Check for updates

human relations
THE TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE

human relations
64(10) 1345–1367
© The Author(s) 2011
Reprints and permission: sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0018726711415130
hum.sagepub.com
SAGE

Gender, embodiment and place: The gendering of skills shortages in the Australian mining and food and beverage processing industries

Lia Bryant
University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

Katrina Jaworski
University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

Abstract

This article examines skills shortages in the context of the Australian mining and food and beverage processing industries. Drawing on Acker's concept of inequality regimes, we examine gendered and classed bodies in relation to place. We argue that organizations are situated in place, and here, Australian *rural* places. We also argue that while specific industries are important to the rural economies, these economies are influenced by the gendered politics of place that occur at the site where the enterprise is located. Guided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' quantitative analyses of workforce profiles, and predominantly drawing on qualitative interviews with Human Resource (HR) personnel, we analyse the gendering of work, place and organizations across three themes: a) women, work and reproducing bodies; b) male embodiment, organization and place; and c) absent bodies: women and apprenticeships. The purpose is to show that assumptions about gender, embodiment and place influence how organizations understand and respond to skills shortages in the given industries.

Keywords

class, embodiment, gender, organizations, rural sociology, rural workforce, skills shortages

Corresponding author:
Lia Bryant, School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy, University of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia.
Email: Lia.Bryant@unisa.edu.au

Introduction

In this article we question what has been understood in Australia as skills shortages. Industry and governments have argued that demographic changes in Australia have contributed to an increasing uneasiness about the difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled and semi-skilled workers (Australian Industry Group, 2003; Gow et al., 2008; Resources and Infrastructure Industry Skills Council, 2003). This is despite Australia's economy continuing to experience one of the longest cyclical economic expansions in its history against the backdrop of the recent global economic crisis. Alongside this expansion, and in line with other Organization and Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, Australia is experiencing a decline in birth rates and an increasingly ageing workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2007). These structural factors have been used to question the need for more skilled and semi-skilled workers and how to obtain them.

To examine skills shortages, we turn to the mining and food and beverage industries in Australia. In these workforces we see that there are gender disparities in workforce participation. The mining industry has the lowest level of female workforce participation of all Australian industries, comprising fewer than nine percent (ABS, 2001; Bryant and Tedmanson, 2006; National Mining Industry ITAB, 2003). In the food processing industries women account for 34 percent of employees (ABS, 2006a). These gendered workforce profiles suggest that there is something more to skills shortages than lack of available workers. As a consequence, we examine the concept of skills shortage using a gendered analysis drawing on Acker's (2006) concept of inequality regimes. Given that gender and class intersect to constitute work and worker (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990), and as we focus on specific occupational positions like 'blue-collar' or trades and semi-skilled positions, we incorporate an analysis of class and its relation to gender.

In this article we take Acker's (2006) work further and argue that gendered and classed bodies occur in place. In our analysis, place is important because organizations are situated in place, and in this study, Australian *rural* places. In this sense, place refers not only to a geographical location, but also to social practices that shape each location (Massey, 1994). This social conception of place draws attention to 'who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience' (McDowell, 1999: 4). In the context of our article, place refers to rural and/or remote communities and the historical, political, economic and social conditions that give rise to norms and practices that contribute to social meanings attributed to gender and class (Bryant and Pini, 2011). Thus, we explore how specific industries are important to the economies of rural places and, in turn, how these economies are influenced by the gendered practices of place. Attracting and retaining workers is especially difficult for industries such as mining and food and beverage processing, since the majority of production sites are in rural, regional and remote parts of Australia and, as we show, are implicitly informed by social perceptions bound to the cultural politics of a particular region. We focus on mining and food and beverage industries because, as we also show, evident and similar gender differences exist. Furthermore, these industries are crucial to sustaining rural and regional economies in Australia. Over 40 percent of food processing employment occurs in rural areas, yet employers cannot attract and retain enough workers (Bragatheswaran and Lawrence, 2008). Still further, outside of agriculture, the nature of work in specific industries has received limited attention in organization studies.

The article begins with a discussion of the terms *skill* and *skills shortage*. We then examine critically some of the strategies and approaches to understanding the recruitment and retention of workers, and how they relate to questions around gender, embodiment and power. Specific connections are made to Management and Human Resource literature. Guided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics quantitative data, and drawing directly on qualitative data from a national study conducted by Bryant and King (2007), we analyse the gendering of work, place and organization across three themes: a) women, work and reproducing bodies; b) male embodiment, organization and place; and c) absent bodies: women and apprenticeships. These themes are based on data obtained from interviews with Human Resource (HR) personnel from mining and food and beverage processing sites across rural Australia. Human Resource personnel were targeted for the study because, as Watson et al. (2006) argue, they are likely to report on skills shortages, and have a nuanced understanding of the difficulties faced by employers in recruiting and retaining workers.

Understanding 'skill' and 'skills shortage'

Attewell (1990) states that 'skill proves on reflection to be a complex and ambiguous idea', maintained by unexamined assumptions (p. 422). At the core of understanding skill is the idea of competence – that is, to do something well (Attewell, 1990; Grugulis, 2007). Competence implies mental and physical ability linked to knowledge, but also physical dexterity (Attewell, 1990; Grugulis et al., 2004). Class and gender influence how the notion of skill is understood. Sociological analyses showcase the fact that jobs and occupations regarded as blue-collar rather than white-collar are not credited with the same level of status and prestige (Bryant and Pini, 2009; Wolkowitz, 2006). A similar pattern occurs in relation to gender, where work recognized as feminine is not given the same level of prestige as those jobs that are considered more masculine (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990; Halford and Leonard, 2006).

Part of understanding what skill means is the idea that one can improve it. This dominates contemporary government and industry based perspectives, where skill is understood as a certified qualification based on training (ABS, 2006a, 2006b; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations [DEWR], 2006; Grugulis, 2007, 2008). Certified qualifications and training, however, are not the most reliable measures, as they do not indicate entirely 'what employers are, or are not, seeking in recruits', and overlook the fact that skills are 'not simply the preserve of individuals but the product of a complex interrelationship between workers, work and power' (Grugulis, 2003: 3–4). Even though the idea of skill is more complex than government and industry based understandings, we draw on the notion of skill as being indicated by certified qualifications to guide our discussion. This notion is important because, as Grugulis (2003: 3) argues, organizational possession and deployment of certified skills can be seen as a 'litmus test' of HR management practices.

Lack of a clear understanding of the term, *skills shortages,* complicates the idea of skill. For Richardson (2007), this lack arises from the slippery nature of the term. This slipperiness is compounded by a number of factors. First, Australia does not have an objective means of identifying skills shortages, despite having a list of occupations designated as

being in short supply (Bryant and King, 2007; DEWR, 2006). Second, skills shortages are understood as a universal lack of workers (Hall and Lansbury, 2006). This is despite shortages varying across occupations, regions and industries, and among employers with the same industry in the same region (Bryant and King, 2007; Hall and Lansbury, 2006; Watson et al., 2006). Third, skills shortages are confused with skills 'gaps'. While both are similar in that they lead to similar outcomes, gaps refer to a lack of workers with specific competencies rather than a lack of workers in general (DEWR, 2003).

