

## ‘Just’ a Fisherman’s Wife



‘Just’ a Fisherman’s Wife:  
A Post Structural Feminist Exposé  
of Australian Commercial Fishing  
Women’s Contributions and Knowledge,  
‘Sustainability’ and ‘Crisis’

By

Jane Dowling

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFFA	Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia
AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
APAI	Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry)
ARLP	Australian Rural Leadership Program
ARC	Australian Research Council
ASIC	Australian Seafood Industry Council
AWiA	Australian Women in Agriculture
BAS	Business Activity Statement
BRS	Bureau of Rural Sciences
CSU	Charles Sturt University
DPIE	Department of Primary Industries and Energy
DPIWE	Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (Tas)
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FRDC	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
FSRS	Fishermen and Scientists Research Society
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ITQ	Individual Transferable Quota
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
NAC	National Aquaculture Council
NCP	National Competition Policy
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
NFFC	National Farmers Federation Council
NRE	National Resources and Environment
NSW	New South Wales
RIRDC	Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
RLC	Western Rock Lobster Council
RLIAC	Rock Lobster Industry Advisory Council
RWAC	Regional Women's Advisory Council
RWS	Rural Women's Secretariat
SCARM	Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAS	Tasmania
TFIC	Tasmanian Fishing Industry Council
UN	United Nations

WA	Western Australian
WAFIC	Western Australian Fishing Industry Council
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WINSC	Women's Industry Network Seafood Community
WIRIS	Women in Rural Industries and Industry Leadership Section

## INTRODUCTION

Both the fishing and agricultural industries are traditionally viewed as a masculine domain, one in which women are mostly invisible. Yet, there is a lack of research on women in commercial fishing industry in Australia. This does not necessarily reflect a lack of women involved in the industry. Rather, it identifies the need to investigate the possibility that the Australian commercial fishing industry is locally, structurally, politically and systemically gendered.

This book provides a snapshot of women in family fishing businesses that operate licenses and leases in both the aquaculture and wild catch sectors. It applies a feminist post structural framework to explore the lack of visibility of these women in fishing; their contributions; the barriers to, and opportunities for, their greater participation; and the implications of their industry positioning in the quest for more sustainable fisheries in the current industry “crisis”. As these issues frame the boundaries of the research, this book does not provide extensive technical information about harvesting practices or a comprehensive history of fisheries management. Instead, these issues are explained where relevant.

This book is based on doctoral research undertaken between 2003 and 2006 under a Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry) (APAI) scholarship and in partnership between the Centre for Rural Social Research-Charles Sturt University (CSU) and the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS). Given the time lapse between conducting the research and the publication of this book, the context in which this research was undertaken has evolved, particularly in relation to fisheries management policies and regulations, and other environmental, economic and political factors. There has also been a change of Commonwealth government. While any such changes potentially may be associated with shifting of gender relations, identities and positioning, recent publications suggest that there has been little change in terms of women’s marginalised position in both fishing (e.g. Weeratunge and Snyder 2009) and agriculture (e.g. Sheridan and Haslam-McKenzie 2009). As such, it can be said with some certainty that the pervasiveness of the gendered nature of the Australian fishing industry is such that industry women continue to remain marginalised.

Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that while progress has been made in terms of implementing Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) in Australian fisheries, the focus has been on ecological components of ESD, with minimal progress made in social and economic areas (Millington and Fletcher 2008). Furthermore, fisheries management agencies continue to fail to effectively engage with the community; and there remains no baseline social/economic assessments of fisheries or regions (Millington and Fletcher 2008). This is particularly critical given the fact that it is ‘apparent’ that climate change will significantly impact Australian fisheries, and that “considerable social disruption would occur if key fisheries were affected” (Hobday, Poloczanska and Matear 2008, 14). Indeed, as do several others, these authors go on to suggest the need to investigate the socio-economic impacts of climate on Australian fisheries and aquaculture. While the research underpinning this book focuses on discourses of ‘crisis’ and ‘sustainability’, further demonstrating the currency of this work is the fact that the discourse of impending climate change may be critically viewed as the latest industry ‘crisis’ (Crist 2007).

