some Fellows felt that the most important role for a personal tutor was to act as a channel rather than necessarily to have counselling skills themselves, and that it is particularly valuable to have somebody familiar with academic stresses fulfilling this function. In either case good contact between tutor and student is necessary for the system to work when it is most needed.

"It's a bit of a redundant thing - because there's no doubt that there are plenty of people to talk to... By definition if you have got a problem and you have got friends - I mean, you don't go and discuss them with a stranger. He is a stranger, so it's a bit stupid to go and discuss it with somebody who's there who you don't really know but you just go and discuss with him because he's the person you discuss it with!" [UG1M]

Some personal tutors were mentioned with enthusiasm by tutees but most students said they had scarcely met their tutors. Some were described as performing their responsibilities unwillingly and superficially. One of the problems was seen as an ambiguity in the role of personal tutors:

"The relationship with people like [the Senior Tutor], [the Financial Tutor] and so on is good. That's partly a reflection on them and partly on the fact that one has a basis for the relationship, which isn't on the fake basis of, 'We're here to support you,'... because [personal tutors] are also here to throw us out if we fail our exams or if we keep a cat." [UG3M]

Very few of the students expressed positive approval of the system, seeing it more as a palliative for the College's conscience than an effective support structure, and most rejected the idea of going to their tutor with the sort of problem that might cause them real anxiety. Male students, especially, said that they seldom discussed personal problems with tutors, preferring to rely on the support of friends, often women. Among student respondents, more women than men spoke of providing informal counselling and support for friends, as well as being involved in more formal support groups (Linkline, Women's Refuge). Women students more than their male contemporaries may be trying to cope not only with their own problems, but with those of their friends as well. Several students suggested that the College should have a trained counsellor attached to the Tutorial Office (*see also Women's Tutor, below*).

... a Counsellor, not just a Women's Tutor, so that men can go as well and it's not somebody seen as dealing specifically with 'women's problems'. I imagine most men are as screwed up as the women students as well." [UG1W]

"...some of the male undergraduates said to me that they found it very difficult to go to anybody with their problems, not because there simply wasn't anybody there available, but that they weren't expected to have problems..." [MF]

A point made by Fellows, but not by students, was that problems which may surface during a student's time at university are not necessarily caused by their experience as an undergraduate. For some, it may be the first time that they have had access to a system of counselling which can help them come to terms with long-term problems, possibly associated with family relationships or in any case not arising from their situation at Cambridge.

### **Counselling**

A glance at the 'contents' column of the CUSU Women's Handbook for 1989-90 indicates the existence of so many threats to women's mental and physical health that it is only surprising that there are not more casualties than there are. Staff at the University Counselling Service know that they only see a proportion of those actually needing help. They are aware that it is considered socially more acceptable for women to consult them than for men to do so, but they are especially concerned by the rising incidence of eating disorders that come to their attention, the majority among women students.



Staff of the Counselling Service spoke of close links with King's through the involvement of the Senior Tutor in the work of the Counselling Service. Members of the Service also expressed frustration at the inadequacy of their resources, and the degree of complacency with which they feel their reports are sometimes received in the University. In the academic year 1988-89, 6.7% of the total population of King's used the Counselling Service, 70% of those being self-referred.

## **Stress**

A senior woman academic from a London college said recently, "I've often thought that for some reason Cambridge just attracts neurotic women." Nothing has been found during the research to indicate that this is so. There is evidence, on the other hand, that a proportion of the very intelligent and able women who do come to Cambridge manifest worrying levels of psychological stress during their time as students and that this is in spite of efforts to select "robust, self-confident women"[MF] at interview. Evidence that this has been noticed at school level, and may directly affect applications to Cambridge by women, is contained in a letter received from a headteacher (see *Appendix 5*) after this project was featured in a national newspaper. Staff in his "traditional" school, as he described it, used to encourage girls to apply to Cambridge but now positively discourage them because of the history of stress-related illnesses observed among women at this university.

One reason that academics have congregated for centuries in supportive communities of like-minded colleagues is that intelligent and sensitive people, regardless of their sex, suffer levels of stress which can lead to illness if they have to work in environments of constant discouragement and harassment. Women in Cambridge are not peculiar in this respect - just subject to a more stressful existence than most men in a masculine working and social environment.

## **Security**

Women often feel not only uncomfortable but also vulnerable in environments characterized by overt masculinity, which is one reason that some prefer to work from a base in a women's college. A sense of personal security is a prerequisite for the development of self-confidence and self-esteem. Women students in King's articulated both an anxiety about their physical safety and a feeling that their concern was not taken sufficiently seriously by the College administration. Statistics indicate that in Britain men more than women tend to be the subject of physical attack, especially from strangers. As victims of violence women are more liable than men to assault of a sexual nature, and this more likely than not from a man whose identity they know. Having reiterated a need for good lighting on routes between central locations and residences, women students in discussion expressed anxiety about feeling vulnerable in the context

of their own rooms. They felt that there was nowhere that gave them the sense of the security of a home base - that was really their own territory which they could secure against intruders, including 'official' ones. There were complaints from women students of male maintenance staff entering their study-bedrooms after a quick knock, with no pause for a reply or to give them a chance to "make yourself decent". There was no suggestion that staff were deliberately intending to catch them undressed; the complaint was that they themselves could not control the entry of other people into their room.

"... you can keep your own door locked if you're worried about intruders - on the other hand... I had workmen coming into my room before I was up some mornings. Just walking into my room!... They didn't knock or anything!" [UG3W]

This is in spite of recommendations in the College's official handbook for students:

"Students are advised to check that any tradesman requiring access to their room is a *bona fide* member of staff, by asking to see his identification card."

But other comments illustrate the difficulty of installing a system that suits all needs:

"It's so annoying that we've suddenly got to have the Market Hostel door locked at all times...There are so many stairs, if you've got to run down and answer a doorbell it's such a nuisance." [UG3W]

Research into aggression in the workplace shows that when people feel less vulnerable they are more likely to develop the kind of confident demeanour that actually makes them less vulnerable, as long as their attitude does not become either *careless* or *aggressive*. The cooperation of people who may not themselves feel vulnerable is necessary in order to protect not only those who do, but also those who do not.

"As far as the individual is concerned, the most striking point to note is the higher level of anxiety in our younger age group of women (the under 25's) regardless of their occupational group. This was coupled with a lower likelihood that they would take obvious precautions to avoid attack. These results, which reinforce similar findings...show the need for much greater awareness in this age group of the actual difficulties they are likely to encounter. The only other groups with similar general worries were those who had already been attacked... Our results may be interpreted within existing theories and frameworks about the nature of harassment, aggression and violence in the workplace. Such perspectives highlight the need for policies and strategies to deal with such problems, and for the commitment and resources to implement preventive measures and to initiate training, which will translate policy into practice."

[Phillips and Stockdale, 1989]

Only women students complained about the lack of privacy in their study-bedrooms and "intrusion" in the way in which they lived in them.

"The trouble with the College hostels is that they are an uneasy mix of bedsit-flat-type things - in which you would be in charge of the thing and you rented it, and you should be able to do what you like in it - and this boarding-school-type situation in which the hostel keeper feels she has a right to dictate whether you have somebody staying in your room or not, or whether you put X number of posters up on your wall and they might catch fire." [UG3W]

The institution of 'bedders' was not popular with student respondents, although some students enjoyed talking to individual bedders. Nobody seemed clear about exactly what a bedder should be expected to do - except that it is not her job to make the bed. Generally there was a preference for the idea of having domestic cleaning materials and equipment provided for students to clean their own accommodation.

### **'Women's Problems'**

Some women students also talked about the lack of sympathetic cooperation from tutors (and even doctors) when their work is hampered by the effects of heavy and painful menstruation, or symptoms of premenstrual syndrome. These are features of the lives of many women, often also affecting the lives of the men who live with them. Although a degree of stoicism may be necessary to cope with natural and regularly occurring pain, it is important for young women to know that their requests for help are taken seriously and treated sympathetically. Severe menstrual pain can be a sign of serious medical problems.

In considering the conditions necessary for providing equality of opportunity the pleading of 'special needs' for part of the community highlights a complex dilemma associated with attitudes to health and to pain in our society. Women who suffer regularly from debilitating periods may be perfectly *healthy* but their academic performance may be temporarily affected adversely nonetheless. There appears to be a general reluctance among colleges and the University to advertise the special working arrangements that can be made, during examinations for example, in respect of this situation. This seems to be the result of anxieties (a) that the facilities might be abused, and (b) that it increases the perception of women as somehow inferior to men (in whom bleeding and pain are usually associated with illness or accident).

The other 'women's problem' richly endowed with myth and legend is the menopause. There was more than a suggestion that some academics are wary of appointing women of "a certain age" [MF] (although the age of menopause varies widely) because menopausal women are said to be unreliable, or unreasonable, or hysterical, or all of the above. None of the respondents expressed such an opinion directly, but several repeated anecdotes about others who had. It is such anecdotes which help to maintain myths and sustain prejudicial attitudes.

## Women's Tutor

Most of the women students in discussion groups wanted the College to appoint a woman as a Women's Tutor. Female student representatives pressed hard for this, and the request also came from women at the Open Meeting with the Equal Opportunities (EO) Steering Committee. They felt that they would feel able to approach a Women's Tutor more easily than male tutors with personal problems, that women are more helpful than men in the case of specifically female physical problems, and that women are likely to deal more sympathetically than men with complaints of discrimination or harassment on grounds of sex.

The request for a Women's Tutor is an important symptom of something not working in what is meant to be a 'mixed' community, especially one in which nearly half the undergraduates are women. An immediate response is necessary, but the appointment of a special tutor is neither the only, nor necessarily the best, way of eliminating the underlying cause in the long term. There are four main drawbacks to creating such an office:

- 1 It institutionalizes the sexual polarization of the community which currently causes many of the problems that women experience. By setting women's needs in a special category, rather than incorporating them thoroughly into the management of all aspects of academic and social life, it will tend to increase the marginalization of women and feminine values.
- 2 It reinforces the association between *women* and *personal problems* and does not address the real underlying problem: that gender stereotyping makes it is harder for men than for women to admit (to themselves or to anybody else) that they have personal problems; or to learn to cope with them; or to be prepared - or expected - to be sympathetic and helpful with other people's.
- 3 The existence of a Women's Tutor provides an excuse for already uncooperative tutors (male or female) to feel that the particular needs of women in a masculine environment have been catered for, and that they therefore do not need to make any special effort in respect of women students.
- 4 In a college with about 200 women students the office of Women's Tutor is likely to be time-consuming for the person appointed. Students have specified that they want the officer to be a woman. Women's academic careers need if anything less rather than more delay and interruption, and even with extra time-allowance in compensation, the job could effectively slow the career-

development of a young academic. The kind of work it would involve is precisely that which does not attract academic appointment or promotion in the University, and which confirms an association between *women and tutoring* as opposed to *women and academic advancement*. If a senior woman academic is appointed as Women's Tutor the responsibilities of the post would restrict the time available to her for serving on senior academic committees, in the College or the University.

Members of the Women Tutors' Group at Oxford University, during a discussion arranged to collect information for this project, said that the post of Women's Tutor is probably most helpful only as an interim measure, to provide support for women students while the system of personal tutors is being reviewed, and until the number of women in the Fellowship increases. Although acutely aware of the problems of being female in a masculine environment, they were also very conscious of the long-term counter-productive effects of creating a permanent office for a Women's Tutor in a mixed college.