Differences in understanding skills shortages lead to further problems. As explained by Watson et al. (2006) in the UK context, treating skills shortages as being universal creates difficulties in gaining consensus among stakeholders, and identifying specific problems among employers. In addition, confusing skills shortages with gaps in skills locates problems with shortages as something for governments to solve. Ultimately, this means that skills shortages are not necessarily the responsibility of a given employer. Indeed, debates about skills shortages are dependent on the vested interests of stakeholders (Bryant and King, 2007). This explains why some commentators in Australia see the topic as subject to hegemonic ownership between stakeholders and the Industrial Relations system (e.g. Labour Market Analysis Branch, 1992; Pocock, 1989). That is, 'who is defined as skilled [and therefore, for example, who is eligible to fill skill gaps in the labour market] is determined by countervailing industrial power and access to the resources of government' (Labour Market Analysis Branch, 1992: 6). Relations of power reside at the heart of understanding skills shortages, based on what purpose and whose interest such understandings serve.

Human Resource approaches to recruitment and retention of workers

In a similar vein to countries such as the UK (Adams et al., 2002; Devins and Hogarth, 2005; Monsastiriotis, 2005; North and Smallbone, 1995; Watson et al., 2006), USA (Marshall, 2001; Theodore and Weber, 2001), and Spain (Diez, 2002), public discussion about skills shortages in Australia has focused on the supply side of skill development and how the tertiary education sector may equip workers with relevant qualifications. Schofield (2003) and Hall and Lansbury (2006) argue that there has been an over-emphasis on the supply side issues in the training agenda at the expense of trying to understand and critique employer demand for training. There is growing recognition that demand side (employer based) strategies are equally important in addressing recruitment and retention issues in the labour market, with Management/Human Resource (HR) literature dominating the discussions (Burke and Ng, 2006; DiTomasco et al., 2007; Ford, 1982). Socio-cultural aspects such as gender, ethnicity and race have gained attention, with analyses targeting the following industries: information technology (Tapia and Kvasny, 2004); health care (Myers and Dreachslin, 2007); and construction (Lingard and Francis, 2005). The overall impetus of these analyses has been on promoting diversity management as the key strategy for improving recruitment and retention of skilled workers (Lingard and Francis, 2005).

Lloyd and Payne (2006) have questioned diversity management approaches by critiquing the presumption that *all* workers will benefit from human resource strategies. The authors argue that there is a tendency to see the model as something that 'can be applied

to a vastly different as well as very varied service sector', which will have 'universal benefits for both management and workers' (Lloyd and Payne, 2006: 153, 155). Within this approach the social categories of class, gender and race are treated as empirical givens represented by statistics. Wrench (2005) argues that while diversity management is attractive to employers and certain employees because of its inclusive nature, it can also be used as a means of evading choices about recruitment and retention. For DiTomasco et al. (2007), the schism between inclusivity and exclusivity is generated by a lack of understanding of power relations that underpin organizational policies, processes and work cultures. While theoretical understandings of power and inequality have been examined extensively from a sociological perspective, such understandings are rarely referenced in management and HR diversity literature.

Socio-cultural forces such as gender and class play a significant part in understandings of power and inequality, and how they are embodied at an organizational level. Acker's (1990, 1998) work on the gendering of organizations has been influential. Building on an earlier study on gendered segregations in Swedish banks, Acker (1989, 1990, 1998) has argued that both gender and multiple social categories such as race and class are embodied in organizational structures, practices and processes. Specifically, what may initially appear as neutral is gendered, classed and raced, obscured by an abstract, universal, bodiless worker ideal (Acker, 1990). For example, organizational culture reflects male power in communication and language; recruitment processes and job titles rely on gendered and hierarchal norms and practices that privilege the white middle-class male body while appearing as gender neutral. Indeed, Acker (1990, 2006) suggests that the fact that these structures, processes and practices remain understood as neutral and unnamed makes them more difficult to change. Acker (2006) refers to the myriad practices, structures, cultures and performances that reproduce embodied norms as 'inequality regimes'. Bound to practices of power, such regimes 'maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations' (Acker, 2006: 443). Emphasis on regimes is important because this showcases power as a relation not only determined by structure and hierarchy, but also by explicit and implicit expectations built into sustaining organizational cultures (Acker, 2006).

The view of power as a relation impacting on organizational culture is one we employ in our analysis of skills shortages. As a relation, power is immanent in the sphere in which it operates, shaping those subject to it (Foucault, 1978). Additionally, power is gendered, because its practices are enabled by assumptions about masculinity and femininity (Adkins, 1995; Jackson and Scott, 2002). The physical body becomes a social site where power is exercised, connected to local everyday practices (Holland et al., 1994). This is because, as Lorber and Moore (2007: 4) highlight, human bodies 'are socially produced under specific cultural circumstances . . . shaped by sociocultural ideals of what female and male bodies should look like and be capable of'.

Literature concerned with women in non-traditional spheres of employment, such as engineering, illustrates the gendered face of power relations. Professions such as engineering are often perceived as masculine. As Bastalich et al. (2007) argue, the problem is not about attracting women to specific jobs, or whether some work is unsuitable. The problem is that 'workplace culture polices a narrow set of masculine norms and is intolerant of diversity' (p. 397). Thus, as Evetts (1998) highlights, the problem with engineering is not the culture of engineering work itself, but rather with organizations. How organizations

view gender relations, Evetts (1998) argues, impacts women's career choices. Women are encouraged to take the professional rather than the managerial route, with the view that the latter will enable them to manage family and childcare commitments more effectively. Thus, work and worker identity are shaped by masculine norms (Eveline and Booth, 2002; Evetts, 1998), which strengthen the neutralized yet gendered abstract, universal, bodiless worker ideal (Franzway et al., 2009). It is not surprising that '[w]ithin the engineering workplace culture "women", or anyone who fails to conform to strict codes of masculine conduct, is cast as an "outsider" or "foreign"' (Bastalich et al., 2007: 397). This is despite the fact that, as Sayce et al. (2007: 99) argue in the context of craftwork, not all workers embrace structures that associate masculinity with particular jobs.

Acker's (2006) work is useful in that it provides a descriptive account, which demonstrates the need to recognize that what is taken as neutral and invisible at an organizational level is never outside relations of power. In particular, her analysis takes into consideration recruitment and hiring as 'a process of finding the worker most suited for a particular position', influenced by factors such as gender (Acker, 2006: 449). Images of appropriate gendered bodies influence perceptions and hiring, where 'female bodies are appropriate for some jobs; male bodies for other jobs' (Acker, 2006: 449). While providing a way to understand inequality regimes as systematic disparities, Acker's (1989, 1990, 1998, 2006) work does not provide a framework to examine analytically *how* inequality regimes are embodied in place. Thus, we draw on Acker's (2006) contribution as a guide rather than as a specific tool for analysis, to demonstrate that understandings of skills shortages are shaped by assumptions about gender, embodiment and place, bound to specific sites of mining and food and beverage processing industries.

