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RATIONALISATION, FLEXIBILITY AND THE IMPACT OF PRESENTEEISM ON THE WORKING LIVES OF SENIOR MANAGERS IN THE UK

The writing's author demonstrates the impact of changes occuring as a consequence of flexible employment patterns on the position of senior managers, based on an empirical survey. To describe this, the conception of „survival syndrom" seems to be the most apropriate: the managers wish to prove their commitment to their job by the length of time spent at work.

In the UK the culture of downsizing, fuelled by new technology, takeovers and global market pressures, has been facilitated by a government which has been attempting throughout most of the eighties and nineties to encourage more flexibility in the labour market. This has involved a variety of reforms designed to free the labour market from legal and other constraints which, according to the new orthodoxy, increase the willingness of employers to hire labour and create the flexible employment practices crucial for a competitive economy. While such practices may have contributed to recent falls in unemployment, one impact has been on working hours with, according to Bassett (1995), British employees now working the longest hours in Europe.

This increase in hours can be partly explained by the emphasis in the UK on numerical flexibility, whereby employers are able to vary hours worked and numbers employed in response to changing demand conditions. According to Beatson (1995), this has contributed to the development of a dual labour market, characterised by a small core' of permanent and increasingly overworked employees and an outer ring of peripheral' workers who may be on a variety of short term, project based casual contracts with little security of tenure. Increasingly, however, managers who have been seen as core' workers are experiencing the same levels of insecurity which have hitherto been assocated with the periphery'. In other words many modern managers have a dual status' (Wood, 1989) in that they may in theory be on permanent contacts and have access to an internal labour market of promotion opportunities while in practice they may face redundancy or limited career prospects within their organisations.

The dual status' of being part of a reduced and increasingly insecure core' places a double burden on managers both of which impact on hours worked. Firstly, in the face of restructuring, new technology and loss of key personnel, their work load is considerably increased which in turn leads to longer hours (IM, 1996; Wheatley, 1992). Secondly, given that firms are less willing to promise job security in the face of tighter cost controls, many managers react to the insecurity and fear of redundancy by staying at their desk for long periods of time in order to demonstrate visible commitment to the job (Goffee and Scase, 1992). Brockner et al (1993) see such behaviour as part of a survivor sydrome' that affects many managers who have experienced restructuring and downsizing in their organisations and which Cooper (1992) refers to as presenteeism'. This he defines as „being at work when you should be at home either because you are ill or because you are working such long hours that you are no longer effective".

These changes associated with restructuring have lead to the dismantling of orderly and predictable career structures which have arguably had a greater effect on men than women (Goffee and Nicholson, 1994). Men's climb up the corporate hierarchy has become more uncertain and according to Goffee and Nicholson, the psychological contract, ie the explicit and implicit relationship of mutual expectations between managers and their employing organisations, has changed. Men can no longer trade security and status for a commitment to the organisation that has often taken precedence over family or other interests. Previous employers may well have promised men the very prizes they have valued highly in their career – namely promotion and steady, predictable increases in pay and status based on past achievements – but restructuring and competitive pressures have altered the rules of the game. Male managers can no longer rely on organisations to look after their careers and in this respect the career experiences of men and women could well be converging as men encounter the same levels of insecurity and unpredicability that women have traditionally faced (Goffee and Nicholson, 1994).

The unpredictable nature of women's careers is well known and has been well researched (Burke and McKeen, 1994; Morrison et al, 1987; Nicholson and West, 1988; Melamed, 1996). Women's careers have always progressed in less orderly routes, characterised by changes in direction and organisation and by career breaks (Burke and McKeen, 1994). In addition, the glass ceiling has meant that they have relied less on the organisation to manage their careers and more on their own initiative. While women, like men, are also under increased pressure through the intensification of managerial work and increased workloads, their visibility and token status has meant that they have always faced additional pressures to perform and their career paths have often been characterised by uncertainty (Kanter, 1977; Marshall, 1984). In addition, women have placed less emphasis on the traditional male rewards of pay and status where, given the disadvantages they face in the organisation, they are bound to be disappointed. Instead, according to Marshall (1984), their work orientations are more focused on intrinsic rewards such as job satisfaction and working relationships. Greater uncertainty concerning the more extrinsic factors relating to promotion and salaries may therefore have a higher impact on men, for whom such factors have always had a high value, than on women whose motivations lie elsewhere (Goffee and Nicholson, 1994).

Consequently, the so called proletarianisation or dual status of managers together with associated pressures of insecurity and overload may well have a different gendered impact with men, given their earlier advantages, feeling the changes more keenly. Dysfunctional outcomes such as long hours and, in particular, presenteeism may arise from the intensification of managerial work (Burke and McKeen, 1994) and it is possible that these dysfunctions, while affecting men and women alike, originate in men's feelings of insecurity and uncertainty.