#### **Harassment - sexual and otherwise**

*(During the main period of fieldwork for this project, the academic year 1989-90, CUSU organized a sexual harassment survey throughout the University [See Appendix 7]. This project did not therefore seek specifically to raise the issue for discussion, to avoid giving it an artificial emphasis, but discussion of sexual harassment arose spontaneously during interviews and group discussions. It was not part of this project's brief to collect details of specific cases, and one or two past cases referred to in outline were already known to College officers. By April 1990, publication and discussion of the CUSU survey report and of this project's Interim Report, and a general heightening of awareness of the issues involved in sexual harassment through the media, has already begun to affect the previous sense of a 'corporate deafness' and made discussion easier.)*

'Sexual harassment' is a phrase now widely used but not as often defined. The definition used in the BBC's 'Equal Opportunities Guide' is typical of those used by such employers as do have a stated policy:

*"...behaviour that involves persistent and inappropriate comments, actions, suggestions or physical contact of a sexual nature that is objectionable or causes offence." [My italics]*

It refers, above all, to the effect on the person receiving the attention, and less to specific actions than to the intentions of the harasser. The adoption of a policy statement on the definition of sexual harassment, and the development of strategies for handling

complaints, is effectively a formal statement by an institution that its members and employees are responsible for being aware of the effect of their actions on others. It also removes any onus newcomers may feel *necessarily* to accept the traditions of a community in this area of interpersonal behaviour, if they find them personally offensive.

The stereotypical university harasser of global myth is the lecherous male academic who obliges the stereotypically innocent young female undergraduate to receive his sexual favours, under threat of academic down-grading if she does not comply. But men are also liable to be harassed by women, men by men, women by women, and any category of student, academic and staff might be involved as harasser or as victim of any other. This does not, as one male Fellow lightly observed, illustrate that universities are simply places of "Byzantine sexual complexity", but rather that universities are places where men and women - young, middle-aged and old - are involved in interconnected, overlapping, and potentially chaotic power relationships.

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment first. It is a form of power play, not a kind of foreplay. It is primarily a form of abuse, by one person of another, using sex as a channel for an attempt at control. The University and colleges set up asymmetrical professional relationships where people may often be working one-to-one. In cases where a senior abuses a junior it is also the abuse of a professional position of trust, and therefore inevitably involves the institution that provides the post. Although either person in such a relationship may actually be open to sexual exploitation by the other, the intrinsic imbalance of formal power places a greater responsibility on the one with greater institutional authority. In this setting the development of a sexually intimate relationship may involve some degree of coercion [*Pope, in Gabbard, 1990*]. The presence of mature students may seem to complicate the picture, because the age difference between a senior and junior member may be very small - or, indeed, the conventional order be reversed. But the responsibilities of institutional authority remain the same, as they do between academics and graduate students, or between Fellows of different professional status.

Some respondents suggested that the harassment of women by men was often more the result of men's under-developed social skills than of deliberate intent. Others said that although it was unconscious it was nonetheless intentional, as the expression of a general attitude of domination. The culture of Cambridge University (including King's) encompasses the expression of a whole range of masculine attitudes that many women actually find offensive, on a scale from 'mildly' to 'intensely'. Harassment which includes sexual innuendo or explicit acts is a form of behaviour which expresses such attitudes. It was clear from interviews that there are also men who object to such behaviour, undergraduate and graduate men being noticeably more outspoken in their

criticism than male Fellows (*see 'Undergraduates', above*). Men's comments were more about feeling offended by the behaviour of other men towards women than of having felt harassed themselves, although there were also reports of the sexual harassment of men by men.

### **Sexuality in King's**

*NB The word 'gay' here refers to homosexual men only, and 'out gays' to men who have made their homosexuality known, whether to friends only or to the world in general through a variety of codes - the most unambiguous being a sticker or badge displaying a pink triangle.*

Student representatives (all women) on the Equal Opportunities Steering Committee asked for this report to contain a section on sexuality in King's. This request was made after the College had received the project's interim report, and after the bulk of the fieldwork had been completed. The following observations are therefore made on the basis of a review of interviews and discussions in which questions about sexuality had not been specifically asked, but in which some spontaneous comments had been made, and on some additional interviews with groups of students.

Sexual and social identity were discussed by many of the women respondents, and by male respondents who identified themselves as gay. The analysis of interviews with gays cast an interesting light on the situation of women at Cambridge. This relates in general to their position as members of minority social groups in the community, and specifically to the experiences of those who do not wish to conform to an overtly masculine stereotype. (Although this category also includes heterosexual men, it was gays who spoke most directly about the associated problems).

Gay respondents felt that, for the most part, undergraduates interact with senior members almost entirely in an academic context and that as their sexuality had more to do with their social life than with their academic life the mere fact that they are gay had little impact on their academic work. This contrasts sharply with the comments of women students and Fellows, who felt their sex was highlighted by men even in academic contexts (*see 1.4: Women in a mixed college.*),

"An obvious difference [between gays and women] is that I can, if I choose, hide my sexuality from any supervisor who may be hostile." [UG3M]

The situation for graduates was felt to be somewhat different. Graduate respondents referred to the relationship between student and mentor / supervisor at graduate level as ideally representing the regeneration of academic ideas. Most felt close personal identification between student and supervisor to be important, some referring to their supervisors as models for their own academic futures. Gay students saw a difference

of sexuality as a possible difficulty if it represents for either party an obstacle to close intellectual identification (*see 1.5: Women's Academic Work*).

In the context of the identity dilemma facing women with academic ambitions at Cambridge, where the existing academic stereotype is masculine and most models of academic success are male (*see 1.4.1: Women's Integrity as Women*), one gay respondent discussed the tension between institutional stereotype and personal integrity created by the Church of England's stance on homosexuality.

### A minority group

One aspect of the College's tradition of humane liberal tolerance has been the caricature of King's in Cambridge and beyond as, "...a college 'full of queers and hippies'" [MF]. Students described the image as still having currency among their contemporaries in other colleges as a "joke" and a "tease". Gay respondents described King's as a generally "supportive" community for out gay students.

"I don't know what they think privately, but...they've been indoctrinated into the academic liberal tradition. They know what to say and what not to say."  
[PGM]

(So many supporters in King's wore stickers during Gay and Lesbian Awareness Week that, according to the last speaker, "... if you went into the Bar you had to wear two to show you weren't just a supporter but you are actually gay!") As well as representing genuine commitment by heterosexual members of the College to the rights of gays in particular, respondents saw the display of support for gays as symbolizing a general support among King's students for the rights of minority groups in principle. They said they felt the situation might be more difficult for lesbians. No woman student identified herself as such, either in interview or in private conversations.

"One might set up a new cross-classification, with 'homo / hetero' crossing 'female / male'. But... cross-classification confuses the issue, since that operation logically equates women's homosexuality with men's homosexuality. There is every reason to think there are important differences between them, not only in the forms of their expression but in the ways they are initially constituted. As the chequered experience of lesbians in the gay liberation movement shows, the solidarity of women and men against oppression from straight society cannot be taken for granted... "

[Connell, 1987. p60]

Gay students had experienced some homophobia in King's. They saw much of it as being an automatic response by some men to identify themselves with an overtly masculine culture, but they also saw it as a recognizable feature of the behaviour of male-only groups and societies in the College. They felt that their own relations with



women students were often easier and more relaxed than those of some heterosexual men.

"I think women are often more comfortable with us because we're not trying to impress them all the time." [PGM]

Student respondents spoke of the difficulties associated with the process of coming out as a gay. One who had done so as an undergraduate in King's described the greatest difficulties as those of anticipatory anxiety. He spoke of the value of having been able to discuss the decision with an out gay student in the College before he had told his personal friends, and of the importance of the support and counsel of the former Chaplain. Respondents talked about the small number of known out gays in the College among students and Fellows and deduced - given a notional norm of homosexual men and women as 10% of the population - that there must be a number of isolated people in King's facing extremely difficult decisions. They wanted to encourage such people to use what support is available (there is now a KCSU Gay Men's Officer, in addition to sources of counselling through the Chaplain and Senior Tutor). They also suggested other ways in which the College might be more helpful:

- have books of information and advice grouped together in the library which would be of special help to people wanting to know more about homosexuality, whether for themselves or to support friends;
- ensure that such books are "... not filed under 'Psychiatric Disorder', like in some libraries...";
- be sensitive to the particular importance of identity to people who might be seriously questioning their own sexuality;
- reflect this by "... using terms which we use ourselves: we're 'gays' and 'lesbians', not 'homosexuals'";
- similarly, address minority issues individually in statements of policy or in the College prospectus rather than "... lumping gays, and women, and disabled people, and racial minorities into a catch-all bracket".

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## **2.4 KING'S: THE PLACE**

### **Architecture and public image**

When approached from King's Parade, or along the Backs from the North end of Queen's Road, the roofline of King's positively bristles. Architectural motifs and elements on the main College site include:

crowns  
castellation - battlements, turrets  
ecclesiastical windows and doorways  
a triumphal arch on a super-human scale  
temple pillars and pediments  
mosque-like window-arches, stone window-screens, domes and minarets

These act as referents to warfare and public aspects of church, state and empire - not areas of life in which women have filled senior positions in any quantity. Students appreciated the grandeur of the architecture (described spontaneously by women students as 'masculine') and enjoyed the visual beauty of the environment, but they also felt that it was awe-inspiring rather than friendly.

The Dining Hall was likened by students to "a church without the pews", recalling that feasts and High Table, like services in the Chapel, are a regular part of the College's traditional ritual. Several women (junior and senior) described the Hall as a "gloomy" and "unfriendly" place to eat. This seemed to be the result not only of its architecture and lighting but also of the use of long refectory tables, which restrict the number of people who can see and talk to each other with ease.

The entrance to the much-used screens passage of the Wilkins Building from the main court is through portals. These are functional in that they provide occasional access for large items of furniture, but the handles are above shoulder height for people of average height. The architectural implication is that the rightful occupiers of the building are of heroic stature - gods or giants.

The Keynes Building was described in terms such as "boring" and "utilitarian", but also as more neutral. It was specifically excluded from the awe-inspiring category.

### **Residential, working and social environment.**

The most common complaint by students about the living and working conditions in King's was about the problem of noise - the poor quality of the walls as acoustic insulation in various buildings. The attitude on the whole was that, "You just have to put up with the noise and try to get on with your work." The problem was felt especially acutely by musicians and their neighbours.

"People are reasonably tolerant. Most people realize it's your subject. I never practise in my room, but on one side of me I've got a concert pianist, and on the other side a budding composer... You can go and bash on their doors if it's too much...." [UG1M]

"The practice facilities are perfectly dreadful - it must be the worst of any college. There's one *very* nasty practice room at the bottom of Keynes Hall which is just never used. It's got a broken piano." [UG2M]

"There is the Keynes Hall, but to regard that as a practice room is just nonsense because it's being used so much, and the sound-proofing doesn't exist.

Compared with the facilities offered to people who want to play sport, or use the darkroom, in terms of music they don't exist." [UG2M]

Most of the undergraduates interviewed said they used their rooms for working. Those who did not work in their rooms but liked to feel "shut away" used the College Library. Other places mentioned were the SPS loft and the Classics library.

### Senior Combination Room

Fellows were not asked specifically about their living or working accommodation, but the subject of the Senior Combination Room was raised by several who do not like it. For much of the day the room is empty, but at lunch time it has to cope with more people than can be easily accommodated. The room is furnished in a way that underlines fixity and permanence, and this was reflected in Fellows' comments:

- the furniture is heavy and awkward to move (*see also The Bar, below*);
- it is dark / tatty / oppressive;
- its furniture and decor are reminiscent of a gentlemen's club;
- it is easily dominated by groups whose noise inhibits quieter conversation (cf. *the Bar, below*).

Several of the complainants said they preferred to use the Orangery area, which is brighter, or to go out into Webbs' Court during fine weather.