In drawing on Acker's (2006) work, we take embodiment to mean the inscription of power on the body through social practices (Gatens, 1996; Grosz, 1994). Embodiment captures the notion of the self as experienced through gendered and sexual bodies and vice versa (Lupton, 1998). What becomes embodied is, as Morgan et al. (2005: 5) argue, shaped by 'formal arrangements and structures (divisions of labour, job specifications, etc.) and informal practices such as patterns of inclusion or exclusion'. The concept of embodiment is useful in analysing the complexity of skills shortages because it provides the basis for understanding how shortages in skills are experienced through the 'lived body' and the assumptions made about 'the materiality of both gender and sexuality' (Witz et al., 1996: 174). One such assumption is the idea that women are more embodied than men, owing to their reproductive bodies. Skeggs (1997, 2004, 2005) has also been influential in theorizing embodiment. Her focus has been on how bodies become gendered and classed through the inscription of moral worth. That is, class is perceived and practiced through cultural values 'premised on morality, embodied in personhood and realised (or not) as a property value in symbolic systems of exchange' (Skeggs, 2005: 969). In this sense, there are parallels between 'classifications of social class and the production of sexuality and gender' (Skeggs, 2004: 3).

Research design and methods

To examine the gendering of skills shortages at selected industry sites we adopted a qualitative approach to complement the use of official ABS statistics. Purposive sampling was

used to select information rich categories, sites or persons to maximize opportunities for exploring variation, process and/or relevant categories (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling was especially useful in the early stages of the study. Initial findings indicated that attempts at diversifying the workforce differed within the same company at different sites. Thus, we explored potential differences and dimensions in the data at the *site* level.

Qualitative data were collected in 2004 via in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews. Interview questions explored the following themes: a) organizational recruitment and retention practices for skilled and un-skilled workers; b) workforce profiles; c) training opportunities; and d) barriers to recruiting and retaining workers. Interview responses were typed directly into a computer database. Telephone interviews were used as they allowed the researchers to obtain the sample size within budget restrictions, thereby reducing high travel costs associated with travel to remote and rural locations in Australia. Realistically, conducting interviews directly is very costly in Australia, owing to distances in general and the breadth and size of our sample, which was spread across several remote areas. Even though there are few studies comparing telephone with face-to-face interviews (Minichiello et al., 2008), we found that we were able to build rapport with participants as several phone calls were required to establish an interview time, allowing room for conversation before the actual interview. This brought the issue of embodiment to our attention in that particular assumptions about working bodies were made by the HR personnel. We allowed an hour per interview to explore issues in depth. The limitation of the telephone interview was our inability to accept spontaneous invitations to explore the site and participate in further discussions with participants. In this sense, telephone interviewing restricted a deeper contextual understanding.

The sample consisted of 21 HR personnel from rural and remote based mining sites, and 23 HR personnel and management personnel (where no formal HR personnel was available) from rural and regional food processing sites. Where food-processing organizations were small family-based industries, management personnel took on the role of Human Resources. Given our focus, we did not gather detailed data about the participants other than their gender and position in the organization. In the mining sector there were 10 women and 11 men, all of whom held HR positions. In the food and beverage industry, 15 men and eight women were in general management positions except in larger industries where they were employed as HR Officers. It is interesting to note, however, that family based industries had a sense of connection with place, based on established family history and reputation in the region, which afforded them respect and standing in the community. As Bryant and Pini (2011) contend, class positions are shaped by generational history and contributions to the social fabric of rural communities.

Sample selection

The mining and food manufacturing industries were selected owing to their importance in sustaining rural economies. The focus on rural areas is crucial because, as documented by the ABS (2006c: 151), ‘skills shortages can be more severe in regional areas as can be seen with recent difficulties in recruiting and retaining’ a range of professionals and skilled and semi-skilled workers. The fact that it is skilled and semi-skilled workers that are required suggests that specific classes are important in sustaining rural work forces.

Contributing five percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the mining industry out-performs much larger industries in the Australian economy as measured by their workforce size (ABS, 2006a, 2006b). When the multiplier effect of this expenditure is considered, the contribution that the mining industry makes is estimated to be around eight to 10 percent (Minerals Council of Australia, 2009: 2). The mining industry employs 1.6 percent of the total workforce (ABS, 2006a). This small workforce belies the massive contribution the industry makes to the Australian economy and, in particular, the 'downstream' jobs generated by the activities of the mining industry (Minerals Council of Australia, 2009).

The food industry makes a significant contribution to rural and regional Australia, with over 40 percent of food processing employment occurring in rural areas (Bragatheswaran and Lawrence, 2008). The food industries are Australia's largest manufacturing industries, ranked according to the value added to beverage and malt manufacturing industries, which comprises wine, beer and soft-drink manufacturing (ABS, 2005). This sector provides more than 17 percent of industry value added and 20 percent of total sales and services income to the Australian economy (Bragatheswaran and Lawrence, 2008). In February 2006, there were just over a million people employed in all manufacturing industries with about 19 percent of these employed in food manufacturing (ABS, 2006a). Workers in this industry generally earn low wages, which, in socio-economic terms, means that they must be viewed differently from their counterparts in the mining industry.

Access to the food and beverage sample was guided by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) data (ABS, 2005). Once identified, the researchers sought companies by region and size to reflect the industry profile of each state and territory. In particular, sampling reflected structural differences within food and beverage processing industries. Where large companies represented the specific industry structure, these constituted the first line of sampling (e.g. 'meatworks' in South Australia). Where the specific industry structure had a more varied commodity base (e.g. diary, milk, cheese, yoghurt), the size of companies varied, particularly by state. The variance in commodities and company size was accommodated in the sample to allow for the investigation of diverse contexts and issues impacting on recruitment and retention.

Analysis of data

Qualitative data were analysed using interpretative data methods that sought to ascertain patterns, themes, gaps, replication and new questions to be explored in the course of the study (Patton, 2002). An important component to this method is that analysis occurs throughout the data collection phase as well as after it. The inductive analysis of the data revealed three themes focused on gendered embodiment that show how perceptions of skills shortages are part of the gendering of workplaces. Once gendered patterns were identified, it became clear that gendered assumptions were articulated through class. Narratives of recruitment practices allowed us to uncover organizational meanings about gender and class at the site level, which in turn revealed local community knowledge of who takes what jobs and why.

Table 1 Sample of mining sites by state/territory

State/territory	Number of mining sites
Western Australia (WA)	4
South Australia (SA)	3
Victoria (VIC)	3
New South Wales (NSW)	2
Queensland (QLD)	4
Tasmania (TAS)	2
Northern Territory (NT)	1
TOTAL	19

Table 2 Sample of food and beverage processing industries by commodity groups

Food and beverage processing industries	Number of processing sites	Corresponding location by state
Meat processing	9	NSW, NT, SA, WA
Dairy	5	NSW, WA
Seafood	2	TAS
Fruit processing	2	SA, VIC
Food and beverage and Misc.	4	QLD, SA, VIC
TOTAL	22	

Gender differences according to industry, site and place

Table 1 shows the mining sample by state/territory and the number of mining sites. The rationale for the construction of this sample was to exclude fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) operations and include diversity by incorporating a range of geographical sites; all Australian states and the Northern Territory; a range of companies; and a diverse commodity base (e.g. gold, silver, uranium, copper, coal, iron ore, lead, zinc, manganese, and bauxite aluminium). This was to accommodate the variety in the structure and size of the industry. The sample did not include sites predominantly operating FIFO work arrangements since they are less likely to engage with local rural communities as a result of employing workers from non-rural areas. The sample consisted of 19 organizations.