A further purpose of this book is to provide emerging feminist scholars with a sound post structural theoretical framework for undertaking feminist research. Undertaking higher degree research can be daunting, and many students struggle with determining and articulating a solid framework for research planning, data collection and analysis. Indeed, it was my early experience that accessible and comprehensive material relating to reconciling theoretical and methodological tensions was difficult to locate and understand. As such, I hope that this book assists emerging scholars in both developing a greater understanding of these issues, and also provides an accessible example of how to apply this knowledge to a particular subject to advance the positioning of women.

## **Women in Fishing-The Issues**

Historically, commercial fishing has been characterised by family businesses operating in the wild catch sector (Wilkinson 2004). Traditionally, fishing has been constructed as a singular, masculine occupation and, despite the reliance on labour from women in family businesses, women’s contributions have not been visible (Lambeth et al 2002; Siason et al 2002). The application of a feminist informed Foucauldian theoretical approach highlights the importance of analysing the what, where, why and how of women’s contributions within a specific historical context. Thus,

exploring the current industry climate of fisheries in “crisis” (Kura et al 2004; *Fishing Crisis* 2006) and discourses of sustainability are central to this analysis.

International research suggests that women in fishing make vital contributions yet lack recognition within a masculine dominated industry (Thompspon 1985; Neis et al 2005; Siason et al 2002). In Australia, the small amount of research conducted with women in fishing also suggests that this is the case (Aslin, Webb and Fisher 2000; DNRE n.d.; Stella 1996, 1998). However, there has been no thorough exploration of these issues, or the implications of women’s lack of stakeholder status in the current industry climate and the potential of women to enhance the future of the Australian commercial fishing industry.

Nonetheless, there is a growing body of international feminist literature on women in commercial fisheries. Nadel-Klein and Davis’s (1988) recognition of women’s extensive contributions to fishing globally created impetus for research to further explore these issues in the early 1990s, much of which was conducted in Norway, Iceland and Canada (e.g., Porter 1991; Davis and Nadel-Klein 1992; Thiessen, Davis and Jentoft 1992; Davis 1993). In an effort to alleviate the male bias in fisheries research, both *Anthropologica* (Binkley 1996; Hall-Arber 1996; Skaptadottir 1996; Szala-Meneok 1996) and *Women’s Studies International Forum* (Binkley 2000, Davis 2000; Gerrard 2000; Nadel-Klein 2000; Neis 2000; Munk-Madsen 2000; Skaptadottir 2000) published special journal issues dedicated to women in fisheries and fishing communities which recognise women’s extensive and diverse contributions, often in the context of fisheries in “crisis”. The more recent publication of *Changing Tides: Gender, Fisheries and Globalization* (Neis et al 2005) continued to position women’s extensive contributions and marginalised position within the broader context of a changing fishing industry, and explore the implications of these changes for women in fishing (Binkley 2005; Neis 2005; Neis and Maneschy 2005; MacDonald 2005, McCay 2005; Power and Harrison 2005; Skaptadottir and Proppe 2005).

The synergies between women in fishing and women in farming are worth noting and are further explored in Chapter 1. Over the past three decades, an extensive amount of research has emerged which focuses on women in farming. Recognising the patriarchal, masculine dominated nature of farming, this research has explored numerous issues including the visibility of women in farming, their contributions, their representation

in industry decision making and transforming gendered industry identities both in Australia (Alston 1995b; 1998a, 2000, 2006; Bryant 1999, 2001; Davidson 2001; Dempsey 1992, 1994; Gibson, Baxter and Kingston 1990; Haslam-McKenzie 2003b; Liepins 2001; Pini 2002a, 2003b, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Piner 1990, 1994) and internationally (Brandth and Haugen 2000, 2005; Little and Morris 2005; Shortall 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004a, 2005; Whatmore 1991a, 1991b; Whatmore, Marsden and Lowe 1994).