### The Bar

"... the bar is not an imperfectly designed or decorated public space but a crucial, focal *locus* in the College's corporate imagination. And that locus is right at the heart of the corporate self-image." [The Chaplain in a paper to College Council, January 1990]

The Bar is the main social venue in the College open to all members. Both the Vac Bar and The Cellar were popular with student respondents as occasional venues - the Cellar, especially, being a facility that is the envy of students from other colleges.

The Bar was criticized on a number of grounds, even by those who said they used it regularly. None of the respondents particularly liked the fixed 'corrals'. Several students complained that the arrangement isolated groups and yet forced them into an uncomfortable proximity, back to back. The free-standing furniture was preferred, particularly for the way that it catered for fluctuation in the size and constitution of groups. Several students - undergraduate and graduate, women and men - said they only occasionally used the bar in the evening, when they wanted to use it like a pub,

otherwise they preferred to meet friends elsewhere. Others said they did not use it in the late evening, or on Saturdays. The objection most frequently voiced was that the Bar in the evening was too noisy and was associated with "crowd behaviour". It was not seen as the place for a sociable cup of tea or coffee and quiet conversation, except in the morning and afternoon before the bar opened "... when most of us are working somewhere else" [UG1W]. Several students regretted the lack of a separate coffee bar as an alternative in the evenings.

Stresses in the Bar reflect stresses in the College. Several Fellows in interview used phrases such as, "When I say, 'the College' of course I mean the Fellowship", and " 'The College' is the Fellowship, of course...". Others see it differently.

"The Bar *is* the College. As far as I'm concerned, if you aren't seen around the Bar you don't exist." [UG3W]

Statements which define the College's community as "the Fellowship" on one hand and as "the Bar" on the other do not happily coincide in King's. Some people appear fairly frequently in both the Combination Room and the Bar, but the section of the College who are not members of the Fellowship are those most likely to be in a majority in the Bar. Some respondents polarized the aims and interests of Fellows and students as being divided "naturally" between one generation and another. But students and Fellows in King's are of all generations. The College includes members of almost every age between about 18 and '86. A 28-year-old may be an undergraduate, a graduate or a Fellow. The divisions are more marked by sex and academic status than age - the 28-year-old is more likely to be male than female. The college is an artificial community and the dynamics that it contains are as politically influenced as those of any such community. Those members who expect to have priority in using the main social venue like a pub - and at some time the College chose to define its common area as 'The Bar' - place the space firmly in a positively masculine culture. Although the style of pubs in general is changing they are still firmly controlled by a masculine definition of society. The College Bar is an arena in which, just as elsewhere in Cambridge life, the masculine crowds out the feminine.

### 3: CONCLUSIONS

1 Using King's College as a case study, this research has identified attitudinal and structural factors inhibiting the academic careers of women at Cambridge University.

- The main attitudinal barriers are caused by the masculinity of the academic and social cultures at Cambridge, and the expectation that women will conform to traditional stereotypes.

- The main structural barriers derive from the incompatibility of needs in establishing simultaneously an academic career, according to existing conventions, and a family.

Both sets of factors result in the current ideal of a Cambridge academic being defined by implication as male. Proposals to effect equal opportunities for women therefore involve the modification of conventional academic career patterns, course content and ways of working. They show age-related and experience-related academic criteria used in processes of selection and promotion to be indirectly discriminatory.

2 The presence of women in previously male institutions has highlighted an imbalance of gender, as well as sex. Formerly this was not a career impediment because the careers were developed by men, or by women who were both prepared and able to adapt their personal lives to the demands of a masculine career pattern. Current generations of women students are less willing to accept this. The research has identified differences between the articulation of sex and of gender in Cambridge. This leads to a clearer distinction between those inhibiting factors that are consequent on the biological function of *women's sex as female*, and those consequent on the social construction of *women's gender as feminine*.

3 This draws the study beyond the consideration of factors affecting women only. It addresses the conflict between the demands of conventional academic career-development, especially as defined at Cambridge, and aspects of life traditionally identified as feminine. The conventional academic career scarcely tolerates an academic's commitment to major family responsibility at a practical level. Men, as well as women, whose lives reflect an active involvement in their roles as partners and parents come into conflict with professional requirements to do research, writing, lecturing, and travel. The greater the extent of practical involvement, the more intense the conflict.

4 Examination of the culture of King's also highlights the continuing influence of class-related conventions on professional advancement. Such conventions are those

typical of traditional public schools and ancient grammar schools, and relate especially to styles of rhetoric and forms of social behaviour. This places those educated according to other expectations at a disadvantage within the College. In career terms this is likely to represent less of a barrier to those Fellows whose membership of the College is associated with a University post, for they have a place in a faculty or department. Most of the men have University posts and most of the women do not. The careers of most of the men are therefore empowered by the University in a way that most of the women's are not.

5 Examination of the dynamics of sex and gender in King's and the University, including the issue of harassment, highlights the centrality of institutionalized power relations in providing or preventing equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity implies equality of access to power.

6 The existing agonistic academic culture in Cambridge is a consequence of the role of power issues. This is reflected in conventions of teaching and learning which reward competitive and aggressive behaviour. It is known that women thrive and flourish better in cooperative and mutually supportive systems and environments. The wider use of encouragement and 'non-combative' modes of teaching and learning would enable more women, especially, to take a more active part and be more inclined to stay, as well as benefit men.

7 As long as such a large proportion of academic women remain dependent for employment on colleges or external funding they will remain in short-term posts at low levels, without equal opportunities for advancement. The role of the University faculties and departments in appointing and promoting women to permanent and senior positions is crucial. This will entail a reassessment of current criteria for appointment and promotion, and of the conditions of employment, to enable women and men to combine parenthood and an academic career. Given the exclusive history of the University and colleges, institutional modifications to enable women to be thoroughly incorporated, especially if they are mothers, may well involve changes to statutes and ordinances designed to govern communities of single men.

8 Existing barriers to women's academic careers will not be removed without a change of attitude in the bodies controlling the structures in which women work. At University and College level the membership of these bodies consists overwhelmingly of men. The underlying issue is not so much one of men's attitude to women as one of men's attitudes to the quality of their own personal lives and relationships. To address

issues of equality proposes, in effect, the rejection of a culture in which the academic and personal areas of life are officially regarded as separate, in favour of one which acknowledges a greater integration of the personal and professional. This will affect men as well as women.

9        Defining a culture that will allow people to realize their personal potential to the full entails developing features that will encourage growth, and inhibiting those that maintain inequality. The decision of the Governing Body of King's College to accept the recommendations of its Equal Opportunities Steering Committee represents the first move in establishing those features.

## **4: FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1 ON THE EO STEERING COMMITTEE REPORT**

The EO Steering Committee report included recommendations based on those in the project's interim report. The adoption of the detail of the Steering Committee's Report (see Section 10) is recommended, with the additional recommendation that the appointment of a Women's Tutor be intended as an interim measure only.

The attention of the Fellowship Committee is drawn to Section 4 of the Steering Committee's Report, recommending a review of eligibility requirements for Research Fellowship Competitions. Age limits, or a requirement that research experience include full-time research, might be held to represent indirect discrimination against women under section 1(1)(b) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, because women's careers and working time are more often fragmented than men's.

"Indirect sex discrimination occurs when an unjustifiable requirement or condition is applied equally to both sexes, but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one sex, because the proportion of one sex which can comply with it is much smaller than the proportion of the other sex which can comply with it... A finding of unlawful discrimination may be made even though the employer has no intention to discriminate."

*EOC Code of Practice for the elimination of discrimination, HMSO, 1985.*

### **2 MONITORING PROCEDURES**

Recommendation 7 in the Interim Report, relating to the establishing of a system of monitoring candidates for recruitment, appointment and promotion, is not reflected in the EO Steering Committee's recommendations accepted by the Governing Body. It appears to be the College's intention that the development of such a system will fall within the duties of the EO Officer. It is recommended that a monitoring system should be part of the College's formally adopted equal opportunities policy.

### **3 ASSESSMENT OF INITIAL PERIOD**

The EO Steering Committee's recommendations refer to a two-year "experimental" period. This has caused concern among some senior and junior members of the College that developments will be regarded as temporary, and may function at a cosmetic level only. It is recommended that such a period be regarded as an initial phase, and that plans include an assessment of the Equal Opportunities programme by an external specialist towards the end of the initial two-year period.



*Further to recommendations already made:*

#### **4 PUBLICITY**

##### **a) Reaching a wider audience**

The traditional image of King's is so strongly established and regularly reinforced that the College needs to be far more energetic in countering the disadvantages this represents for its egalitarian aims. This is especially true in relation to members of social groups who are under-represented at various levels in the King's membership. Such people may well assume that the College would not be interested in them. At the moment, apart from publications such as the prospectus and advertisements for appointments, King's tends to become involved in publicity accidentally or incidentally, through acquiescence or ignorance rather than deliberation or intent.

The College could take a more unified, directed and active approach to publicity and advertising, promoting an image of King's that is positively associated with an egalitarian philosophy. This could include advertising in publications other than those normally used for appointments, specifically in those that cater for a particular readership among social groups under-represented in the College. Advertisements, press releases or articles that show the College to be actively supportive of its members' family commitments will have a particular attraction for women. This is likely to involve taking the initiative in making and keeping good contact with the media (including local radio and television) so that news of the constructive activities of the College and its members reach a wider audience.

##### **b) Dual career job searches**

Mobility is especially difficult for professional couples, particularly as they reach senior levels. In seeking senior women, especially, the College will increasingly be competing with employers who undertake dual career job searches as part of an equal opportunities policy. Recognition of the problems of career-related separation would be represented by the College's willingness to look for possible employment opportunities in the locality for an appointee's partner. People making enquiries about posts in King's could be told at an early stage of the selection process that dual-career job-search is part of the College's equal opportunities policy. Identifying possible openings for an appointee's partner is legitimate if it is restricted to seeking out and passing on information, and does not involve any form of coercion or interference in the process of selection or appointment of the candidate.

## 5: APPENDIXES

### *Appendix 1*

#### METHODOLOGY

##### **TASK**

The research task was to identify factors inhibiting the academic careers of women at Cambridge University, taking King's College as a case study. Although only a minority of undergraduates move on to do academic research, academic careers start with a first degree and undergraduate experience was therefore included in the project. Owing to constraints of time the detailed research has been limited to King's, with occasional interviews elsewhere for background information.

The project was set up as a one-year appointment, and extended for a further year after six months. This affected the design of the project: the statistical survey was kept to the essential minimum, as the most urgent need was to hear and compare what members of the College had to say about their experiences, and to identify those factors that influence the decisions of women at various stages to leave or to continue in the academic profession. The *equal opportunities audit* was carried out as an examination by listening.

##### **METHOD**

1 Standing and ad hoc College committees were observed throughout the academic year 1988 -1989.

2 Attitudinal data was collected over a period of five months by depth interviews with 42 Fellows of the College, ranging in age from 28 to 86 years. They were selected according to sex, age, academic subject, employment status, and domestic background (e.g. single or married, numbers/ages of children etc.). Two of the earliest interviews were carried out with pairs of Fellows, but attempts to mesh timetables proved so time-consuming that the remaining 38 were carried out individually.

The interviews moved from an initial structured phase (representing about a third of the time) to an unstructured open-ended mode, and were designed to allow the respondents as much opportunity as possible to volunteer personal opinions and suggestions. The areas and subjects for discussion were identified during an initial period of familiarization and informal enquiry during the first term. Interviews averaged one and a quarter hours each, and were tape-recorded.