The food and beverage processing industries sample consisted of 22 organizations. This included sites from a variety of regions and industrial sectors. All Australian states and the Northern Territory were represented (see Table 2). The industry sectors included the processing of meat, dairy, seafood, fruit and miscellaneous food and beverage products.

As discussed earlier, mining has the lowest level of female workforce employment in Australia (Bryant and Tedmanson, 2006; National Mining Industry ITAB, 2003). ABS (2001) data show that only 8.7 percent of the mining workforce is female. Pattenden's (1998) *Women in the Mining Industry* report reflects a similar structure: 11 percent of the

Table 3 Occupational groupings by gender in the Australian mining industry

Occupational groupings	Women employees	Men employees	Total
Managers and administrators	439	5410	5849
Professionals	2043	8001	10044
Associate professionals	1259	5417	6676
Tradespersons and related workers	129	12788	12917
Advanced clerical and service workers	1219	58	1277
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	1736	1322	3058
Intermediate production and transport workers	674	20703	21377
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	135	210	345
Labourers and related workers	131	2101	2232
not stated/unclassifiable	62	500	562
TOTAL	7827	56,510	64,337

Source: ABS (2001), unpublished dataset.

mining sector is female compared with the Australian average of 43 percent of women in the workforce as a whole (see also AusIMM, 2003). As shown in Table 3, women are also more likely to be employed in clerical and administrative jobs, instead of managerial and professional positions. These gendered divisions of the labour force by occupation in mining also results in creating classed divisions via socio-economic disparities between women and men.

Gender differences in our findings matched those documented in already existing work profiles. As Table 4 shows, for a number of mining sites the gender balance in HR positions is reflective of women being more likely to be employed in administrative capacities than in scientific and technical positions. Furthermore, as Table 4 shows, women were predominantly represented in white-collar jobs, with only very few working as apprentices – a point we return to later.

Women account for 34 percent of employees in the food and wine industries (ABS, 2006a, 2006b). Further analysis of the 2001 ABS data shows that women constitute a smaller proportion of food and beverage manufacturing workers in rural and regional Australia than in the major urban areas (see Figure 1).

Our findings indicate that women are represented in all fruit manufacturing sites, while men are dominant in the meat processing industries (see Table 5; National Training Meat Industry Advisory Council, 2009).

Table 4 Frequency of female representation in main occupational groupings for sampled mining sites

Occupational groups	Number of sites recording presence of women workers[a]
Apprentices	5
Administration/clerical/accounts/HR	15
Chemical engineers and geologists, metallurgists environmental, etc.	13
Process technicians/miners	3

[a]Information regarding gender was not provided by two of the sites in the sample.

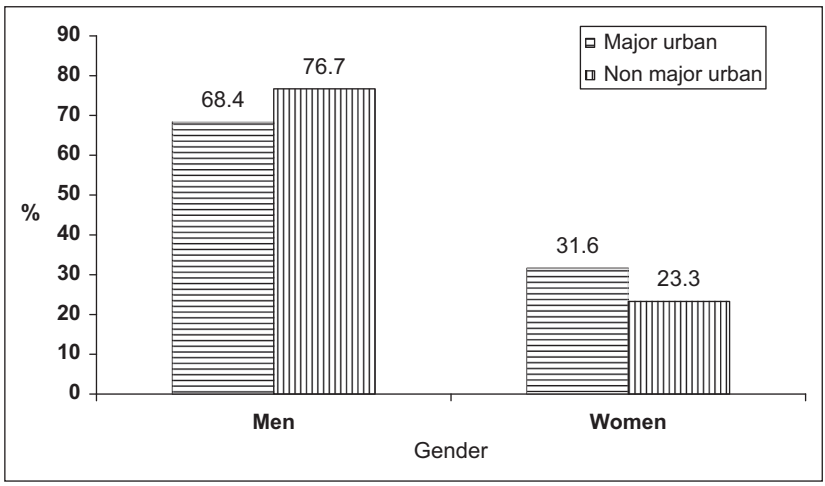

Figure 1 Gender of food and beverage processing workers by major urban/non major urban location, 2001
Source: ABS (2001), unpublished dataset.

Table 5 Women as a percentage of workforce for specific food and beverage processing industries, by sampled site

Food and beverage processing industries	Sites with less than 10% of workforce female	Sites with 11–49% of workforce female	Sites with 50% or more of workforce female
Meat processing	5	4	
Dairy		3	2
Seafood		1	1
Fruit processing		1	1
Food and beverage and Misc.		2	3
TOTAL	5	11	7

Figure 2 Occupation of Australian food and beverage workers by gender, 2001
Source: ABS (2001), unpublished dataset.

Furthermore, as Figure 2 demonstrates, women are dominant in occupations such as intermediate clerical and sales positions, and as labourers and related workers. Men are dominant among trades, production and transport workers, with a significant number also working as labourers. Thus, the industry is organized along gender and class differences. Men are employed in the industry, but only in areas traditionally associated with working-class jobs (Bryant and Tedmanson, 2006).

Interestingly, participants in the fruit manufacturing industry reported that seasonal and casual workers accounted for a large proportion of their workforce, with women making up the greater proportion of casual employees. Therefore, the ABS figures may actually underestimate what happens at a micro level in specific industries. What they may also underestimate is the lived classed reality of many women who constitute the majority of the skilled and semi-skilled workers (Bryant and Pini, 2011).

What do the similarities between official statistics and our findings say about skills shortages? First, our findings reflect the patterns represented in ABS data. Women and men are either under-represented or over-represented in different industries, occupations, and groupings within occupations. Second, our findings show that what is represented by official statistics also occurs at site level in the given industries. As such, the site level needs to be explored further in order to better understand why gender differences are sustained despite changes to workforce policy at the industry level, especially in mining; and importantly, how these differences are classed or shaped by class (AusIMM, 2003). While quantitative data do not explain why, they nevertheless show that place *is* important, and may influence recruitment and retention practices.

The qualitative data set shows the importance of place; that is, the importance of local community in shaping gendered and classed patterns of work. In acknowledging difficulties in recruiting and retaining workers in general, HR personnel understood

the importance of place by emphasizing the role of local communities as conduits for recruitment. As one interviewee from the mining industry said: 'There is a close relationship between our organization and the community. Local kids have parents working on site and they have a strong link to the company'. Furthermore, as another interviewee from the same industry explained: 'We are getting more involved in talking to local high school students . . . we recruit from the local area as local kids are more likely to stay'. HR personnel understood that there is the potential to tap into the historical nexus between place, community and company to encourage mining as a career option. They also understood that local rural communities were more likely to sustain the industry. This highlights the point Acker (1998: 196) makes about the importance of understanding work organizations, by taking into account a number of aspects and to 'link them as sites in which both "the economy" and "the polity" take place'. It also suggests that what happens in places, and how places are recognized for their economic and social potential, travels beyond the boundaries of physical locatedness.