However, studies investigating women's contribution to the Australian commercial fishing and the gendered nature of the industry are a more recent phenomenon, with several authors identifying the need for further research in this area (Aslin, Webb and Fisher 2000; MyriaD Consultants 2000; Stella 1996, 1998; Waitt and Hartig 2005; Smith and Sullivan 2001). Women's knowledge, gained through the experience of engaging in their daily activities, has also been identified as important for enhancing natural resource management and facilitating more sustainable agricultural industries (Agarwal 1992; Sachs 1996; Trauger 2004). This recognition occurs within a global context of increasing acknowledgment of the importance of women's contributions to more sustainable development and industries (Fourth World Conference on Women 1995; SCARM 1998, 2001). However, while there has been a sustained movement to increase the participation of women in farming, women in fishing have been less likely to be incorporated into this rhetoric.

Nonetheless, women in fishing in Australia have started to organise and activism by the Women's Industry Network Seafood Community (WINSC), a national network of women in the seafood industry in Australia formed in 1999, has been promoting women in the industry. At this time of this research, WINSC had also had representation on the Rural Women's Secretariat (RWS) in the Commonwealth Office for Women, and the Regional Women's Advisory Council (RWAC), a representative body located in the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services. In addition, WINSC has been instrumental in generating research to increase recognition of women in fishing, including facilitating a project *Fishing for Women: Understanding Women's Roles in the Fishing Industry* (Aslin, Fisher and Webb 2000) which was conducted by the Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS), a subsidiary of the Commonwealth government department at that time, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA). Indeed, this report created the impetus for an application to be made to the Australian Research Council for this doctoral research to be undertaken.

In order to generate more critical debate on women in fishing, this book explores the nature of the dominant fishing industry discourse; women's involvement in industry decision making; and their contributions to their businesses (including family business decision making), families and communities. It then explores the implications for women in the current industry climate and their potential to enhance the future of the fishing industry, with a focus on the value of women's knowledge and sustainability. This exploration is achieved through research conducted with women in fishing in three case studies—the Western Australian Rock Lobster fishery, the Tasmanian Oyster fishery and *Cardea*, a pseudonym for an Australian east coast fishing village where women are involved in the Commonwealth Trawl Fishery and tuna fisheries. As with any feminist research, this book is unashamed about exposing inequalities with a view to challenging gendered assumptions that marginalise women in any social arena (Reinharz 1992), including the fishing industry.

## **My Story and This Research**

A further critical aspect of the feminist nature of this research and my adoption of reflexivity—a position which rejects the notion of an impersonal objective researcher—suggests I disclose my biography as a researcher so my beliefs and social location may be considered in the context of the overall research (Harding 1987b). When this research was undertaken, I was in my mid thirties, and a white, middle class feminist with two teenage children. As such, it is difficult to know what is important to disclose about myself for it is not possible to articulate all of my values, knowledge and beliefs and the factors which account for these, so the following is only a brief overview of some aspects of my life. Ironically, this divergence between my knowledge of self and the readers reinforces the underpinning theoretical construction of knowledge in this book as partial, situated and located (Haraway 1988).

After leaving school with only four years of secondary education, I was successful in gaining a university place under a special admissions program and commenced an educational journey which has and will continue to mark my personal development. I have also had a long standing interest in and passionate commitment to women's issues. My honours thesis investigated the shifting sexual division of labour in restructuring industry, and I have worked in organisations and conducted consultancy work where empowering women through both research and action has been the central aim.

When I commenced my doctorate, I was living in a small coastal town seeking stimulating employment which provided the flexibility to fit in with my family responsibilities. In rural areas, these opportunities are scarce. One evening I happened to come across an advertisement for a research scholarship, and having completed an undergraduate degree in psychology and sociology and an honours year in sociology, met the required academic criteria. While I had no prior knowledge of, or experience in, the commercial fishing industry, I also lived in an area with a high profile fishing industry. The possibility of applying a feminist perspective to exploring this industry appealed to me, and I was privileged to be successful in gaining this opportunity which I undertook as a distance education student, a common form of study in Australia where students undertake educational programs away from their residential location.

My experience of the process of engaging in and undertaking a doctorate was a personal journey. Not only have my conceptual, analytical, research and writing skills advanced significantly, but my own subjectivity has been influenced by my enhanced understanding of, and affiliation with, feminism. My commitment to women's issues and passion for social justice issues has strengthened with the insights I have gained. It is with great delight that I now have the opportunity to publish this research, and my hope that this work enhances the position of industry women into the future.