Information and suggestions were also supplied by voluntary group discussions, sorted by sex and stage of study, with 28 undergraduates from all years and 12 research students. (Details of the status and academic subjects of respondents are given in Appendix 4.) I also received information and comments from informal discussions with individuals and groups of men and women in faculties and other colleges as the result of invitations to talk to groups, and publicity given to the project.

3 The analysis of recorded material was carried out by collecting information from the different respondents under sets of headings. The initial headings were based on the questions asked about various areas of experience, and further headings identified as the common preoccupations spontaneously raised by respondents.

4 Data was also collected from the Fellowship by questionnaire in the Easter Term of 1989. The total number of Fellows at the time was 103, but 3 were too ill to receive questionnaire forms. Of the remaining 100, 75 returned completed forms before analysis began. The ages of those returning completed forms ranged from 28 to 83 years. A few of the retired Fellows replied that they preferred not to complete the forms, feeling their experience to be too out of date to be relevant. The responses gave information on

- Fellows' family background
- Fellows' education and that of their parents and siblings
- Fellows' employment history
- occupations of Fellows' parents
- employment of Fellows' partners
- number/sexes of Fellows' children
- Fellows' use of childcare facilities
- Fellows' views on funding of childcare.

The project and materials were designed in consultation with members of the Fellowship, and the researcher carried out all collection and processing of data personally.

## ***Appendix 2***

### **FELLOWSHIP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Each interview in the Fellowship was initially structured around the following questions. As information was collected about the respondent's views and role in the College the session then developed along much less structured lines, allowing the interviewee's own concerns and suggestions to surface.

#### ***PROCEDURES OF RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND PROMOTION***

- 1.1.1 Is there a College policy on the constitution of selection and interviewing committees?
- 1.1.2 If so, what is it?
- 1.1.3 If not, what is the usual practice?
- 1.2 What is the College's recommended recruitment process? Check:  
job description; person / job specification; obtaining candidates; application forms / letters of application; short-listing; assessment procedures; final selection.
- 1.3.1 What machinery is there in the College for human resources planning and staff development for academic staff?
- 1.3.2 How clearly stated are the associated policies, and where can they be found in written form?
- 1.4 To what extent, if at all, are candidates' domestic circumstances taken into account during recruitment and promotion?
- 1.5.1 Are any posts advertised by word of mouth only?
- 1.5.2 If so, what sort of posts are they?
- 1.5.3 Where might they be mentioned and discussed?
- 1.6 Where are academic posts in King's advertised?
- 1.7 How do people with responsibility for recruitment and promotion get to know about the College's policies and/or habitual practices?
- 1.8.1 Who in the College has had special equal opportunities training on how to avoid inequitable and illegal practices during the recruitment and promotion of academic staff?
- 1.8.2 How is this information been passed on to those involved in selection for recruitment and promotion?
- 1.9 What practical help does the University and King's College offer to academics with children?

## **OWN CAREER**

- 2.1.1 What is your current position in King's?
- 2.1.2 Do you have a University post?
- 2.2.1 At what stage did you seriously consider doing a research degree?
- 2.2.2 What were the strongest influences on that decision?
- 2.3.1 What and who have been the greatest influences on your own choice of career?
- 2.3.2 What factors made you opt for an academic career?
- 2.3.3 At what points in your career have you made important decisions about its direction?
- 2.3.4 What prompted those?
- 2.4.1 What would you like your next career move to be?
- 2.4.2 When do you think it is likely to happen?
- 2.4.3 What would you like to be doing, professionally, in five years' time?
- 2.5 What careers guidance, formal or informal have you ever had?
- 2.6 What careers have you had, or do you have, in addition to an academic one?
- 2.7 What is currently the most creative area of your life?

## **DUAL-CAREER HOUSEHOLDS**

- 3.1 What academic and/or professional qualifications does your partner have?
  - 3.1.2 Does he/she work full time or part time outside the home?
  - 3.1.3 What is his/her occupation?
  - 3.1.4 Where does he/she work?
  - 3.1.5 [*For respondents whose partners' work entails their living away from Cambridge*] How often and for what sort of periods do you live together?
- 3.2.1 What influence has your partner's career had on your own, directly or indirectly?
- 3.2.2 [*Where applicable*] Are there any particular difficulties associated with the fact that your partner works in the same College/University?
- 3.2.3 [*Where applicable*] What are the difficulties and/or benefits arising from the fact that you and your partner work and live in different localities?

## **CAREERS OF ACADEMICS**

- 4.1 What qualities do you look for in students applying to do a research degree?

- 4.2.1 Concern has been expressed by several Fellows about the numbers of women who don't seem to realize their potential as undergraduates or research students. Do you think it is a cause for concern?
- 4.2.2 If so, can you think of any features that such cases seem to have in common?
- 4.3.1 What seem to you to be the most common problems for women students and academics in Cambridge University?
- 4.3.2 Apart from those; what particular problems do you think women academics have in King's?
- 4.4 What sort of reasons do research students give for not completing their studies?
- 4.5 What kinds of non-academic experience do you think actually strengthens a candidate's application for an academic post at King's?

### **CAREERS GUIDANCE**

- 5.1.1 What *formal* system of careers guidance is available to academics
- in the University?
  - in the College?
- 5.1.2 How do they get to know about it?
- 5.1.3 Have you ever used it?
- 5.2.1 What *informal* system of careers guidance is available?
- 5.2.2 How do academics get to know about that?
- 5.3.1 Are senior academics in the College expected to take some responsibility for encouraging the careers of junior academics in their subject?
- 5.3.2 If so, how do both parties know that?
- 5.3.3 How regularly and in what ways is senior academics' performance of this responsibility assessed?
- 5.3.4 Is their performance in this role likely to affect their own prospects of promotion?

## **Appendix 3**

### **INTERVIEWEES**

#### **Academic subjects of Fellows interviewed:**

Ancient History	Latin-American Studies
Animal Behaviour	Mathematics
Anthropology	Metallurgical Science
Applied Mathematics	Modern Languages
Architecture	Molecular Biology
Astronomy	Music
Astrophysics	Neurophysiology
Biology	Philosophy
Classics	Politics
Economics	Pure Mathematics
English	Russian
Geography	Social and Political Science
History	Theology
	Zoology

#### **College Officers:**

Provost; Vice-Provost; Bursar; Senior Tutor; Dean; Director of Music; Chaplain.

#### **Student interviews:**

28 undergraduates ; 12 research students  
24 female; 16 male

#### **Academic subject of students interviewed:**

Classics	Music
Engineering	Natural Sciences
English	Philosophy
History	Physics
Mathematics	Social Anthropology
Medicine	Social and political Science
Modern Languages	

#### **Types of secondary / tertiary institution of voluntary student respondents:**

comprehensive school	17
independent schools	8
l.e.a. grammar school	3
(ex)direct grant grammar schools	2
sixth form college	2
college of further education	1

## **Appendix 4**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS**

The following are extracts from questionnaire responses. The statistics do not always total 100%: not all respondents answered all questions, many questions offered the opportunity for multiple responses (e.g. some Fellows attended more than one kind of school) and some questions did not cater precisely for all kinds of answers (e.g. non-British kinds of education).

#### **Questionnaire responses**

Total responses :     75     =     73% of total Fellowship.  
Female response:     14     =     100 % of female Fellowship.  
Male response:        61     =     68.5% of male Fellowship.

#### **Women as % of return in each age-group:**

Age	% of return
28 - 32 :	20.0
33 - 37 :	9.0
38 - 42 :	26.6
43 - 47 :	12.5
48 - 52 :	33.3
53+    :	nil

The main purpose of asking Fellows to provide detailed information about their family and educational background is to discover the nature of the environments that are likely to have shaped or influenced their attitudes. The results showed some clear differences between the sexes.

### **FELLOWS' FAMILY BACKGROUND**

#### **Siblings, and position in family**

In gauging whether there is likely to be any marked difference in the gender background of respondents, by recording the sex ratio of their siblings, it is noticeable that for the whole constituency:

for each female Fellow :     0.86 sisters     0.50 brothers  
for each male Fellow :        0.67 sisters     0.92 brothers

The women respondents come from backgrounds more marked by sisters than by brothers, while their male colleagues come from backgrounds not only more marked by



brothers than by sisters, but almost twice as heavily marked by brothers as the women respondents'.

Women respondents are most likely to be a second child, and more than a quarter of them were only children, but male respondents are much more likely to be an eldest child than in any other position:

	% of total response	% of women respondents	% of men respondents
eldest child	33.3	21.4	36.1
second child	22.7	35.7	19.7
only child	21.3	28.6	16.0
fourth child	8.0	14.3	6.6
third child	4.0	nil	4.9

As children, the male respondents are more likely than the women to have had the experience of having primacy in a male sibling environment.

## **PARENTS**

### **Disruption**

14.7% of respondents (7.1% of women; 16.4% of men) recorded the divorce of their parents as having taken place either before they left home, or within a couple of years afterwards.

22.7% of respondents (21.4% of women; 22.9% of men) recorded their fathers' absence on war service for periods of a few months to seven years (as a prisoner of war). Respondents were from less than a year to twelve years old at the time.

### **Parents' education**

Sex differences were evident in the schooling of respondents' parents, not only relating to the sex of their parents but also between the sexes of the respondents themselves:

*FEMALE RESPONDENTS*

	mother	father
state school	50.0%	35.7%
independent school	35.7%	57.1%
grammar school	7.1%	7.1%
education completed at		
5th form or before	35.7%	42.9%
"    6th form	28.6%	7.1%
"    professional certificate/ diploma	21.4%	7.1%
"    first degree	14.3%	28.6%
"    doctorate	nil	14.3%

*MALE RESPONDENTS*

	mother	father
state school	55.7%	41.0%
independent school	36.9%	39.3%
other (abroad; convent)	4.9%	11.5%
grammar	1.6%	4.9%
state & independent		3.3%
education completed at		
5th form or before	34.4%	26.2%
"    6th form	19.7%	8.2%
"    professional certificate/ diploma	18.0%	14.7%
"    first degree	22.9%	29.5%
"    doctorate	nil	13.1%

88.4% of the fathers of male respondents continued education beyond 5th Form level, compared with 57.1% of the fathers of women respondents. Although a greater proportion of the mothers of female respondents had continued in education beyond 5th form level, those mothers of male respondents who had done so had qualified at a higher level: (22.9%) took a first degree, compared with the mothers of female

respondents (14.4%). Generally, there is more of a history of higher education in the background of male respondents than of female respondents.

### Parents' occupations

Statistics about the employment of respondents' parents indicate that most of them came from homes where both parents were employed, but nearly three-quarters of mothers had been employed part-time. Apart from 2 mothers reported as having been involuntarily unemployed for five years or more, involuntary unemployment did not appear as a major feature in the lives of respondents' parents. 73.3% of fathers and 66.7% of mothers were said never to have been involuntarily unemployed.

88% of fathers were described as having been employed full-time at one or more jobs, and only 5.3% described as working part-time. This compares with 30.6% of mothers who were described as having been employed full-time at one or more jobs, and 71.4% who had part-time work. The breakdown of respondents' records of their mothers' part-time work showed a distinct difference between the sexes of the respondents, who were asked to assess whether the part-time nature of the work had been 'by choice' or 'of necessity'.