Gendering of work, place and organizations

Findings from the qualitative interview data indicate three themes that explain the gendering of work and its relation to place in mining and food organizations in specific sectors of the industries. The first theme focuses on how HR personnel's organizational understandings of women's bodies as reproducing bodies shape the work available to women. The gendered availability of work at the same time reproduces meanings about skills shortages. The second theme examines men's embodiment in industrial processing work, illustrating how masculinities shape gender divisions of labour, and contribute to the notion of skills shortages in blue-collar jobs, or jobs traditionally associated with working-class people. The third theme steps back from an analysis of the employment of unskilled and skilled workers to consider entry into technical occupations through apprenticeships in the industries in question. It examines apprenticeships because they are closely tied to policies designed to redress 'skills shortages' in these industries and gender imbalances in skilled occupations. Here, class intersects with gender differently, particularly as apprenticeships are traditionally thought to be the province of young working-class men's education.

Women, work and reproducing bodies

Interview data demonstrated that understandings of skills shortages were influenced by the nature of work, and whether this work suited some workers more than others according to gender. In the food processing industry, HR personnel suggested that 'women, unlike men are prepared to take work that is repetitive and paid less as they want work to fit in with looking after kids'. These mothering bodies are classed and articulated by poorer working conditions and their inability to pay for childcare. It seems that their reproducing bodies, and the caring labour they perform as mothers, embodies their work choices. As Acker (2006), Adkins (1995) and Brandth and Haugen (2005) argue in various ways, this gendered organization of work is constructed around women's obligations outside of paid work, which maintains gender inequality both in the private

and public spheres. What is important about the food processing sector is that unlike the mining sector, gender inequalities are hidden not because, as Acker (2006: 452) argues, 'they are difficult to see', but because working women's embodiment is understood as implicitly heterosexual, involving responsibilities of caring for family (Bryant and Pini, 2011). This naturalizing and neutralizing of social and cultural meanings about women's bodies is what becomes invisible in the gendered organization of work.

HR personnel across six sites articulated the relationship between shift work and motherhood. For example:

> In production work, there are usually morning and afternoon shifts; rarely there is a third shift to make it a 24 hour operation. But when we do this third shift, and hopefully this is growing, then this will be a problem, especially for women, as there is no public transport. Certain shifts are popular with women: the early morning shift is popular, but not so much [as] the other as they want to get home to children. These workers are often casuals, but if they become permanent they lose flexibility . . . We try to be sympathetic but also it's difficult with production.

And,

> We have no shift work, but we will be introducing it and I see it as a problem for getting adequate supervisors – the workers are not used to shift work here. We have a lot of mums here who leave at 3.00 or 4.00 and go home to family, but to get them to do a 4.00 pm shift [is] difficult for us to deal [with]. A different age group will need to be employed – outside workforce for shift work – but then we will recruit outsiders for shift work. If I change conditions for current workers, then they will have to leave because of children.

While far fewer women are employed in mining, working hours similarly exclude family relations from work relations on a structural level. Mining has the longest working hours of any industry in the form of regular day shifts and/or long working weeks. Yet HR personnel rarely acknowledged the need for any structural or cultural changes required in shift work in order to foster increases in the numbers of women in the mining workforce. Nor did they acknowledge that such changes should happen precisely because work occurs in rural places – places where formalized childcare services are limited.

Lack of acknowledgment of the need to rework shift work in the mining industry is surprising. This is because, as the AusIMM (2003) report recommended seven years ago, the industry should provide employer-sponsored childcare, voluntary shift work, flexible rostering, paid maternity leave and reduction of working hours to increase diversity. It can be argued that while the need to implement structural and cultural changes is recognized, this does not appear to be the case at individual, organizational sites. As Acker (2006: 457) argues, recognition and/or development of diversity programs do not always 'alter assumptions and actions that are rooted in the legitimation of systems of organizational power and reward'. The notion of the *disembodied* worker, who fills the job and performs any work at any time and any place, prevails in the ways in which the organization of work is understood in both mining and food processing. As Bastalich et al. (2007) argue, the problem is not about attracting women to specific jobs, or whether some work is unsuitable. The problem is work place culture defined by masculine norms, where diversity is not easily tolerated, or if so, tolerated with resentment (Bastalich et al., 2007).

Anyone who fails to conform to norms is cast as an outsider whose gendered worker identity does not fit (Evetts, 1998; Sayce et al., 2007).

As argued by some scholars, the invisible organization of work is strongly entrenched in rural spaces and defined and performed as heterosexual (Brandth and Haugen, 2005; Bryant and Pini, 2011; Bryant and Tedmanson, 2006; Little, 2003, 2007; Panelli, 2007). Thus, the picture is complicated by place in physical and social terms, whereas Bryant and Pini (2011) argue that certain ideals about heterosexuality and work identity are deeply entrenched and are very difficult to change. Consequently, while inequality regimes are constructed by 'surrounding society, its politics, history, and culture' (Acker, 2006: 443), they are also reconstructed in the site of a given place. HR personnel articulated the importance of rural place and gender as conditions of articulating the organization of work. The following excerpt from a food processing HR worker shows this to be the case:

> In this region there are quite traditional, conservative views. It is a Lutheran community and we have a conservative industry where women are under-represented at senior level. Women are in those typical slots, women in clerical and men in production. As a company we have actively sought women using funding available through training rebates.

This traditional pattern of work is sustained by the culture of the organization, one that is bound to religious and social traditions embedded in local communities. Importantly, as Paechter's (2003) research shows, views of local people inform recruitment and retention practices, which can in fact marginalize particular groups such as women. This form of marginalization is particularly problematic in that it disfavours women who are less able to get a job in another industry and profession because of their skill level as well as their family responsibilities. In this sense, it is possible to suggest that the working-class status of women working in the industry continues to be maintained by the working culture of the region.

Male embodiment, organization and place

At the meat processing sites, men have traditionally dominated the slaughter, loading and skin areas. HR officers attributed this pattern to the physical demands of the work, and the work culture on the production floors. The male body is presumed to be *able* to meet the demands of heavy, bloody and dirty work. For Connell (2005), this relates to interpreting manual worker's bodies as masculine, defined by toughness, endurance and strength. This form of working-class hegemonic masculinity is neatly situated in 'meatworks'. As Wolkowitz (2006) suggests, work is organized around the presumed capabilities and bodies of working-class men in some organizations and industrial sectors, despite mechanization. Furthermore, there are some areas of work, like the slaughter house, where the cultural ideas of dirt and disgust are only fit for the masculine body (Isaksen, 2005). Similarly, HR personnel informed us that labouring jobs in mining have strong associations with 'the pit', working 'underground' or 'driving massive trucks', work that is 'dirty, dangerous and not made for smaller people, like women'. When

focusing on mining and meat processing, however, we are talking about different types of 'dirt'. As Isaksen suggests:

> We need to understand how different kinds of dirt are related to each other and how they are socially ranked and ordered . . . the further down the ranking list the more negative the feelings and the stronger the intensity of contempt and disgust. (2005: 119–120)

In the context of 'meatworks', dirt refers to animal blood, bone and matter, whereas it refers to soil, dampness and darkness in mining. These differences give rise to different class locations among men in these skilled and unskilled jobs. These locations, however, are also situated in particular images and ideas of what it means to work in rural communities. For example HR personnel and managers from 'meatworks' explained that:

> We are not the employer of choice in rural communities. We think that although everyone likes meat, the local community doesn't want abattoirs because there is a lot of effluent and it is quite smelly. We are deemed not to be a glamorous industry with repetitive and hard labour. So why would they come to us when they can be paid a lot more and work in the mining industry?