## **A Feminist Post Structural Approach**

Over the last two decades, a significant influence on research with women in agriculture has been the application of post structural theory. This has generated a more sophisticated understanding of the diversity amongst women, their agency and resistance, and the positioning of women in masculine industry discourses which moves beyond theorising "women" as an essentialist category inscribed as victims (Brandth and Haugen 1998; Grace and Lennie 1998; Leipins 1995, 1996, 1998, 2001).

While I felt there were significant benefits in applying Foucauldian post structuralism, I also became familiar with the feminist critique of Foucault (Bailey 1993; Cain 1993; Deveaux 1994; Grimshaw 1993; Ramazanoglu 1993a). Issues raised by these authors include: the notion that women's daily activities lack a material reality and instead are seen to derive only from discursive subject positions; the lack of attention given to

internal processes and emotions in taking up and rejecting subject positions; and the difficulty in discussing collective political action for “women”. For these reasons, I draw from both post structuralism and standpoint theory, and reconcile the tensions between these positions by employing the concept of “situated knowledge” (Haraway 1988).

A further benefit of applying a post structural theoretical approach is its emphasis on the need to explore power in specific local and historical contexts (Foucault 1980). As power is theorised by Foucault as everywhere (capillary) and *exercised*, and subjectivities are constituted in and by discourse, exploring power relations at a broad contextual/structural level is required in order to understand what women do, and do not do, and why and how this occurs. This aligns with the contextual understanding that the fishing industry is operating under increasing global, local, environmental, economic and social pressures (Neis et al 2005).

## **Key Definitions-Language and Meaning**

In order to aid understanding of the reader and as meaning cannot be guaranteed by any author (Weiner 1993), I now provide a brief explanation of how key terms are employed throughout this book. Theoretical concepts are explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

### ***Discourse***

The construct of discourse which is applied in this research is understood as:

“...practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak...Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the process of doing so conceal their own invention” (Foucault 1980, 49).

### ***Family businesses***

In this book, I employ Tonts and Black's (2002) conceptualisation of the family farm business.

“...family farms are usually held to be businesses that are owned and operated by a family. The decisions about farm management are made

within the family unit, which also provides the business with much of the necessary land, capital and labour" (Tonts and Black 2002, 3).

However, in doing so, I transpose the key elements of this definition to family businesses in the fishing industry. As such, I transpose family farming business with family fishing business; decisions about farm management with decisions about management of the fishing business; and land and agricultural capital with fishing capital including boats, fishing gear, quota, leases and licenses.

### ***Fish, fisheries and the industry***

The definition of "fish" as "...living aquatic vertebrate and invertebrate organisms..." (FRDC 2001, 6) includes fish and shellfish harvested in the aquaculture and wild catch sectors of the Australian commercial fishing industry. A "fishery" refers to one of the approximately 150 sectors within the industry at the time of this research which are delineated by species and/or geographic area. While "the fishing industry" is often commonly understood as referring to the act of harvesting fish within these fisheries, an official definition recognises "the fishing industry" as comprising of a broad range of activities.

"The fishing industry includes any industry or activity conducted in or from Australia concerned with taking, culturing, processing, preserving, storing, transporting, marketing or selling fish or fish products" (FRDC 2001, 6).

While I employ this definition, I further expand this term and use it to refer to those individuals who undertake these tasks, including women, men and children involved in fishing.

### ***Fisheries management agencies***

"Fisheries management agencies" refer to the State or Commonwealth government department responsible for implementing policy within specific fisheries. In Australia, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) oversee Commonwealth fisheries, including the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery and the Commonwealth Trawl Fishery which both operate in Cardea. State fisheries management agencies relevant to this research include Western Australian Fisheries, who are responsible for managing the Western Australian Rock Lobster fishery and

the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIWE), who are responsible for managing the Tasmanian oyster fishery.