### MOTHER'S PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

	female resps.	male resps.
by choice	50.0%	19.7%
of necessity	21.4%	8.2%

### MOTHER'S OCCUPATION

academic(3)	GP's wife
administrator, FPA	head of kindergarten
administrator, health centre	housewife/mother (10)
administrator, higher education	journalist
advertising saleswoman	legal executive
antique dealer	library supplier, bookshop
architect	nurse
art dealer	photographer
artist	psychiatric social worker
assistant in husband's shop (3)	research assistant
bacteriologist	sales assistant
building presentation	school dinner lady (2)
civil servant	secretary (7)
clerical/office worker	social worker (2)
developer, new food sources	sub-editor
doctor	tailor
domestic help (2)	teacher (11)
draughtswoman	teacher, further education
editor	teacher, handicapped children
farm manager	writer and reviewer

## FATHER'S OCCUPATION

accountant	civil servant	engineer
antique dealer	clerical worker	estate manager
architect (2)	clerk in Holy Orders	farmer
army chaplain	clinical researcher	foreman
bacteriologist	company director (2)	gardener
barrister (2)	company secretary	head of an Oxford college
bookmaker (bookie)	counsel, House of Lords	insurance agent
butcher	county councillor	insurance clerk
carpenter	diplomat	journalist
chimney sweep	draughtsman	lawyer (2)
church minister	electrician	lecturer
Lloyd's underwriter	professor (4)	soldier
manager (2)	property manager	solicitor
medical practitioner	psychiatrist	tailor
medical researcher	railwayman	television producer
miner	research director	travel manager,
motor body stylist	sales engineer	university teacher
National Trust employee	schoolteacher (3)	wholesale merchant
nurse	shoe repairer	writer
electrician	personnel director, commerce	

## EDUCATION

### Education of Fellows and their siblings

Information on the education of respondents and their siblings showed some marked differences between the sexes. The 75 respondents have between them 53 sisters and 63 brothers, giving a total constituency of 67 females and 124 males. Only women (6%) had received private tuition.

The women are more likely than the men to have attended an independent school for at least part of their secondary education (53.7% against 48.3%), and men more likely to have gone to some kind of grammar school (34.8%) than the women (23.8%). 18.5% of the men had been to a direct grant grammar school, compared with 11.9% of the women; 16.3% of the men had been to some other kind of grammar school, compared with 11.9% of the women. The men are also more likely to have been to either kind of grammar school than to a comprehensive school (12.9%), whereas the women are more likely to have gone to a comprehensive school (14.9%) than to either kind of grammar school. 12.4% of the men went to a secondary modern school, compared with 6% of the women.

More women than men had been to sixth form colleges (6% to 0.8%). There was only a marginal difference in the proportion of each sex that had attended colleges of further education or training (13.5% of the women and 13% of the men).

Altogether, 69.6% of the total have university degrees, representing over three-quarters (79%) of the men and just over half (52.2%) of the women.

## Fellows' Education

### *Schools*

28% of the respondents had been educated at independent schools: a higher percentage of the women (42.9%) than of the men (24.6%). A higher percentage of the men had been to direct grant grammar schools (19.7%) than the women (14.3%). But a larger proportion of the women had been to other grammar schools (28.6%) than the men (16.4%), and a much larger proportion of the women had been to comprehensive schools (28.6%) than the men (9.8%)

Most respondents had been day pupils - 78.6% of the women and 65.6% of the men. Just under a quarter of the women (21%) and nearly a third of the men (32.8%) had been termly boarders. Nearly three-quarters of both sexes (71.4% of the women and 73.8% of the men) had studied for A-level at single-sex institutions.

Both at home and at school, male respondents are more likely than their female colleagues to have grown up in predominantly male environments.

### *University*

42.9% of women and 45.9% of men went directly from an A-level course to a first degree. Half the women went within 1 - 2 years, as did 37.7% of the men. Over three quarters of the respondents graduated at Oxford or Cambridge, and 60% did their doctorates at one or other of these universities. A higher percentage of the women (64.3%) than of the men (59%) gained Firsts, but a higher percentage of the men (83.6%) than of the women (50%) took their first degree at Oxbridge. A higher percentage of the men than of the women did their doctorates at Cambridge (44.3% against 21.4%).

<i>First degree</i>	% of total response	% of women respondents	% of men respondents
Cambridge	46.6	35.7	49.2
Oxford	30.7	14.3	34.4
<i>Class of First Degree</i>			
First	60.0	64.3	59.0
Second	37.3	35.7	37.7

### *Doctorate*

Cambridge	40.0	21.4	44.3
Oxford	20.0	28.6	18.0

## **FAMILY FACTORS**

### **Domestic situation**

Data on respondents' domestic situation shows that the women experience a higher level of domestic disruption associated with employment than the men. A higher percentage of the men (67.2%) than of the women (42.9%) are married. A *very* much higher percentage of the men (73.8%) than of the women (28.9%) have children. (Enquiry showed that all the women under the age of 40 would like to have children.) The proportions barely change even when data for men in the same age-range as the women are compared: 72.4% of the men in that group have children. A higher percentage of the women (28.6%) than of the men (14.8%) live apart from their partners frequently or regularly, due to their employment. 21.4% of the women live alone, compared with 14.8% of the men, and only 6.6% of the men are single, compared with 21.4% of the women.

### **Children**

Although there is such a difference in the balance of the sexes among respondents and their siblings, the numbers of their sons and daughters is very much the same, with slightly more females (53) than males (51). The numbers are very evenly balanced between the sexes, also, throughout the whole age range:

*AGES OF CHILDREN* (Including six stepchildren or children of partners in permanent / long-term residence)

<i>age</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>total</i>
up to 5 yrs	10	9	19
5+ - 10	9	9	18
10+ - 15	9	9	18
15+ - 20	5	5	10
20+	<u>19</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>39</u>
	totals: 53	51	104

## Partners' employment

Data on the employment of respondents' partners indicate common differences in the employment patterns of men and women. The only kind of employment carried out by the partners of women respondents is 'full-time in one job' (71.4%). Male respondents record a variety of employment patterns among their partners:

full-time in one job	34.4%
full-time in more than on job	4.9%
more than half-time	18.0%
less than half-time	4.9%

## PARTNER'S MAIN PAID OCCUPATION

academic (3)	psychotherapist
animal illustrator	researcher (5)
bookseller	research fellow
clerical / typing	retired (publication royalties)
clinical psychologist	secretary
community education	social worker
conference interpreter	solicitor (2)
consultant, CAD	teacher (5)
consultant, Local Exam. Syndicate	translator (2)
freelance writer	college tutor (2)
hospital doctor (2)	university assistant
librarian	University Lecturer - UTO (10)
nursing sister	university teacher (2)
pharmaceuticals rep.	yoga teacher
professor (5)	

Data on partners' attitudes to their own occupations show a common gender difference, 11.5% of male respondents' partners being identified as having an "acceptable job" rather than a "potential career", and 4.9% doing something classified as "better than nothing". Women's partners registered nil in both these categories.

## PARTNER'S ATTITUDES TO HIS / HER OWN OCCUPATION

	% of total response	% of women respondents	% of men respondents
established career	42.7	64.3	37.7
potential career	16.0	14.3	16.4
acceptable job	9.3	nil	11.5
better than nothing	4.0	nil	4.9

N.B. Two men described their partners' attitude to academic employment as "between a potential career and an established career".

The differences of occupational status are reinforced by data on partners' earnings.

*PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME PROVIDED BY PARTNER'S EARNINGS*

	% of women respondents	% of men respondents
less than 25%	7.1	36.0
more than 25% but less than 50%	7.1	27.9
50%	21.4	9.8
more than 50% but less than 75%	35.7	6.6
75%	nil	1.6

**Domestic work**

Data on the cost of help with domestic cleaning and maintenance show that 42.9% of the households of women respondents pay for help, compared with 20.2% of those of the men. Most of those who employ people to help spend between £40 - £80 per month. In respondents' homes, according to answers to the questionnaire :

- men and women share the routine shopping, washing up, gardening and transport of children;
- women do most of the routine cooking and laundry ;
- men do most of the routine maintenance of property and equipment;
- employees do most of the interior and exterior painting and decorating.

Responsibility for childcare varies according to term-time or vacation, and time of day. Most male respondents indicated that their partners are responsible for daytime childcare in term-time and vacation, but that they share responsibility in the evening. More women respondents indicated that "employees" are responsible for daytime childcare in term-time, but that they themselves take that over during vacation. They also said that they were primarily responsible for childcare in the evening.

Although 26.9% of respondents' children were recorded as being between the ages of 10 and 20 years, only one respondent (male) indicated that his children shared responsibility for any form of domestic work - in the case of his household, laundry and indoor cleaning.



### **Sabbatical leave and mobility**

A higher percentage of men (64%) than women (35.7%) had taken sabbatical leave, but this is likely to be affected by the fact that most of the women are on short-term appointments. There were marked differences between the sexes in relation to influences on sabbatical leave, women being more constrained than men by family needs, and less by financial considerations. This reflects the fact that University and/or College earnings represent over half the household income for a higher percentage of the men (50.8%) men than for the women (21.4%).

#### *CONSTRAINTS ON WHERE SABBATICAL LEAVE WAS SPENT*

	% of total response	% of women respondents	% of men respondents
family's needs	59.0	80.0	56.4
financial	20.5	nil	23.0
employer's needs	2.3	20.0	nil

#### *CONSTRAINTS ON LENGTH OF SABBATICAL LEAVE*

employer's needs	40.9	5.0	43.6
family's needs	27.3	60.0	23.0
financial	9.0	nil	10.2

Data on the number of days spent away from home annually for research, conferences and other employment-related events (averaged over the last three years) was an indication of the women's more restricted mobility:

	% of total response	% of women respondents	% of men respondents
up to 14 days	22.7	35.7	19.7
15 - 28 days	22.7	7.1	26.2
29 - 57 days	50.0	32.0	29.5
58 - 90 days	10.7	7.1	61.0
90+ days	8.0	7.1	8.2

### **Membership of clubs and associations**

A higher percentage of the women respondents (71.5%) than of the men (55.7%) belong to some kind of professional or academic association. A higher percentage of the men (26.2%) than of the women (17.9%) belong to a recreational / sports association. Just under a quarter of each constituency belong to other kinds of association - political, environmental etc.

## Appendix 5

### LETTER FROM A HEADTEACHER

*As the result of publicity for the conference on Women in Higher Education , and a letter in the national press from a male Cambridge professor (using biological determinism as an explanation for women's examinations results at degree level) the following letter was received from the headteacher of an ex-grammar school in the North of England.*

14th June 1989

Dear Mrs Spurling,

... I, and several other Heads to whom I have spoken, have some concern about encouraging our girl students to apply for places at Cambridge. This is because of the pressures placed upon female undergraduates in particular and their often falling victim to stress-related illnesses as a consequence.

I would suggest that this partly comes about because girls are generally more anxious to please than boys, more overtly conscientious if you prefer, and therefore attempt to do all that is asked of them. Young men will reject the impossible, such as over-long reading lists, and seek the kernel of what is required of them and upon which they will subsequently be examined.

Cambridge is still, for the moment, attracting some of the most capable young people in the country. By the time they arrive, both ability and application has been tested. I wonder, therefore, if it is then necessary to continue testing their mettle by, as still happens in many disciplines, asking them to learn vast amounts of fact as part of some outdated induction process. This is a 'traditional' school and we believe in hard work but we are also aware of how easy it is to 'kill off' interest and motivation.

There is a theory that people can be taught to cope with pressure by having it continuously exerted upon them. This is only true up to a point. In situations of extreme and continuing stress, as in war, it is often the bravest and most conscientious who break if there is no respite.

... [At Cambridge there is] the continuing emphasis on the accumulation of arid facts where other institutions give more weight to process ... I would certainly wish to support your efforts. At this school girls are the high achievers - twice as many girls as boys obtained 5 'good grades' at GCSE last year (you have to work consistently with the new format) - it is disappointing to see them falling back at university.

Yours etc.