There is also a different social and therefore classed understanding of the skill inherent in these types of jobs and industries, like truck driver or meat processing worker, which further differentiates men and their bodily skill. Brandth and Haugen (2005: 95) draw attention to this social understanding of skill by arguing that machinery and equipment for men may present 'an extension of their bodies'. Like Brandth and Haugen's (2005) loggers' bodies, miners are 'equipped with hard hats' (p. 92). Conversely men on the factory floor of the abattoir are covered with plastic hairnets and plastic coats to diminish blood spills on their clothes. How these bodies are clothed highlights a point made by Williams (1998) in regards to abjection, male bodies and masculinity. Male bodies are socially constructed as corporeal containers resisting 'external forces, while holding back internal ones from expansion and intrusion' (Williams, 1998: 69). How corporeal bodies are clothed is socially constructed and signifies assumptions about masculine bodies, and the gendered and classed nature of work done by men. Yet these bodies are also out of sight, performing labour in rural communities. The threat of abjection is contained not only by the way the bodies are clothed, but also by their locatedness in place, determined by whichever site they are working.

It is clear that to be embodied via gender involves doing labour deemed as gendered. Yet to be embodied is to feel and express emotion. How emotions are defined, conveyed and evaluated are shaped by hegemonic discourses and practices of gender (Ahmed, 2000; Brody, 1999; Bryant and Pini, 2011). This may happen at a micro level, but also at a more discursive, macro level. For example, despite the gendering of processing industries such as meatworks, larger processing plants have changed their practices to employ women. As our interview data revealed, women have been employed in offal areas out of 'desperation'. While a push factor for employment, desperation is also an emotion. When HR staff were asked if the employment of women was successful in offal areas, they agreed by stating that 'women took pride and care in their work'. Thus, women's different embodiment to men was used to explain women's successful employment in a

traditionally working class masculine domain. In this sense, skills shortages are bound not only to the number of workers available, but also to specific gendered and embodied organizational practices and perceptions, and how such practices come to be.

Absent bodies: Women and apprenticeships

Australian government policy has focused on increasing resources to attract and train apprentices in areas identified as being in short supply of labour (Schofield, 2003). HR personnel in the food and beverage industries informed us that in the main men held apprenticeships, while those in the mining industries suggested that a few women did hold apprenticeships. Of the 19 mining sites, nine sites reported employing apprentices, five had no female apprenticeships, while the other four had very few; for example, two female apprentices, compared with 30 male apprentices. The largest number of female apprentices was five. This occurred at a site that employed 80 apprentices in total.

Responses by HR personnel explained the absence of women as follows. One participant stated that 'women are not interested in mining', while another thought that 'mining occurs in remote communities where women are less likely to seek employment and it is a masculine culture and women would not feel comfortable working within such a workplace'. A manager said that 'we go to schools and push for everyone to apply but rarely do we get girls'. When asked why this is the case, the response was: 'The girls want to go to uni[versity] and some only have an interest in clerical. They say "We don't want to work there"'. According to HR personnel young women are ascribing what theorists like Skeggs (2005) and Sayer (2005) refer to as moral worth to specific occupations. This moral worth might be furnished by a desire to leave local rural communities to live in the cities. Place in a physical and social sense repels and propels young people to gravitate towards professions and organizations in urban places.

The gendered nature of what it means to be an apprentice was conveyed through specific use of language. When asked about whether there was a need for apprenticeships, all interview participants from the mining industry exclusively used the term 'tradesmen'. One participant stated, 'we haven't trained enough people to keep up the number of tradesmen'. This suggests an implicit masculine norm may culturally signify who is meant to work as an apprentice (Paechter, 2003). Further, apprenticeships themselves are inscribed by class as a consequence of the lower positioning of trades within occupational hierarchies in western societies (Wright, 2001).

Novices such as apprentices, Paechter (2003: 70) argues, are seen as 'developing expertise through participation in legitimate and acknowledged activities' that are part of an occupational community. Paechter (2003: 70) further argues that novices develop not only expertise but also 'their understanding of, and embeddedness in, the culture that surrounds it'. What is important about Paechter's (2003) point is that if women are absent among apprentices, this reinforces the view that particular jobs belong to people according to their gender and indeed their class. In this sense, apprentices make visible the gendered nature of a particular sector, where meanings about masculinity and femininity shape what it means to work in a particular industry, organization and region. Jobs become embodied as masculine through absences rather than presences. Jobs also become embodied as masculine in and through communities, whose gendered and

classed values and culture may not readily accept and recognize women participating in apprenticeships. This compounds absence even further.

What is important about absence is that it may detract HR personnel from paying attention to the gendered dimension of organizational culture even though there may be a genuine attempt to recruit men and women (Acker, 1998, 2006; Eveline and Booth, 2002; Yancey Martin, 2003). Although some personnel recognize possible reasons for low numbers of women, explanations do not take gender into serious consideration (Sayce et al., 2007). As DiTomaso et al. (2007) argue, such responses can indicate a lack of recognition of underlying power relationships associated with gendered processes within the recruitment process in particular, and occupational segregation more broadly. Instead, the gendered nature of recruitment and retention is attributed to individual career choices.

If one is to take a bird's eye view of the discussion, what can be said of the two industries when put side by side? On the whole, the industries differ significantly according to gender. Where women are predominantly absent in mining, their numbers are higher in the food and processing industries. Nevertheless, in both industries women are relegated to positions with fewer responsibilities, and significantly reduced incomes. Thus class comes into the picture, despite the fact that those working in the mining industry in particular tend to earn higher wages. While one can argue that this is attributed to skill level and career choices, repetitive patterns occur precisely because gender and class assumptions are sustained at organizational and site levels. Organizations do not operate in a vacuum. Local communities, whose population depends on organizations and industries to provide employment opportunities, affect them. It is interesting to see that childcare is an issue in both industries, with it being a bigger source of tension in the mining industry. Perhaps the remoteness of some of the mining sites adds to this tension, where location discourages rather than encourages the maintenance of family friendly policies. The implicit expectation of a bodiless abstract worker ideal dominates the way in which the workforce is viewed in both industries. Thus, each organization responds to the embodied gendered worker as something outside the norm – a norm that, we are suggesting, might actually compound the issue of skills shortages. As in the instance of meatworks, perhaps it is a good idea to go outside the norm, precisely because the life of organizations and industries must be maintained – a life that very much depends on the availability of local workers.