### ***Industry organisations***

The term “industry organisation” is used to refer to any organisation, association or body which is comprised primarily of commercial fishing industry stakeholders. One example of these at a local level are the Professional Fishermen’s Associations in the Western Australian Rock Lobster fishery. An example at a state level is the peak organisation, the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council, which represents all commercial fishing operators in the state of Tasmania, and at the time of the research was called the Tasmanian Fishing Industry Council (TFIC). I employ the term “industry decision making” to refer to both these decision making structures, and the decision making processes which occur within these structures.

### ***Participant***

I employ the term “participant” when referring to both women and men who were involved in this research, the latter typically being representatives of industry organisations and fisheries management agencies.

### ***Power/ knowledge and truth***

Power is theorised as capillary, multiple, productive and as constituted, embodied and exercised in all relations and subjectivities, and as inseparable from resistance. Furthermore, power/ knowledge is conceptualised as unified and singular, and as the fundamental component of what defines truth in the dominant discourse.

### ***Subjectivities, subject positions and positioning***

I employ the term “subjectivity” to mean “...the conditions of being subjected to frameworks of regulation, knowledge and discourse and constructing subjectivity in the process” (Skeggs 1997, 12). “Subject positions” refer to categories constructed as part of wider discourses as an effect of discourse and structures which “...investigate the specificities of how women become particular subjects, especially respectable subjects” (Skeggs 1997, 12). I use the concept of “positioning” to refer to how individuals are defined in, and by, particular subject positions.

### ***Sustainability and neo liberalism***

The language of “sustainability” is prevalent in industry and fisheries management discourse. In this research, I have not conceptualised “sustainability” as a theoretical construct, but as a linguistic, discursive site of power. As such, I understand “sustainability” and “a sustainable industry” not as an apolitical, concrete, achievable state of being or end result, but as a term which is shot through with power and which refers to a variety of ideas with differing meanings (depending on who is speaking and who is hearing) relating to the need for all or some things to continue to survive and how this may occur. Within this post structural framework, what becomes pertinent is how the language of sustainability is employed, for what purpose, and the implications of the way it is used.

At the time of this research, the language of sustainability was both dominant, and used in a neo liberalist state culture. In this research, I employ the term neoliberalism to refer to

“...an all-embracing economic and political ideology that advocates the supremacy of the market over any alternative social arrangement....The market, based on freedom of choice and respect for private property and individual rights, and underpinned by competition...is seen as the ideal and optimal vehicle for the realization of human ends (Mhone 2005, para 4)”.

### ***Women and men in fishing***

In this book, I employ the terms women and men “in fishing” and “in farming” to refer to women and men involved in family fishing and farming businesses. I employ the terms “men in fishing” and “women in fishing” to refer to individuals involved in family fishing businesses within the fishing industry. In fishing, typically these women are married to men who harvest fish. The terms “fisherman” and “fisherman’s wife” are used when referring to the prevalent industry subject positions for men and women in fishing. In order to emphasise the constructed nature of these subject positions and other terms, I use inverted commas, and in order to emphasize the masculine occupational privileging in particular contexts within the fishing industry, I use round brackets as a technique to draw attention to the relationship between “man” and “fisher”. In the literature review, my use of the term “fisher” reflects the use of this term by particular authors.

## ***Women’s contributions***

When writing of the “contributions” of women in fishing, I refer to the range of activities in which women in fishing and farming are engaged. Women in these industries make extensive contributions to their businesses, industries, families and communities. I conceptualise these contributions as holistic, as these activities are not easily separated into distinct spheres of business, industry, family and community. As such, women’s contributions are intertwined, and may be social, cultural, economic, and/ or political.

## **Addressing the Issues**

### ***Masculine industry discourses***

Women’s lack of visibility is a concept that lies at the core of feminism and, given the lack of visibility of women in the Australian commercial fishing industry, is central to this research. In this book, in addition to drawing from overseas literature on women in fishing, I also incorporate themes drawn from research on women in farming for three main reasons. Firstly, similarities have been observed between women in fishing and farming including the historically male dominated nature of these industries, the prevalence of family units and patrilineal inheritance practices (Aslin, Webb and Fisher 2000). Secondly, there is often a lack of distinction between the two industries. Statistics on fishing and farming are often aggregated in Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force data (e.g., Herreria et al 2004) and the industries are linked by their primary industry status in the Commonwealth government’s Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, which at the time of this research was called Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA). Thirdly, this research’s exploration of women in fishing in Australia replicates the initial stages of a similar process that occurred for women in farming some 30 years ago. As such, incorporating themes which emerge from research on women in farming enables a more sophisticated analysis to be conducted of the experiences and positioning of women in fishing.