## *Appendix 6*

### **THE HANSARD COMMISSION'S STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE**

#### **BARRIERS**

##### **Organizational barriers**

Unfair selection or  
promotion procedures

Inflexible working arrangements

Mobility

Age limits

##### **Traditional roles**

Work and family life

##### **Attitudinal barriers**

Lack of confidence

Prejudice

#### **STRATEGIES**

Equal Opportunities policy  
Equal Opportunities training  
Dual interviewing  
Precise job specifications  
Objective assessment criteria  
External advertising  
Equal Opportunities audits  
Monitoring  
Targets

Senior level part-time / jobsharing  
Flexitime  
Working at home  
Annual hours  
Other flexible arrangements

Requirements dropped or modified  
Dual career job search

Requirement dropped

Career break schemes  
Workplace nurseries  
Childcare vouchers  
Parental leave  
Enhanced maternity leave  
Other childcare help

Equal Opportunity advertising  
Headhunting  
Internal promotion policies  
Women-only training courses

Boardroom commitment to change  
Equal Opportunities training for managers  
Awareness training for all staff

## *Appendix 7*

### ON THE CUSU SEXUAL HARASSMENT SURVEY

During the period of fieldwork CUSU carried out a sexual harassment survey. Many women commented that the form was unclear in its definition of sexual harassment, obscuring the results to an extent. But the survey did collect information about how women felt as members of the University, and about harassment generally - whether expressed in specifically sexual terms or not. The following are extracts from its report:

"There was...a sense that men did not recognise that there was a problem and a widespread sense of helplessness that anything could be done about the male attitude in general."

"One of the most interesting series of comments concerned the idea that women get inferior intellectual attention at university...Some respondents reported that supervisors and lecturers had less time and patience for women. While men were allowed to interrupt and 'hog' the conversation, women's comments were ignored or belittled. Particularly in those subjects which were male-dominated some teachers had trouble relating to women and would ignore them instead...some women reported that supervisors and lecturers made sexist remarks and were patronising, and assumed that they were stupid if they were attractive."

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**PART 2**  
*The Project*

## 7: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

by Tess Adkins, *Senior Tutor*.

A research project on women in higher education was initiated by King's in the summer of 1988. The aims of the project were to identify and examine factors inhibiting the academic careers of women at Cambridge University in general and King's College in particular and to make practical proposals for change. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly the reasons which led to this project but it is clear that a number of factors, both internal and external, contributed. Reports such as *40 Years On...*, produced by the Cambridge University Women's Action Group (CUWAG), were appearing which gave detailed statistics concerning the numbers of women at various levels within higher education but it was clear that some more detailed research was needed in order to find the explanations for the patterns revealed.

There was also frustration and concern within the College itself. King's was a community which considered itself to be sympathetic towards encouraging more women into higher education and had taken a number of initiatives to seek out and appoint senior women. In spite of all this, over the years since women were first admitted at the start of the 70s, the College had not been able to increase significantly the percentage of women in its Fellowship.

The problem was highlighted in the Spring of 1986 when once again at the annual election of Fellows, no women were appointed. After some discussion on the Electors to Fellowships it was agreed that a paper giving facts and figures and general background should be prepared by the Senior Tutor. This was done and it was presented to the Electors by Stephen Hugh-Jones. He made a powerful case for taking a new initiative, arguing that if the College wanted to take the problem of lack of women in its Fellowship seriously it would have to think and act differently. In order to do this we first needed more information. We needed a digest of what was known elsewhere and an analysis of what was going on within the College. He suggested a Research Centre project.

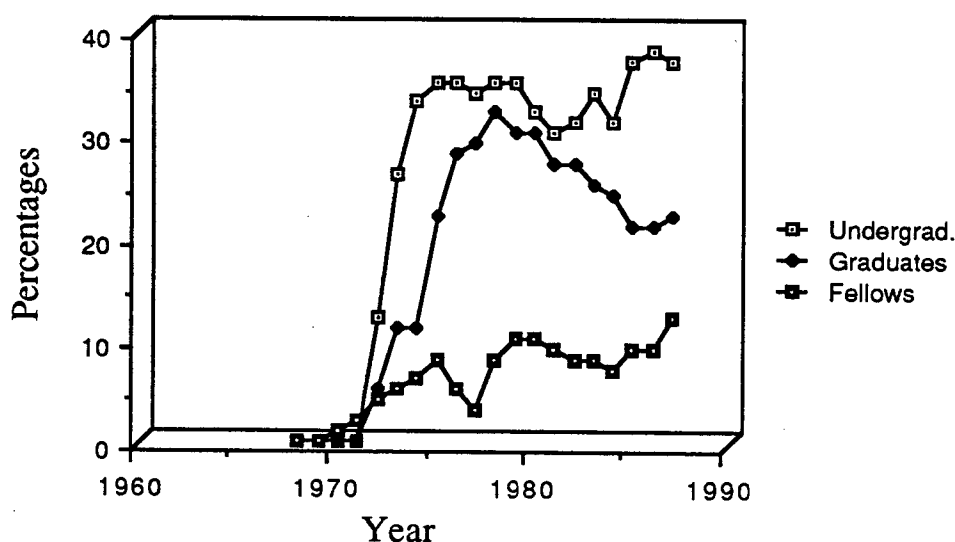
After a gap, (these things always take time), the Provost took up and promoted the cause (*see Appendix 9*). This was very important in enabling progress to be made. He called an informal meeting of the Governing Body in February 1988. At that meeting it became clear there were many different views about how the problem should be approached. Views which ranged from a radical feminist critique of higher education as a whole through to the promotion

of gender studies as a research topic. Much to the women Fellows' alarm the mood of the meeting seemed to be to move away from doing something practical. Following that meeting the women Fellows met together as a group for the first time, and after several discussions decided to put a proposal to the Research Centre managers that a research assistant should be appointed for one year to carry out the needed research. The managers accepted the proposal and Andrea Spurling was appointed to carry out the research, starting in October 1988. In May 1989 the project was extended by a further year.

## 8: THE PROVOST'S PAPER ON WOMEN FELLOWS, February 1988

This paper is intended to open a discussion on what actions the College might take in order to increase the number of women in the Fellowship. It is based on one originally brought to the Electors by Tess Adkins in 1986. The discussion will take place at an informal meeting in the Wine Room on Monday, 29th February at 8.30 pm.

2. The percentages of Fellows, graduate students and undergraduates who have been women in each academic year are shown below.



Since 1974 (the first year in which there were women undergraduates in all three years) the proportion of women undergraduates has risen slightly, despite the large number of other Cambridge colleges that have started to accept women. The proportion of women Fellows has also risen slightly but, nevertheless, has been low throughout. Disappointingly the proportion of women graduate students has dropped in recent years. What has happened in King's is reflected throughout the academic world. In Cambridge 8.2% of University Officers were women in 1985 and in the country as a whole the figure was only 15.6%.

3. The difficulty we have experienced in trying to increase the proportion of women in our Fellowship is partly due to the increasing competition that we have faced from other Colleges. By degrees all the male bastions have followed the lead of Churchill, Clare and Kings. Having become co-residential, each college in turn has attempted to recruit from the rather small number of women academics.

4. From time to time the College has made an effort to break new ground in its efforts to recruit more woman Fellows. We have made a systematic search for highly qualified women academics without college Fellowships in the following ways:

(a) We advertised for and appointed part-time women tutors. (This was before the Sex Discrimination Act. It is now illegal for us to advertise jobs, whether part-time or full-time, specifically for women.)

(b) We appointed individuals recommended by Fellows of the College. These women all had outside funding.

(c) We raised the age limit for our Senior Research Fellowships and the experience limit for our Junior Research Fellowships. (An experience limit for JRFs ought to be less disadvantageous than an age limit to people who take a break in the careers - as is commonly the case in women).

(d) We ran research fellowship competitions in areas that are particularly well populated by female academics. It must be said that these attempts were not been especially effective. In one notable case, a subject chosen partly because it was likely to yield several female Junior Research Fellows resulted only in the election of one excellent, but male, Senior Research Fellow.

(e) Whenever possible, we have appointed women teaching officers but, it must be emphasized, not as a result of positive discrimination.

Some of these drives (in particular (b)) were not especially popular among the group we sought to help. As one woman put it, she felt as though she had been rejected from a post for which she had not applied. Many women would prefer not to be appointed to a job simply on account of being a woman. Although we have not practiced American-style affirmative action, people may have suspected us of doing so.

5. It might be argued that a low number of women academics is a fact of life and nothing we might plan to do in King's will change that. An argument about the slow-moving character of institutions is easily confused with one about intrinsic differences between the sexes. A large body of evidence suggests that, given the right conditions, women can perform as well as men in subjects that supposedly reflect ineradicable sex differences<sup>1</sup>. Explanations for why the observed differences have arisen and continue to arise are still a matter of active discussion and research. Although conscious and patent discrimination against women almost certainly occurs from time to time within the University, it seems unlikely that this is the sole or even the principal explanation for the slow increase in the numbers of academic women employed. Women are simply not entering the academic professions in the numbers that might naively have been expected. For instance, the proportion of women applying for New Blood lectureships was the same as the proportion appointed<sup>2</sup>. An expectation, still strongly held in Britain, is that women should play the major part in caring for children. The expectation almost certainly starts in childhood and adolescence when people form attitudes about themselves and their abilities. This is reflected in the A levels that are chosen and in the way those women who go on to higher education perform at University. Finally, among those women who succeed in becoming academics, many either fall behind or drop out altogether as soon as they have children. They may fail to return to their professions simply because they have lost their confidence.

6. Inevitably some of the measures we might adopt could alter the character of the College. So it might be asked by those who are concerned about such a change what our reasons might be for taking any new action. The strongest argument for improving conditions for women academics is on grounds of fairness. In our other policies, such as the admissions of undergraduates, we have had as a clear goal the elimination of some of the injustices in British education. Making a move to reduce the frustration of many highly intelligent women and release their talent is just as important. We also have a clear duty to our women undergraduates who want a larger proportion of the

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<sup>1</sup>The Royal Society and the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (1986) *Girls and Mathematics*. The Royal Society, London.

<sup>2</sup> Whitehead, J.M. (1987) Why so few? Women academics in the University of Cambridge. *Cambridge Review*, 108, 107-115.

Fellowship to be women. They would like more women teachers as they find women's teaching styles are different and on the whole more supportive.

7. What we do next is precisely what we need to discuss. I include a list of suggestions that have been accumulated in the course of informal discussions. They are not mutually exclusive. Nor are they exhaustive and other proposals would be very welcome.

(a) We could advertise part-time appointments. Although no formal requirements are imposed on research fellows, it is nonetheless usually assumed by the College and the individual concerned that research is a full-time commitment. A part-time research fellowship (and part-time stipend) might prove attractive in removing ambiguous expectations about commitments of time. At the same time it might provide stimulus, encouragement and an escape from the domestic environment. Part-time teaching or administrative fellowships might also be welcomed by women as might some combination of teaching and research.

(b) Valuable though it would be to increase the number of women in all sections of the fellowship, a major aim should be to encourage the number of women fellows with tenured appointments either in the College or in the University. Trawls amongst women working in Cambridge, though they might have the parochial effect of increasing the number of women in the College, would do little to increase the number of women in Cambridge. Therefore, we might consider giving University departments financial support to create tenured UTO jobs for particular women for whom, within the University's present financial constraints, tenured jobs would not otherwise be available.

(c) We could adopt the rule that gender is decisive in making appointments when other things are equal. If we did this we should be aware that such a policy would almost certainly be misconstrued and, as a consequence, might be counter-productive. Also, other things seldom are equal.

(d) We could make public announcements that it is our policy to improve opportunities for women. We have also been advised that, although we cannot legally advertise exclusively for women, we could probably include in advertisements something along the lines that "The College would welcome applications from women".