Conclusion

While there are recognizable skills shortages in Australia in occupations and industries, it is clear that the two largest employers outside agriculture experience ongoing difficulties in attracting and retaining workers in rural, regional and remote parts of Australia. From an international perspective, there is nothing novel about this trend. As Devins and Hogarth (2005) note in relation to the UK experience, a mismatch continues to exist on the supply (worker) and demand (employer) side of the labour market, despite policy efforts emphasizing the importance of developing human capital as a means of meeting the challenge of skill shortages. For Devins and Hogarth, this is owing to giving little consideration to 'the *extent* to which these employers provide employment opportunities for local people' (2005: 246 [emphasis added]). According to Adams et al. (2002),

employment opportunities are often influenced not only by the availability of work, but also by the recruitment practices and characteristics of employers rather than workers. This rings true here since, as in the case of 'meatworks' sites, altered recruitment practices have led to an increase of female workers and higher rates of retention.

In line with Adams et al.'s (2002) explanation it seems that from a HR perspective, lack of diversity is maintained by particular practices, traditional norms and assumptions, as well as workplace culture. This lack of diversity shows that workforce profiles as indicators of what happens in practice are too narrow. Skills shortage as a term is not neutral. Rather, it is a term bound to organizational practices, which in turn are shaped by place, industry needs and assumptions in relation to gender and class.

Responses from HR personnel tend to leave the underlying power relationships associated with recruitment and occupational segregation unacknowledged, even though segregation continues to exist. In the case of the mining industry, the lack of women is associated with personal individual career choices, leaving gendered occupational segregation unproblematized. In the food and beverage industries, traditional understandings of an ideal worker continue to exist. This fits in with Acker's (2006: 449) notion of inequality regimes, whereby the majority of specific sites in this sample do not readily recruit workers who do not fit a presumed 'natural' worker ideal. The problem with the ideal is not only the ideal per se, but also the lack of reflexivity, or critical analysis of ideas and assumptions that shape the structure of organizations. This perhaps would displace the normalizing power of the ideal, which foils the gendered and classed nature of inequality, both of which are (mis)taken as neutral matters of fact.

Funding

This research was funded by Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC Project no USA 13A).

References

Acker J (1989) *Doing Comparable Worth: Gender, Class and Pay Equity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Acker J (1990) Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society* 4(2): 139–158.

Acker J (1998) The future of 'gender and organisations': Connections and boundaries. *Gender, Work & Organisations* 4(4): 195–205.

Acker J (2006) Inequality regimes: Gender, class and race in organizations. *Gender & Society* 40(4): 441–464.

Adams J, Greig M and McQuaid RW (2002) Mismatch in local labour markets in Central Scotland: The neglected role of demand. *Urban Studies* 39(8): 1399–1416.

Adkins L (1995) *Gendered Work: Sexuality, Family and the Labour Market*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Ahmed S (2000) *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. London: Routledge.

Attewell P (1990) What is skill? *Work and Occupations* 17(4): 422–448.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2001) *Australian Census 2001*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2005) *Manufacturing, Australia, Cat No. 8221.0. Manufacturing Industry: Business Performance by ANZSIC Class, Australia 2001-02 and 2002-03*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2006a) *Labour Force, Australia. Employed Persons by Industry Subdivision and Sex, Cat. 6291.0.55.003*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2006b) *Australian Labour Market Statistics*, Cat. 6105.0. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2006c) *A Picture of the Nation*, Cat. 2070.0. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2007) *Australian Social Trends, Cat. 4102.00*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

AusIMM (2003) *Increasing the Diversity of the Mining Industry Workforce – Strategies for Employers*. Melbourne: The Australasian Institute for Mining and Metallurgy.

Australian Industry Group (2003) *How Competitive is Australia? Big Issues Call for Big Ideas*. Sydney: AIG.

Bastalich W, Franzway S, Gill J, Mills J and Sharp R (2007) Disrupting masculinities: Women engineers and engineering workplace culture. *Australian Feminist Studies* 22(54): 385–400.

Bragatheswaran G and Lawrence L (2008) Overview of the Australian Food Industry, 2006–2007. In: *Australian Food Statistics,* Commonwealth of Australia. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 1–14.

Brandth B and Haugen MS (2005) The gendered embodiment of agricultural work: Nature, machinery and patriarchy. In Morgan D, Brandth B and Kvande E (eds) *Gender, Bodies and Work.* Hampshire: Ashgate, 89–100.

Brody L (1999) *Gender, Emotion and the Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bryant L and King K (2007) *Recruiting and Retaining Workers in Rural Australia: Case Studies of Mining, and Food and Beverage Processing Industries, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Bryant L and Pini B (2009) Gender, class and rurality: Australian case studies. *Journal of Rural Studies* 25(1): 48–56.

Bryant L and Pini B (2011) *Gender and Rurality*. London: Routledge.

Bryant L and Tedmanson D (2006) Drilling down – diversity in the mining industry: Exploring the barriers to gender and Indigenous diversity in the Australian mining industry. *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management* 5(3): 157–167.

Burke R and Ng E (2006) The changing nature of work and organisations: Implications for human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review* 16(2): 86–94.

Connell RW (2005) *Masculinities*, 2nd edn. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crompton R and Sanderson K (1990) *Gendered Jobs and Social Change*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) (2003) *Current and Future Skills Needs (Attachment A: Skill Shortages, Skill Gaps and Recruitment Difficulties),* Submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Educational Reference Committee. Canberra, ACT: Parliament of Australia.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) (2006) *Skills on Demand Lists: States and Territories – May 2006*. Canberra, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Devins D and Hogarth T (2005) Employing the unemployed: Some case study evidence on the role and practice of employers. *Urban Studies* 42(2): 245–256.

Diez MA (2002) Evaluating new regional policies. *Evaluation* 8(3): 285–305.

DiTomaso N, Post C and Parks-Yancy R (2007) Workforce diversity and inequality: Power, status, and numbers. *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 473–501.

Eveline J and Booth M (2002) Gender and sexuality in discourses of managerial control: The case of women miners. *Gender, Work and Organisation* 9(5): 556–578.

