

Women in Australian society and the power and authority they hold are affected by social class, ethnicity and prejudice, amongst many other things which have historically been limiting and oppressive. By examining the societal place of women in Australia in relation to the domestic/micro world and public/macro world ~~is~~ ~~with~~ with regard to factors of class, ethnicity and prejudice, it is clear that although women as a group in society may hold power, the authority held by women even today is relatively less significant than that held by men.

Weber defines power and authority as being to do with legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic (ie. the authority of Jesus Christ) forces or means of influence, and authority ~~and~~ ^{as} de jure, ~~and~~ and power as de facto. Looking at the structures and institutions of society and culture, not just of Australia but of the world, we can see that men are favoured over women. However the feminist movement

of the last ~~two~~ century (and a little of the one before that) beginning with the ^{literary} works of British Mary Wollstonecraft and exemplified by the suffragettes shows that women without institutional authority can, undoubtedly, exert power.

~~The~~ Wollstonecraft and the suffragettes, however, were women from privileged backgrounds, belonging to an upper, wealthy class, ^{imbued with} ~~not~~ education and importantly, belonging to the culture (and race) they were operating within. The inequality they were battling was based on the political and economic standing of women in Europe. Late feminism; the second and third "waves" of feminism broadened ~~the~~ ideology and endeavors to encompass a wide scope of inequality and disadvantage. Feminism became an umbrella for many revolutionary struggles, including that of the impoverished mother ^{and} her children, the immigrants working class (particularly women) and taking into account the related issues of such endeavors, for example ~~the~~ employment of the

off-spring of aforementioned "impoverished mothers" and ^{ethnic} immigrants. Authority, for the latter two groups in society are probably the least likely to obtain authority, though with the empathy, support and awareness promoted by an umbrella group such as the second and third wave feminists, power can be obtained.

In Australian society, certain historical moments can be seen as significant: The United Nations declaration of human rights in 1945, the 1975 International year of the woman, and the 1960s feminist activities relating to contraceptives and abortion. All events, though global (or at least American) were significant to the renegotiation of the role and freedom of Australian women.

1979 saw many changes with the media paying attention to international feminist voices, meaning that Australian politics of the day had to deal with feminist issues of child care and support, marital status and de facto rights,

abortion and contraception (reforms). Many of these issues, particularly child-care and support were connected with social class. Women's reliance of men for financial support was on the decline.

Today, women are undeniably better off than they were in both the domestic ~~and~~ (micro) and public (macro) arenas. More women are employed in politics and institutions such as the law, however there is still the horizon, or problem of a "glass ceiling" a socially enforced restriction on women preventing them from ascending to the very top of a career field.

Interestingly, there are still fewer female than male doctors, and the reverse for nurses in Australia. In Russia however, there are more female doctors. In Russia, the medical profession holds lower status than it does in Australia, which says something of the remaining status limitations and prejudices on women is

professional society. In the home, women tend to continue (though less than before) to be primary care givers and housekeeper, despite the fact that many are also working professionally. Women are however better off in terms of rights in de facto relationships (now recognised by the law, i.e. "de jure") marriage break ups, and child custody, as well as property claims. In Australia, before 1945 women could not claim custody of children.

Women ~~of the~~ of Australia are throughout the world, despite the feminist revolution and de jure equality still ^{generally} hold less authority than men, however seem to have almost as much power. The difference is related to the fact that though de jure equality means a fair society for males and females, there remains the discrepancy and complication of other factors of inequality - social class, ethnicity and prejudice, that result in society being, de facto, an effectively unfair playing field.

in terms of power and authority.