Not being married meant that I put 100 per cent of my life into my job. I have no regrets. The way it’s been is the way it’s happened. I think you have to be driven to succeed. Some people want to achieve and some don’t. I don't know what makes that difference. When I had children, I loved being a mother, but it never occurred to me not to go back to work. I thought if I am happy, my kids will be happy.

(views of two interviewed women)

Women and men both make choices about the sort of work they do and the type of career that they want, and their choices are influenced by such factors as location, parental example and their own specific talents, qualifications and interests. In addition, choices tend to be influenced by expectations of what is an appropriate job for a man or for a woman. For both women and men there are also choices to be made about work/family balance which are usually based on assumptions about male and female roles.

**Gendered career choices**

Although driven by many of the same motives in making choices about work and family, women and men make career decisions that are contextualized by gendered expectations. Adopting gender roles, gendered behaviour and gender discourse is part of identity formation throughout childhood and adolescence (Davison and Frank, 2006; Eagly, 1987). Specifically, choices about specialization at school to some extent determine career choice, and subject choices still tend to be gendered (Myers and Taylor, 2007). For example, more boys specialize in science,
technical subjects and ICT while more girls specialize in English, modern languages and the humanities.

One of the women interviewed was a rarity in that she had worked in engineering. She was the exception as she recalled how she had escaped being pigeonholed by her school through a combination of ‘the accidental and my obstinacy’.

I went to a traditional girls’ grammar school where they only let you do the normal subjects if you were good at everything. I was only good at Maths and I was made to do subjects like domestic science. I had no career advice and no science qualifications so I looked at what I could do. I got into computing and electronics at university. The school system moved me into it by accident and then I got on when I got there. I went to university to do something applied, and found out I was incredibly interested in it.

This woman was unusual in her career choice. Women and men tend to gravitate to particular areas of work, as we noted in Chapter 1. Men predominate in industry and in careers associated with science, technology and engineering, while women predominate in the three ‘C’s of caring, clerical and catering, offering support where appropriate in male-dominated areas and to male roles at work. Where vertical differentiation is breached so that women are working in a ‘male’ industry, the tendency will be for them to specialize in a ‘feminine’ area like human resource management rather than in the core business. A woman in a power industry felt that:

The barriers have been around the fact that I was neither an engineer nor an accountant. That might have got me to the main board. They tend to be chosen to run businesses rather than lawyers or human resources professionals.

Another woman commented on the importance of breaking down the stereotypes that associate men with the ‘hard’ and women with the ‘soft’ jobs. She said that success at work came from measurable results and went on to say:

I do scold women and girls and ask: why are you not taking on line positions in charge of revenue and results? If you take soft jobs, results are not measurable. It is important that women take on technical positions. Women so often go into HR. It’s not surprising, they