Aims

Against this background, the overall aim of this paper is to assess the impact of restructuring on the workload and working hours of senior managers and to explore the concept of presenteeism within the organisation, its gendered origins, its links to the dual status' of many managers and its impact on the working lives of men and women. The paper starts with a review of recent literature and research and then goes onto to consider the results of this project on presenteeism and senior managers.

The Sample and Methodology

Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire sample consisted of 90 female and 130 male managers who were asked to provide information on their personal status, labour market position and work pressures. This allowed a profile to be built up of the types of managers for whom long hours was a key pressure and of their employing organisations. The majority of managers in the sample (70%) had experienced restructuring in their existing or previous organisations over the last five years and nearly eight in ten had seen workloads increased.

Follow up interviews with 15 female and 10 male managers (the latter ongoing) allowed a more indepth analysis to take place of the extent of restructuring, of presenteeism and its origins and of the impact of long hours on the working and home lives of men and women.

Recent Research:
Workloads, Stress and Presenteeism

Evidence on increasing managerial workloads is widespread. A recent Institute of Management survey (IM, 1996) found that 84% of managers claimed to regularly work in excess of their official working week and for

60% this was always the case. Half the respondents took work home and over four in ten said they worked at weekends. Similarly, in their study of managers Scase and Goffee (1989) found the majority worked an average week in excess of 50 hours. In the NHS, this increased to an average 56 hours (IHSM, 1994) and a survey by Wajcman (1996) of five large multi-nationals found that over 60% of managers worked on average 50 hours and 16% more than 60 hours a week.

Evidence also suggests a strong link between restructuring, workloads and hours with increased hours worked in a company usually following large scale redundancies (McKay, 1995). For example the proportion of BT employees working more than 46 hours a week increased from 39% in 1991 to 51% in 1995 following a massive restucturing (Newall and Dopson, 1996) and in two IM surveys on the effect of restructuring 80% of senior managers and 75% of middle managers had been personally affected in terms of increased workloads and responsibilities (Lockwood et al, 1992; Benbow, 1996).

One impact of these changes that has received considerable attention has been a marked increase in stress and stress related illnesses (IM, 1996). This is linked not simply to extra workloads through restructuring but also to prolonged worry concerning layoffs and job losses. Characteristics of this ,,survivor syndrome" (Brockner, 1993) include heightened anxiety, decreased morale and, according to Clarke (1994), fear of being next in line for redundancy which drives its victims to work harder than necessary and to be seen at work for long periods of time. This was supported by a survey by Austin Knight (1995) recruitment consultants which found that 20% of respondents worked long hours either out of fear of job losses or because they felt under direct line manager pressure while over a half felt pressurised by a prevailing culture of presenteeism. A similar outcome emerged from a survey by Hays Accountancy Personnel (1996) whose managing director commented:

> ,,The combination of competitive aggression which was the hallmark of much of the 1980's culture and the desperate need not to be at the top of the redundancy list in the early 1990's have combined to form a work ethic of making sure you are never first to leave the office" p4

Flatter organisations with greater competition over reduced promotion opportunities may also lead to a need to demonstrate visible committment to the organisation in order to gain an advantage over others (Clark, 1994). This is supported by Meyer and Allen (1984) who argue that many senior managers believe there to be a strong link between commitment and increased performance and that the ability to go the extra mile'is what organisations need to compete effectively and to improve profits. At BT for example, following massive and prolonged restructuring, career movement changed from clearly defined paths to one based on proof of performance, efficiency and above all visible commitment. The latter was often cited as a key factor in terms of improved career chances so that an important measure of success was the number of hours worked despite the fact that there was a strong feeling that these extra hours were not really necessary. It was important, however, to be seen at your desk for long periods of time both to advance your career by demonstrating a heightenend commitment and to avoid future rounds of redundancies (Newell and Dopson, 1996).

The hallmark of the 90's organisational culture, therefore, could well be endemic presenteeism which is difficult to resist without paying the penalty of being considered a ,, shirker". The imperative to stay at one's desk, however, may not always reflect greater productivity. In fact evidence suggests that performance suffers as a result. Nine out of ten managers in the Austin Knight survey acknowledged that their productivity and performance dropped the more hours they worked both over the day and over the week and more than three quarters said that working long hours affected them physically. Half the accountants surveyed in the Hays Accountancy Personnel survey agreed that their productivity dropped after 7pm but over two thirds felt that their career would suffer if they left work on time every night.