Evetts J (1998) Managing the technology but not the organization: Women and career in engineering. *Women in Management Review* 13(8): 283–290.
Ford GW (1982) Human resource development in Australia and the balance of skills. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 24(3): 443–453.
Foucault M (1978) *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1. London: Penguin.
Franzway S, Sharp R, Mills JE and Gill J (2009) Engineering ignorance: The problem of gender equity in engineering. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30(1): 89–106.
Gatens M (1996) *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*. London: Routledge.
Gow K, Hinschen C, Anthony D and Warren C (2008) Work expectations and other factors influencing male apprentices' intentions to quit their trade. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 46(1): 99–121.
Grosz E (1994) *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Grugulis I (2003) Putting skills to work: Learning and employment at the start of the century. *Human Resource Management Journal* 13(2): 3–12.
Grugulis I (2007) *Skills, Training and Human Resource Development: A Critical Text*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Grugulis I (2008) Skill formation. In:Blyton P, Bacon N, Fiorito J and Heery E (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of Industrial Relations*. Los Angeles: SAGE, 606–622.
Grugulis I, Warhurst C and Keep E (2004) What's happening to 'skill'? In: Warhurst C, Grugulis I and Keep E (eds) *The Skills that Matter*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–18.
Halford S and Leonard P (2006) *Negotiating Gendered Identities at Work: Place, Space and Time*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Hall R and Lansbury RD (2006) Skills in Australia: Towards workforce development and sustainable skills ecosystems. *Journal of Industrial Relations* 48(5): 575–592.
Holland J, Ramazanoglu C, Sharpe S and Thomson R (1994) Power and desire: The embodiment of female sexuality. *Feminist Review* 46: 21–38.
Isaksen LW (2005) Gender and care: The role of cultural ideas of dirt and disgust. In: Morgan D, Brandth B and Kvande E (eds) *Gender, Bodies and Work*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 115–126.
Jackson S and Scott S (2002) Introduction: The gendering of sociology. In: Jackson S and Scott S (eds) *Gender: A Sociological Reader*. London: Routledge, 1–26.
Labour Market Analysis Branch (1992) *Redefining Skill: Reforming the Entry Level Training System to Achieve Gender Equity*. TAFE Labour Market Issues, 1.
Lingard H and Francis V (2005) The decline of the 'traditional' family: Work-life benefits as a means of promoting a diverse workforce in the construction industry in Australia. *Construction Management and Economics* 23(10): 1045–1057.
Little J (2003) Riding the rural love train: Heterosexuality and the rural community. *Sociologia Ruralis* 43(4): 401–417.
Little J (2007) Constructing nature in the performance of rural heterosexualities. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25(5): 851–866.
Lloyd C and Payne J (2006) Good-bye to all that? A critical re-evaluation of the role of the high performance work organization within the UK Skills debate. *Work, Employment & Society* 20(1): 151–165.
Lorber J and Moore, LJ (2007) *Gendered Bodies: Feminist Perspectives*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing Company.
Lupton D (1998) *The Emotional Self*. London: SAGE.
McDowell L (1999) *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Marshall R (2001) Rural policy in the new century. *International Regional Science Review* 24(1): 59–83.

Massey D (1994) *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Minerals Council of Australia (2009) *The Economic Significance of the Australian Minerals Industry*. Available at: http://www.minerals.org.au/corporate.
Minichiello V, Aroni R and Hays T (2008) *In-Depth Interviewing*, 3rd edn. Sydney: Pearson Education.
Monsatiriotis V (2005) Labour market flexibility in the UK: Regional variation and the role of global/local forces. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 26(3): 443–477.
Morgan D, Brandth B and Kvande E (2005) Thinking about gender, bodies and work. In: Morgan D, Brandth B and Kvande E (eds) *Gender, Bodies and Work*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 1–15.
Myers VA and Dreachslin JL (2007) Recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Healthcare Management* 52(5): 290–298.
National Mining Industry ITAB (2003) *National VET Plan – Mining Industry, Executive Summary*. Brisbane: Australian National Training Authority.
National Training Meat Industry Advisory Council (MINTRAC) (2009) Literature Review on Labour Turnover and Retention Strategies. Available at: http://www.mintrac.com.au/files/newsletter/research%20turnover%20and%20retention%20.pdf.
North D and Smallbone D (1995) The employment generation potential of mature SMEs in different geographical environments. *Urban Studies* 32(9): 1517–1534.
Paechter C (2003) Masculinities and femininities as communities of practice. *Women's Studies International Forum* 26(1): 69–77.
Panelli R (2007) Time-space geometries of activism and the case of mis/placing gender in Australian agriculture. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32(1): 46–65.
Pattenden C (1998) *Women in the Mining Industry – A Report to the Women in Mining Taskforce*. Melbourne: The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.
Patton MQ (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
Pocock B (1989) *Demanding Skill: Women and Technical Education in Australia*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Resources and Infrastructure Industry Skills Council (2003) *Industry Skills Report: Resources and Infrastructure*. Brisbane: Australian National Training Authority.
Richardson S (2007) *What is a Skill Shortage? Report for NCVER*. Adelaide: Australian Government.
Sayer A (2005) Class, moral worth and recognition. *Sociology* 39(5): 947–963.
Sayce S, Ackers P and Greene AM (2007) Work restructuring and changing craft identity: The tale of the disaffected weavers (or what happens when the rug is pulled from under your feet). *Work, Employment & Society* 21(1): 85–101.
Schofield K (2003) *Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Educational References Committee Inquiry into Current and Future Skill Needs – Notes for the Inquiry Hearing Sydney 6 May*. Canberra: Parliament of Australia.
Skeggs B (1997) *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: SAGE.
Skeggs B (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.
Skeggs B (2005) The making of class and gender through visualizing moral subject formation. *Sociology* 39(5): 965–982.
Tapia AH and Kvasny L (2004) Recruitment is Never Enough: Retention of Women and Minorities in the IT Workplace. Proceedings of the SIGMIS Conference on Computer Personnel Research: Careers, Culture, and Ethics in a Networked Environment, 84–91.
Theodore N and Weber R (2001) Changing work organization in small manufacturers: Challenges for economic development. *Economic Development Quarterly* 15(4): 367–379.
Watson D, Webb R and Johnson S (2006) Influence costs and the reporting of skill deficiencies. *Human Relations* 59(1): 37–59.

Williams SJ (1998) The transgression of corporeal boundaries. *Body & Society* 4(2): 59–82.
Witz A, Halford S and Savage M (1996) Organized bodies: Gender, sexuality and embodiment in contemporary organizations. In: Adkins L and Merchant V (eds) *Sexualizing the Social: Power and the Organization of Sexuality*. London: Macmillan, 173–190.
Wolkowitz C (2006) *Bodies at Work*. London: SAGE.
Wrench J (2005) Diversity management can be bad for you. *Race and Class* 46(3): 73–84.
Wright E (2001) A conceptual menu for studying the interconnections of class and gender. In: Baxter J and Western M (eds) *Reconfigurations of Class and Gender*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 28–38.
Yancey Martin P (2003) 'Said and done' versus 'Saying and doing': Gendering practices, practicing gender at work. *Gender & Society* 17(3): 342–366.

Lia Bryant is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy at the University of South Australia. She was Director of the Research Centre for Gender Studies at the University of South Australia from 2004–6. Dr Bryant has published widely on gender, sexuality and embodiment in the rural setting, and has had an ongoing interest in emotions and the body shaping gender relations in organizations and in rural communities. She has authored *Gender and Rurality* (Routledge, 2011) with Barbara Pini. Dr Bryant has published in numerous journals including *Journal of Rural Studies*, *Sociologia Ruralis*, *International Journal of Qualitative Research*, *Kunapipi*, *Social Science Computer Review* and *Rural Society*. [Email: Lia.Bryant@unisa.edu.au]

Katrina Jaworski is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Hawke Research Institute, University of South Australia. She is also a Visiting Research Fellow at the School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide. Her research focuses on suicide and gender in particular, and death and dying more broadly. Other research interests include: violent extremism; older men and urban sheds; loneliness and older people; sexuality and aging; and genocide. To date, Dr Jaworski has published articles in journals such as *Feminist Media Studies*, *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Social Identities*, *Health and Social Care in the Community Continuum, Journal of Educational Enquiry and Sister in Law: A Feminist Law Review*. She has contributed to edited books such as *Abjectly Boundless* and *Corporeal Inscriptions* (The Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, 2005). [Email: Katrina.Jaworski@unisa.edu.au]