(e) An enterprising scheme, set up by Professor Daphne Jackson of Surrey University, provides retraining opportunities for qualified women to regain the expertise and self-confidence necessary to conduct advanced research, and thereby regain a position from which they can compete on equal terms for permanent academic posts or senior research posts. It might be helpful to invite Professor Jackson here to discuss ways in which we could establish such scheme.

(f) We could promote research on the employment of women in higher education and the reasons for their under-representation. Such research might aim to amass data on academic women (distribution between colleges, faculties, universities, age cohorts, career stages, etc; career histories of female graduates in and out of higher education; numbers and problems of women seeking to re-enter higher education; relevant personal experience, etc.) and to explore policies designed to favour the employment of women graduates in universities, polytechnics, industry, civil service, etc. The aim of such research would not be to duplicate work already done nor even necessarily to investigate problems in depth. It would be useful



simply to make what is known or can easily be discovered or has already been tried, available to the College and University for discussion and policy making. The research might involve undergraduates, graduates, and fellows and might possibly be attached to the Research Centre as a short project which would aim at producing a report within one or at most two years. Since we shall not now be starting a new four year project in the Research Centre in October 1988, we have an opportunity to launch something on these lines without delay. Public policy projects have not been run in the Research Centre for many years and we might in addition advertise for research fellows who would do new work on women in higher education.

(g) We can raise awareness among those who teach undergraduates about the subtle ways in which many women lose confidence in the face of male competitiveness. We might also look into ways of encouraging women to stay on as graduate students.

(h) We could attempt to help schools where a lot of the problems seem to start.

(i) We could use Honorary Fellowships in a symbolic way to support women academics.

8. Some of the measures would inevitably raise the question of what type of Fellowship we want. I hope that in our informal discussions, we will devote some time to this issue. My own view, shared by many others, is that whatever notion of an ideal intellectual community we might have at the back of our minds, high priority should be given to achieving a greater measure of social justice within our own College. We should not fool ourselves that single handedly we can solve all the problems of higher education in Britain. Nevertheless, it is likely that we have already contributed to a decisive shift in attitudes in Oxbridge on admissions, scholarships and, indeed, co-residence. Anything we might do would be in this more modest role of helping things along. Also we have a responsibility to our woman undergraduates to provide them with a larger number of people whom they can emulate.

Patrick Bateson, Provost  
11th February, 1988

## 9: PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT

### Contemporary external events

A calendar of the main events in the research project appears below. What it does not reflect is the extent of the influence on the development of the project of factors beyond the College. Since research started in October 1988 subjects such as parental leave, childcare, women returners, and sexual harassment have been discussed at length in the national media and professional journals. A number of initiatives (but not enough) have been taken, by central government and employers, to help women to treat time spent on raising children as a suspension of, rather than a permanent break in, career-development. The publication of the Hansard Commission's Report, *Women at the Top*, in January 1990 (shortly before the Governing Body considered the EO Working Party's recommendations) focused attention especially on the lack of women in senior positions in Oxford and Cambridge, and suggested that institutional inertia warranted formal investigation by the Equal Opportunities Commission. This has coincided with a change in the attitude of some members of the College. The suggestion that members of King's should aim to influence attitudes beyond the College, as well as improve the situation in it, was described as "pure fantasy" eighteen months ago. Not only does it seem a little less fanciful now, but there have already been enquiries from other colleges and sectors of the University and beyond about the findings of the King's project.

### Internal effects

There was a wide range of reactions to the Interim Report, from enthusiastic welcome to angry rejection. In the period between the presentation of the interim report in November 1989 and the meeting of the Governing Body in February 1990 women Fellows reported feeling under special scrutiny on College committees. Student representatives, who had very limited access to the report and little time to prepare a response before an informal discussion(*see note 6 below*), welcomed it, but criticized it for inadequate coverage of the student culture.

One of the effects of the report was that it brought to the level of consciousness behaviour which was previously unconscious, for much of what had been described by members of the College as causing distress appears to have been the result of unconscious discrimination. Drawing attention to this is bound to cause discomfort in a community. But King's is not the only community involved: respondents, although based in King's, were often describing situations involving members of other colleges and sectors of the University.

**PROJECT DIARY** (Numbers refer to notes following immediately.)

- July 88:* Researcher appointed<sup>1</sup> for one year: Oct 88 - Sept 89.
- Oct - Nov 88:* Designing and setting up WHE Project.
- Nov 88:* First meeting of the Cambridge University Senior Women's Committee<sup>2</sup> (initially known as the Senior Women Umbrella Group).
- Nov 88 - Apr 89:* Fellowship interviews and student group discussions.
- Feb 89:* Series of four seminars<sup>3</sup> for senior members:
- 1 *Equal Opportunities in Selection and Promotion*: : Wilf Knowles, Equal Opportunities Commission
  - 2 *Images of the Ideal Candidate* : Dr Glynis Breakwell, University of Surrey.
  - 3 *Dual Careers/ Dual Parenting* : Rhona Rapoport, research consultant.
  - 4 *Women in Traditionally Male Occupations* :  
Julia Cleverdon, Business in Industry  
Inspector Moya Wood-Heath, Metropolitan Police Force  
Barbara Gunnell, National Union of Journalists
- Apr 89:* One year extension of appointment (to Sept 1990).
- Apr 89:* National conference<sup>4</sup> on *Women in Higher Education*.. Guest speakers:  
Professor Daphne Jackson, University of Surrey and Dr Sandra Acker, University of Bristol.  
The *Women in Higher Education Network* (WHEN?) established by members of the conference.
- May - Jun 89:* Questionnaire<sup>5</sup> to collect information of Fellows' personal, educational and employment backgrounds distributed and responses collected.  
(Analysis of questionnaire extracts contained in Appendix 4.)
- July - Oct 89:* Analysis of data and writing of Interim Report.
- Oct 89:* Presentation of Interim Report.<sup>6</sup>
- Nov 89:* Informal Fellowship discussion of Report.
- Dec 89:* King's *Equal Opportunities Steering Committee* established.<sup>7</sup>  
  
Meeting with representatives of EO Steering Committee, to discuss areas of further research.
- Nov 89 - Apr 90:* Collection and analysis of further data.
- Feb 90:* Open Meeting<sup>8</sup> for students to discuss proposals of the EO Steering Committee.

Congregation: EO Steering Committee's Report to Governing Body. Recommendations accepted.

- March - Apr 90:* Writing of Final Report.
- Apr 90:* Research Centre Managers' decision on joint copyright between the College and the researcher of material produced during the project.
- May 90:* Presentation of the Final Report. Research Centre Managers' decision to release it into the public domain.
- May - Sept 90:* Consultation and collection of further information and to help the development and establishing of new policies for equal opportunities in King's.

## NOTES

### 1 APPOINTMENT

The formal status of the researcher was as research assistant in the King's College Research Centre. The details of the project were worked out with representatives of the women Fellows and of the Research Centre Managers. (For details of the methodology see Appendix 1).

### 2 CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY SENIOR WOMEN'S GROUP

At the first meeting of this group it was clear that morale was generally not good among senior women in the University. Some found it difficult to speak even in front of sympathetic women colleagues. Eighteen months later the Group is sufficiently established to comment on proposals for structural change in the University, and to write to representatives of Government on issues particularly affecting women.

### 3 SEMINARS

The seminars were advertised 'for senior members of the University'. This was for two main reasons:

- the senior women in the University are in a far smaller minority than junior women, and the low morale of those in mixed colleges especially needed special attention; the seminars were designed with their needs particularly in mind;
- it was important that senior women who came to the seminars would feel able to participate in them, and it was felt that the presence of undergraduates might reduce the chances of some senior women contributing. Women who came appreciated the fact that something had been arranged to cater primarily for them.

Women students objected to the exclusion on junior members, and were allowed to come to the seminars by request.

### 4 CONFERENCE

The conference attracted 125 delegates from 40 universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education all over Britain. They included half a dozen men, and women spoke

of the novelty and encouragement of taking part in a conference concerning higher education dominated by women for a change.

#### 5 FELLOWS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire forms were returned by 73% of total Fellowship, representing 100% of women Fellows and 68.5% of male Fellows. Most of those who did not return forms were among the oldest and retired members of College.

#### 6 INTERIM REPORT

The timing of the Interim Report was critical. The aim of the project is to effect changes of policy and practice in the College. It was necessary, therefore, for the Interim Report

- to be read by as many Fellows as possible;
- to be delivered in time for Fellows to think about its content, and find what others thought about it, before the caucuses met for the election of members to standing committees.

The researcher was instructed that the Interim Report would be confidential to the Fellowship. Student representatives objected strongly, after copies had been distributed to Fellows, especially on behalf of students who had taken part in group discussions from which quotations had been taken. A copy of the Report was put on restricted access in the College Library for the use of members of the College. This gave student representatives less than a week to prepare comments before the Fellowship held an informal discussion.

#### 7 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STEERING COMMITTEE

This Steering Committee had a brief to consider the recommendations of the Interim Report, and make specific recommendations to the Governing Body in February. This gave it a very tight timetable. It represented the first step in the College's formal response to information from the research project. Membership consisted of:

<i>Status:</i>	6 Fellows; 4 Student representatives; 1 Assistant Staff representative. (This group included 2 College Officers and 2 Professors).
<i>Sex:</i>	8 women; 3 men.

The work it did was excellent. As a representative body considering issues of equal opportunities it did, however, have two structural weaknesses.

- having elected a staff member it then held its meetings outside the working hours of assistant staff;
- there were no male student representatives.

A copy of the EO Steering Committee's report is included as section 10.

#### 8 OPEN MEETING

This was an occasion for students to discuss the recommendations that the EO Steering Committee was proposing to put to the College's Governing Body, and to suggest any changes or additions. It occasioned very active listening on both sides, and students' requests were reflected in the final document.

## **10: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STEERING COMMITTEE**

King's like Cambridge University, is not yet an equal opportunity employer. It is still, 21 years after the decision to admit women students, a place in which women work in relatively insecure positions, in relatively few academic disciplines, and in which women students are relatively unlikely to continue in academic life. Much of the explanation for this failure is to be found in factors which are beyond the influence of the College or even of the University: from primary school education to government funding policies to international competition among universities. But other factors are within our control. King's may indeed be one of the few institutions with the flexibility and continuity to make a long-term commitment to equality of opportunity in higher education.

UK universities have come relatively late to equal opportunities, which has the advantage that we can learn from experience in other countries. This experience suggests that improving the position of women is a way of improving the quality, the diversity, and the scholarly excellence of university life. We agree with the conclusion of a 1989 Committee at Harvard University that equal opportunity does not involve the 'bending' of existing standards of research and teaching, but is rather a way of enhancing those standards. Equality of opportunity will require effort, time and expenditure on the part of the College. But the costs of doing nothing would be very much greater.

The project on Women in Higher Education, which led to the setting up of this Steering Committee, has identified subjects of present concern in the King's community. We consider that the best way to address these concerns is through practical recommendations for change. There are steps which could be taken immediately, and which would improve the circumstances of women now at King's. There are other policies which could be adopted immediately, and whose consequences would be felt many years from now. These practical recommendations are what we have discussed over the past few weeks, and they are what we put forward here.

### **1. Institutional Structure**

The most important step is that the College commit itself to equality of opportunity: to eliminating discrimination, improving the conditions under which women and men combine family and college responsibilities, and making serious efforts to increase the employment of women across university disciplines and throughout university life. We recommend that the Governing Body adopt a statement of equal opportunity objectives, that progress towards these objectives be described

annually in a written report to the Governing Body, and that this report be discussed annually at an ordinary congregation. The responsibility for preparing the report should be shared by the Provost and by an Equal Opportunities Officer, and the first report should be presented in the Michaelmas Term 1990.