Three central themes emerge in previous research on women in fishing and farming. Firstly, women’s lack of visibility, including their poor representation in industry decision making and the masculine nature of “fisherman” and “farmer”, are challenged. Secondly, women’s diverse and extensive contributions, including their paid and unpaid labour, are

recognised. Thirdly, barriers and opportunities that impact on women's ability to participate in the industry are examined, and strategies are identified to facilitate the increased representation and participation of women in fishing and farming. These themes emerge within a broader context which highlights the continual transition and shaping of industries by local, global, social, economic and environmental forces intersected by government policy. This context is often referred to as the "crisis" in farming (Bourke and Lockie 2001; Rickson 1997) and fishing (Kura et al 2004; *Fishing Crisis* 2006).

### ***The current industry climate***

At any given time, the Australian commercial fishing industry is affected by economic, social and historical factors intersected by government policy. Currently, the quest to achieve more sustainable fisheries is occurring in the context of a global fisheries "crisis" (Kura et al 2004; *Fishing crisis* 2006). In Australia, this is resulting in the emergence of aquaculture as a major growth sector (FRDC 2000; FRDC 2001; NAC 2001) and wild catch fisheries are operating under increasingly stringent fisheries management regulations (Caton and McLoughlin 2000). Under these pressures, the number of smaller family businesses in the industry are decreasing and the number of larger, more corporate businesses are increasing. This displacement of family businesses is occurring in both farming (Burch et al 1998) and fishing (Aslin, Webb and Fisher 2000; Wilkinson 2004).

Exploring the implications of the current positioning of women within this broader context is essential to ensure that industry women are not (further) marginalised in processes of change. Overseas research suggests that the current patriarchal bio-economic model employed in fisheries management is formalising masculine privileging in the inequitable allocation of resources (Munk-Madsen 1998a) and is failing to adequately consider social issues in restructuring fisheries (Davis 2000; Davis and Gerrard 2000; Neis 2000; Skaptadottir 2000). In Australia, it has been reported that women are concerned about the security of their fishing rights and question whether they will be able to pass these rights onto their children (Aslin, Webb and Fisher 2000; MyriaD Consultants 2000). Elsewhere, based on this doctoral research, I have argued that women's exclusion from industry decision making, deriving from their marginalised ownership status, means that women in family fishing businesses are not recognised in the process of the allocation of the rights to resources and

not adequately considered with regard to the social impacts of management decisions (Dowling 2006a).

### ***Research questions and objectives***

This research builds on the small amount of work conducted on women in fishing in Australia by addressing the five following questions that emerge as a result of the literature review. How visible are women in the industry? How do women contribute to the industry, their businesses, families and communities? What are the barriers to and opportunities for women's greater participation in the fishing industry? What are the implications of women's industry positioning in the current climate? What outcomes would women like to see from this research?

Reflecting that the feminist agenda is about change, I also articulate the objectives of this research, where I aim/ed to: make visible and increase awareness of the contributions of women in family fishing businesses; give women "voice" and expose their subjugated knowledge; identify, recognise and value the lived experiences of women in order to increase the opportunities and potential for women's empowerment; expose the barriers to and opportunities for women's contributions greater recognition and participation in the fishing industry; enhance women's capacity to contribute in the context of an industry in transition; raise awareness of women as stakeholders based on principles of social justice; provide a platform for facilitating broader political action that increases recognition of women as industry stakeholders and aspires to more equitable industry relations; and contribute to scholarship in the fields of feminism, social science, and environment and natural resource management.

### **The Book Structure**

In order to explore women's lack of visibility and their current and potential contributions to the Australian commercial fishing industry in the current industry climate, this book is presented in a further eight sections—seven chapters and a Conclusion. Chapter 1 reviews the literature; Chapters 2 and 3 articulate the theory and methodology employed; Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 present the findings of this research with women in fishing; and the Conclusion provides a comprehensive summary of the key findings and their implications.

