

'NEW WIVES' OPT FOR HOME

Dawn Gibson, *The West Australian*, Australia

Is the ideal of the superwoman dead? Since the 1960s, women have been told that they can have it all – high-powered career, husband and happy family. But after watching their mothers juggle these roles with varying degrees of success, Australian women at the top end of the job pool are deserting the corporate jungle and returning to the kitchen and nursery in droves.

Census data shows the number of university-educated women with partners and children who have dumped paid work more than doubled in Western Australia in the decade to 2001. The WA figures mirror a national trend, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In 1991, just over 35,000 university-educated women with partners and children described themselves as

outside the paid workforce. In 2001, that figure had skyrocketed to almost 70,000, reflecting a new social trend as well as the increasing number of women with degrees. And it is not just a case of women spending a few months at home after the baby is born – about half will not return to paid work until their children are at school, and a minority will become so comfortable in domestic bliss that they will never return.

According to social researcher Hugh Mackay, the trend is a reaction among young women who do not want to go down the same path as their own mothers. They had grown up with two working parents and realised they did not want to become the frazzled person their mother was.

While women in their 40s and 50s saw earning their own money as the key to independence, younger



women believed independence was all about having choice – whether that was working, staying home or a bit of both. Mr. Mackay said, “Their mothers saw themselves as revolutionaries and pioneers who made these choices possible for their daughters, but their daughters are not at all grateful. They are critical of their mothers for leading absurdly stressful lives and do not see that as liberation.”

FIGHT FOR FATHERS' RIGHTS

Rana Foroohar, *Newsweek*, USA



A militant new movement is sweeping Britain, generating headlines and sparking protests. In one protest, a young man dressed as Spider-man dangled himself from a crane near London Bridge, holding up construction for six days. This July a handful of protesters dressed as vicars, nuns and monks stormed a Sunday service in York Minster. Not even Prime Minister Tony Blair has been able to avoid the onslaught: the PM. was pelted with purple powder during a speech in the House of Commons. Is this a return of the poll-tax protesters? Rabid animal-rights activists? No – it's the Angry Dads.

British fathers are increasingly fed up with a system that they see as favoring mothers during custody battles. In 80 percent of the cases, children end up living with their mothers after divorce; British law frowns upon shared parenting, citing

the confusion that dual residences can cause a child. And while most cases are settled out of court – allowing parents to arrange their own solutions – British courts have little leeway to penalize parents who do try to thwart visits in contentious cases. The reason is that a judge's only recourse in such circumstances is to fine the mother or throw her in jail, which is rarely if ever in the child's interest.

“We just want to see our kids,” says Matthew O'Connor, founder of Fathers4Justice, a new lobbying group that boasts 10,000 members. Interest in the fathers' rights movement is catching on, too: Fathers4Justice now has offshoots in 33 countries, other activist groups are copying its tactics and high-profile divorced dads like rock impresario Bob Geldof are calling for the government to take more aggressive action. Until it does, expect to see more of Spider-Dad.