**We recommend that the Governing Body nominate a committee to appoint an Equal Opportunities Officer.** The Equal Opportunities Officer should be an experienced senior member of the College, and should be asked to serve on a part-time basis (roughly equivalent, in commitment of time, to a Tutorial position). He or she should take responsibility for establishing and implementing equal opportunities policies across all College activities, with respect to staff, students and Fellows. These policies should be based on knowledge of Equal Opportunities legislation and practice. Our Steering Committee has discussed the position of women in higher education. But the College's equal opportunity policies must be concerned with eliminating all forms of discrimination, whether based on race, disability or gender.

The initial appointment of the Equal Opportunities Officer should be for an experimental period of 2 years, in which the new policies will be put into place. His or her achievement, over this period, will depend on the extent to which different groups within the College become involved in implementing the policies. Equality of opportunity is not something that can be "done" for the College, by an individual or a committee. It is more like a process to which the different groups in the College become committed. We therefore suggest that the major College Committees and groups should each consider identifying one of their members to serve as an equal opportunities representative within the group. These representatives could in turn cooperate with the Equal Opportunities Officer and the Provost in preparing the Governing Body's annual discussions of progress towards equal opportunity objectives. **We recommend that the Governing Body request the Electors to Fellowships, the Council, the graduate students, the undergraduate students, and the staff to nominate their own equal opportunities representative.**

## **2. Educational Policy**

Policies to improve opportunities for women students are a component of good educational practice. But educational practices should be reviewed in the lights of equal opportunities policy. **We recommend that a Women's Tutor be appointed as a member of the tutorial staff.** She should be appointed, in the initial period in which the equal opportunities policy is being put into effect, as an additional Assistant Tutor.

There seem to be several points at which women students are discouraged from continuing in academic careers. Some choices are made before students even think of applying to University: for example, when they choose not to study science subject at school. We consider that the Admissions Tutor should discuss opportunities for women in science when he visits schools, and that the Women's Tutor (or King's women students) might also talk to schools. They should make clear the College's commitment to increasing numbers of women in all academic disciplines.

**We recommend that the Council initiate a review of several aspects of educational policy, which should include the following proposals:**

**With respect to undergraduates**, the review should consider: (1) a reorganisation and extension of the personal tutor system, in which personal tutors should be encouraged to see students more frequently, especially during the first year; (2) advise on teaching and counselling for tutors and supervisors; (3) procedures for the regular discussion of teaching, which could be organised in subject fora convened by Directors of Studies, and which should make it easier for students to express their opinions about teaching; (4) ways to provide advice and support for final year undergraduates who may be considering whether to continue with graduate studies.

The review should also be concerned with educational policies as they affect graduates. Many women graduates are discouraged from continuing in academic careers, some fail to complete graduate degrees, and others who complete degrees choose not to continue in academic life. **With respect to graduates**, the review should consider: (1) ways to increase tutorial support for graduate students; (2) possibilities of College teaching for graduate students; (3) ways in which the College can help to provide career advice and support for graduate students; (4) ways to increase the role of Directors of Studies, and of other senior members in relevant subjects, in graduate student education, with the additional responsibilities recognised as a continuing part of directing studies.

### **3. Conditions of work.**

***Sexual Harassment.*** We recommend that the College adopt a policy and statement of procedures to be followed in cases of possible sexual harassment. The statement should be drafted by the Equal Opportunities Officer, together with the Women's Tutor and the equal opportunities representatives, for discussion and adoption by the Governing Body. The procedures should be simple and clear; their object should be to ensure that problems are averted, or resolved as quickly and as fairly as possible.



*Maternity / Paternity Leave.* We recommend that the Bursar, together with the Equal Opportunities Officer, prepare a College policy on parental leave. The policy should include the provision of six months' paid leave for all employees and fellows, at the birth or adoption of an infant. In the case of employees, this would amount to an extension, by the College, of the leave period mandatory under employment legislation. In the case of fellows, it would be a new policy. The fellowships of people taking such leave should be extended by a period equivalent to the period of the leave. We expect that most people taking such leave will be mothers at the birth of a baby. But we consider that the leave should be available to all parents, for example under the circumstances that a father has primary responsibility for a new-born baby.

*Child Care.* The difficulties of finding child care are of major importance in women students' decisions about beginning or continuing academic careers. They can be especially daunting for graduate students who have moved to Cambridge with young children. The College at present provides financial support for some junior members with children, and also makes regular donations to local child care schemes. **We recommend that the Child Care Committee be reconvened, and that it should be extended to include junior members and the Bursar.** We consider that the Committee should investigate: (1) opportunities for cooperating with other Colleges in setting up child care facilities, such as a kindergarten providing flexible, part-time child care; (2) the possibility of instituting a child care voucher scheme; (3) support available to junior members who interrupt their studies to have children. We suggest that the Bursar should prepare a statement providing information about the College's policies in relation to child care. The information should be available to all students, staff and Fellows.

*Family Leave.* People have family responsibilities at all stages of academic careers: for older as well as infant children, and for parents as well as for children. The tension between these responsibilities and the requirements of professional success seems to be an important factor discouraging women (and some men) from continuing, or thriving, in academic life. One way of reducing this tension is to provide the possibility of taking temporary leave from academic employment, without seriously damaging academic prospects. **We recommend that the Fellowship Committee be asked to bring forward proposals to the Governing Body for implementing a Family Leave Policy.** Fellows should be able to take up to one year of unpaid leave for family reasons. The family leave could be taken as leave of absence or by working part-time; the College might also consider providing short periods of paid leave. When leave of this sort is taken, the fellowship should be extended by an equivalent period. This is similar to the policy in US universities of

"stopping" or "slowing" the "tenure clock" for periods of "personal leave". We recognise that there will be some difficulties in defining the family reasons which should make people eligible for such leave, especially when they do not involve young children. But we consider that such leave should be available, in principle, without respect to age or gender. Even the knowledge that such leave is available might reduce pressures on women Fellows; it would also be an indication that the College is serious about trying to find ways for people to combine family and academic lives.

#### **4. Increasing the Employment of Women in Higher Education.**

The College's contribution to improving conditions for women in higher education will not be evident for years or decades. But its success will be judged by whether the College manages to appoint and retain women fellows, at different levels of seniority, and in different academic fields. Experience from other countries suggests, again, that the presence of senior women scholars is a critical factor in encouraging other women to continue in university careers. The discussion and implementation of equal opportunities policies will itself put additional burdens on senior women now in the College. Policies for the long term should therefore be put in place as soon as possible.

***Appointments Procedures.*** We recommend that the Fellowship Committee prepare a standard procedure to be followed by all appointments committees, for discussion and adoption by the Council and the Electors to Fellowships. The procedure should be discussed with the Equal Opportunities Officer, and should include guidelines for attracting applications from qualified women, and for preparing written reports on all appointments. The Fellowship Committee should also review its policies with respect to the limitations, in Research Fellowship Competitions, on the number of years applicants have spent on "full-time research". Some College appointments will presumably be subject to experience limits. But we recommend that no College appointments should be subject to age limits, other than the age for retirement from university positions.

***Conditions of Employment.*** Most women fellows are at King's for short periods, and without university appointments. Improvements in conditions of employment are important for all NUTO's and Research Fellows. But they will have a disproportionate effect on women fellows. We consider that College Officers should be as explicit as possible, at the time of all appointments to a Fellowship, about the conditions under which reappointment might take place, and about the criteria by which eligibility for reappointment would be judged. If there is no possibility of reappointment, then fellows with short-term appointments should work under conditions which increase their chances to continue in other university positions. If reappointment is possible, then the appointing body might consider nominating a senior

fellow to discuss progress, by some stated date, with the fellow appointed, and to be available for general career advice and encouragement.

**Opportunities.** King's will have a much greater chance of succeeding in its equal opportunity policies if it increases the employment of women in secure, senior academic positions. We recognise that the College has only limited possibilities for providing new long-term positions. We also recognise that there are still few qualified women available in many subjects, including natural sciences, engineering, and some social sciences. But we are convinced that the College should nonetheless try to find innovative ways of attracting women to King's and to Cambridge. The College's policy should be to look for opportunities to identify outstanding women scholars, and to be flexible about using these opportunities. This, rather than quota system or the creation of "women's positions", is a strategy for continuing improvement.

The commitment to innovative appointments procedures should be made on a long-term basis. The College should work closely with the University in implementing these procedures. It could, for example, explore the possibilities of using Joint College/University teaching appointments and Part-Time appointments -- both of which are now under discussion by the University -- to increase employment of women fellows. But the College can also be flexible in ways which are not available to the University.

**We recommend that the Electors to Fellowships be asked to consider policies by which the College can increase the number of women fellows, especially in under-represented subjects and in more senior positions.** These policies should be reflected in the continuing discussion of changes in the structure of the Fellowship. Women fellows, including scientists, have in the past been appointed in several different research categories. We consider that changes in the structure of the Fellowship should be such as to increase the College's flexibility to support research, and to appoint women with "unusual" careers. Contributions to the College should be defined sufficiently broadly as to include, for example, graduate student teaching.

The Provost and the Electors should also encourage a continuing effort to identify qualified senior women who might be appointed to Fellowships. In doing so, they would work closely with Fellows in different subjects, especially those who hold senior offices in university departments. The Provost might, for example, ask all Fellows to suggest names of women scholars for consideration by the Electors. Progress towards recruiting women fellows should be described annually in the written report to the Governing Body on equal opportunities.

We recognise that the College is constrained in its appointment policies not only by income but also by space and by fellowship quotas. But some additional

appointments could be made at relatively low cost. We recommend that the Fellowship Committee be asked to consider possibilities for increasing the College's flexibility in making elections to Fellowships. These might include encouraging visiting fellowships, and senior research fellowships, non-residential or part-time fellowships, and senior research fellowships (comparable to Trinity's Title B fellowships) for scholars, including former fellows, whose principal work is already supported from other sources. Fellowships of this sort would not, of course, be exclusively or even primarily for women. But they would provide an additional way for the College to contribute to increasing mobility, diversity and quality in higher education. That is, after all, the object of policies for equal opportunity.

Tess Adkins

Ian Barter

Marilyn Butler

Pat Cornthwaite

Liz Gentilcore

Katherine Parker

Martin Rees

Emma Rothschild

Fiona Russell

Colin Sparrow

Jennie Walmsley

## 11: THE COLLEGE'S RESPONSE

### *A VOTE OF THE GOVERNING BODY: 24 February 1990.*

- (a) The Report of the Equal Opportunities Steering Committee was received.
- (b) Agreed:
  - (i) To request the Council to nominate a Committee to appoint an Equal Opportunities Officer, such Committee to be composed of the Provost, The Senior Tutor and such other members (including a members of staff and two junior members, one graduate and one undergraduate) as the Council may choose.
  - (ii) To request the Council to appoint a Women's Tutor and to initiate a review of the educational policy as outlined in the Report.
  - (iii) That the Fellowship Committee and the Electors to Fellowships be asked to consider the relative recommendations contained in sections 3 and 4 of the Report and to report back to the Governing Body.
  - (iv) That a policy on sexual harassment and a statement of procedures to be followed in the case of sexual harassment be drafted by the Equal Opportunities Officer, together with the Women's Tutor, the Lay Dean and the equal opportunities representatives of the graduates, the undergraduates and the staff, for discussion and adoption by the Governing Body.
  - (v) That the Bursar, together with the Equal Opportunities Officer, be asked to prepare a College policy on parental leave, including both parents, such policy to include the provision of six months' paid leave for both employees and Fellows, at the birth or adoption of an infant and that the Child Care Committee be re-convened.

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