## ***Chapter 1***

Chapter 1 is a review of the literature that draws from scholarship and research on both women in fishing and farming. This literature review explores the key themes of women's lack of visibility; their contributions to their businesses, families and communities; their involvement in business and industry decision making; and the barriers to, and opportunities for, women's greater recognition and participation. It also explores discourses of sustainability in the context of fishing and farming in "crisis", and gendered management practices in the current climate.

## ***Chapter 2***

In Chapter 2, I present the feminist theory employed in this research. As previous research has suggested, there is a need to go beyond documenting women's "roles" to explore how women are positioned in discourses and the implications of this positioning (Davis and Nadel-Klein 1992). This requires a move away from essentialist structural understandings where oppression is "fixed onto women" to an approach which recognises diversity and reinscribes women with power and the potential for agency, resistance and empowerment.

The theoretical position adopted in this book, drawing from Foucauldian informed feminist post structuralism and standpoint theory, is then articulated. This follows the tradition of other feminist writers who argue for the benefits of reconciling the ontological tension between the constitution of reality from experience in standpoint theory, and from discourse in post structuralism, by locating knowledge as historical, situated and partial (e.g. Haraway 1988; Hirschman 2004; Weeks 2004).

Adopting this approach exposes the inherent instability in universal Truths and recognises diversity amongst women and the intersecting nature of socially constructed locations/positions such as sex/ gender and race/ ethnicity. It allows for an analysis of women's material experiences and discourses of power/ knowledge which are constituted in and through women's fluid subjectivities. It facilitates the exploration of women's subjectivities, resistance and empowerment at both an individual and group level, and has the potential to expose subjugated knowledge.

As meaning cannot be guaranteed by an author's intent, this is followed by a more detailed exploration of my interpretation and application

of the key post structural concepts critical to understanding the positioning of women in the Australian commercial fishing industry. This chapter concludes with a section on social positions where I justify my decision to focus on sex/gender and race/ethnicity as the primary social locations under investigation, and explain my omission of class.

### ***Chapter 3***

Chapter 3 overviews the feminist methodology employed in this research and explains the research process-the “doing” of feminism (Kelly, Burton and Regan 1994, 28). Initially I discuss epistemological and methodological issues relating to feminist research. The principles which inform this feminist research are articulated, the criteria for evaluating feminist research discussed and feminist concepts of validity and generalisation explored. Each section also explains how these concepts and principles were applied throughout this research. A detailed explanation of, and justification for, the research design and process is then provided.

The research is based on pragmatic, feminist, philosophical underpinnings and is informed by Pini's (1998) articulation of the five recurring common themes in feminist research: a focus on gender, value given to women's experience's and knowledge, rejection of the separation between subject and object, an emphasis on consciousness raising and an emphasis on political change.

### ***Chapter 4***

Chapter 4, A Masculine Industry Discourse, explores the gendered power relations in the dominant industry discourse and how women are positioned in this discourse. I do this by deconstructing both clearly gendered language such as “fisherman”, and seemingly apolitical language such as the meaning commonly ascribed to “the industry”, as a means of exposing gendered power relations. In this chapter I name the central industry subject positions of “fisherman” and “fisherman's wife”, and acknowledge the discursively relegated/ adopted activities associated with these positions.

I then explore the gendered power relations in women's positioning in family businesses in relation to their legal ownership of businesses and capital, and explore women's marginalisation through patrilineal inheritance practices and the implications of these practices. The subject

positions of “fisherman” and “fisherman’s wife” are then scrutinised in more detail and the discursive normalising and regulatory mechanisms which exclude women from being occupationally privileged are explored. I conclude by discussing the implications of this occupational privileging and the positing of women within the dominant discourse.

### ***Chapter 5***

The purpose of Chapter 5, Women in Industry Decision Making, is to examine and explain women’s visibility, or lack of visibility, and their contributions in industry decision making. Women in farming are marginalised in industry decision making as a result of the power conferred through patrilineal inheritance practices (Shortall 1999), structural factors such as masculine dominated organisational practices and processes, and personal reasons such as a lack of time (Alston 2000). Research suggests that women in fishing in Australia are marginalised in decision making in similar ways (McKay, Dimopoulos and Baker, n.d).

This chapter explores women’s representation in decision making bodies relevant to the Australian commercial fishing industry. Exploring the meanings associated with the subject position of “fisherman” and “fisherman’s wife”, it explores the positioning of industry women in relation to decision making. I then discuss discursive regulatory mechanisms which operate to perpetuate this positioning of industry women including structural barriers such as organisational processes and practices. Analysis is also provided on how women resist these barriers and the consequences for women who breach the dominant discursive positioning of women. Strategies which may enhance the potential for women to contribute are then explored, including women’s collective action and activism.

Exploring women’s contributions in this context reveals the implications of women’s lack of occupational privileging. This is particularly pertinent as the industry comes under increasing pressure to change. These implications are further explored in Chapter 7, Women in an Industry in “Crisis”.

### ***Chapter 6***

Despite women’s lack of recognition, previous research has demonstrated that women in farming and fishing make substantial contributions to their

businesses, industry, families and communities. The small amount of research on women in fishing in Australia indicates these findings are replicated (Aslin, Webb and Fisher 2000; Stella 1998). Having established that women are not privileged with occupational (and so stakeholder) status, and are excluded from industry decision making, in Chapter 6- Women's Contributions, I provide a comprehensive overview of the contributions women in fishing make to their businesses, families and communities. These contributions are explored in a holistic manner and include women's labour, economic, social and emotional contributions. Reflecting my application of feminist post structural theory, I commence this chapter with an analysis of how women in fishing are discursively relegated into and take up (or resist) the daily activities discursively associated with the subject position of "fisherman's wife". I conclude this chapter with a discussion on the knowledge/ power implications of women's engagement in their daily activities.

## ***Chapter 7***

Chapter 7 explores women's invisibility, their contributions and lack of recognition within the broader changing industry context characterised by increasing regulation and management intervention. I commence with a critical deconstruction of the language employed by management with a focus on the language of "sustainability" and an assessment of how adequately, within the current neo liberalist, masculine dominated, bio economic approach (Holm 1996; Munk-Madsen 1998a) fisheries management integrate the "social" in sustainable. This analysis exposes the political intent in an apparently apolitical analysis. The implications for women within this context are then examined. I then proceed to explore the potential for women's knowledge/ power which derives from their holistic activities as "fishermen's wives" to contribute to enhance the industry, and the likelihood that this will occur, particularly given their current exclusion from industry decision making.

## ***Conclusion***

The Conclusion provides a comprehensive summary discussion on critical issues and implications pertaining to the visibility of women in fishing, their contributions, and the barriers and opportunities for their greater industry participation in the current industry climate.

# CHAPTER ONE

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

The paucity of literature on women's involvement in the Australian commercial fishing industry highlights women's lack of visibility, and the lack of recognition for their contributions. This chapter draws from literature on women in fishing internationally and the small amount of literature on women in fishing in Australia. It also draws on literature on women in farming, particularly in the Australian context. Incorporating themes that emerge from this literature on women in agriculture not only enables a more sophisticated analysis of women's involvement in commercial fishing, but also provides critical information on the Australian context.

This chapter reviews the literature focusing on the visibility and contributions of women in fishing and farming, and examines the three central themes that emerge. Firstly, women's lack of visibility and the gendered meanings of "fisherman" and "farmer" are explored. This includes a review of women's representation in official statistics and the media. Secondly, the contributions that women make in terms of paid and unpaid labour and input into decision making, both at a family business and industry level, are articulated. Thirdly, barriers to and opportunities for the greater participation and recognition of women in fishing and farming are discussed throughout the chapter.

This is followed by an examination of the implications for women in fishing and farming in the broader context in which these themes emerge—the continual transition and shaping of industries by global, local, social, economic and environmental issues, which are intersected by government policy. A central aspect of the broader context is the "crises" in fishing and farming and the policy responses employed to address these crises in the quest for "sustainable" fishing and agricultural industries. This literature review suggests that, while women make vital contributions in the fishing