The impact on family life can only be detrimental. Extra work loads and longer hours means that two thirds of managers in the IM (1996) survey felt they had not achieved a good balance between work and home and 45% of male respondents claimed that not seeing enough of their children was a major source of stress. This view was echoed by Lucy Daniels from Parents at Work (1996) who found that two thirds of her survey said they did not see enough of their children (an average of 2–4 hours a day) and nearly three quarters reported feeling exhausted at the end of the day which was the only time they had to spend with their families. Over a half of both this and the Austin Knight survey felt that their relationships were badly affected by long hours as well as their health and equally over a half of the IM survey expressed concerns over the impact that work demands were making on personal relationships.

The Research Project

Piecing together these various strands of research paints a rather depressing picture of management overload and of a culture of long hours which may well militate against effective management and certainly impacts on family life. However, although the majority of managers from this survey complained of long hours, certain similarities and differences emerged in terms of the profile of both managers and organisations where this was a particular pressure.

Profile of Managers who Experience
Long Hours as a Key Pressure

To ascertain the extent to which long hours was a major problem, respondents were asked to choose from a possible list of eight what pressures they had experienced and, in a separate question, what was the single largest pressure experienced in their working lives. In general terms there was a fair degree of consistency across a range of categories concerning the extent to which long hours was seen as a major pressure. The overall average was two thirds of men (67%) and a slightly lower figure (60%) for women and with just over a quarter of both men and women choosing it as the single largest pressure. Long hours was the most popular choice in nearly all cases though this was occasionally overtaken by an associated pressure: „conflicting demands of home and work".

Little difference emerged between the private and public sector, though a higher proportion of public sector men (30.7%) claimed long hours to be the single largest pressure compared with only 24.1% of private sector men. Financial services and retail emerged as the activities most associated with long hours. Not surprisingly, differences emerged in terms of management level with senior levels associated with long hours for both men and women. For example over three quarters of men and women at senior management level claimed this to be a major pressure compared to 51.6% at middle management and only 46.2% at junior levels.

Age emerged as an important factor for men (there was little difference between age groups for women) with younger men more likely to experience long hours as a pressure than older men. For example 80% of men in the 25-34 age bracket claimed this to be a major pressure compared to only 55.5% in the 45-54 bracket. Although it seems unlikely that young men have more work to do in terms of volume, except insofar as they may be learning

new skills, it may well be that they are less able to resist the pressure to stay at the office and that they are more susceptible to working long hours to improve career prospects.

Family Responsibilities

Although a higher proportion of married women identified long hours as a pressure, a larger difference occurred between women with and women without children. Perhaps surprisingly, women with children were less likely to experience this as a pressure. No difference emerged with the men. For example, long hours was chosen by 66% of childless women compared to the lower figure of 57% for women with children. A larger difference emerged in terms of the single largest pressure. In this case 34% of childless women chose long hours, by far the most popular choice, compared to only 12% of women with children. However, part of this disparity can be explained by the higher proportion of women with children who chose conflicting demands of home and work as the single largest pressure. This is undoubtedly linked to long hours in that time spent at the office is often at the expense of family or home time. Conflicting demands of home and work may be a more popular choice therefore because it describes more powerfully the pressures and conflicts that are the reality of many women's lives.

As the majority of women in the sample work full time (95%) the difference in figures between those with and without children cannot be due to women with children working part time and therefore not experiencing work time pressures. Similarly, although women with children are less likely than childless women to be in senior positions which may well reduce hours worked, the difference is not so great as to explain the disparity between the two sets of data. It is possible, however, that women with children have developed strategies to overcome the pressure to stay at work and, as the interview data suggests (to be discussed later in this paper) that they are more ruthless in their determination to put in the hours contracted and no more. In the conflicting demands made on them between home and work it could well be that for women non work activities are given more priority than childless women in terms of allocation of time.

Gender Mix of Organisations

Of the various factors associated with long hours, gender mix of the employing organisation emerged as particulal-

rly significant. However it was only significant for women. Whatever the gender mix, men are no more or no less likely to experience work time pressures. Gender mix of the organisation was explored at two levels. Firstly, the female sample was divided into token' and non token' women according to the ratio of men to women working at the same or similar level to the women themselves and with whom the women had regular working contact. Where the male/female ratio was 5:1 and over the woman was defined as a token' while a ratio of less than 5:1 defined her as non token'. Token women therefore worked mainly with men whereas for nontoken women the gender mix was more balanced. They could, however, still be in the minority but their minority status was not so great. Male dominated organisations, defined as those organisations in which women managers were of a token' status, emerged as being associated with long hours, more so than those organisations where the gender mix was more balanced. For example, a higher proportion of token' women claimed long hours to be a pressure (64.8%) compared to just over a half of non token' women.

However, larger differencees emerged at the second level of the inquiry where organisations were divided into top heavy' and very top heavy' to describe the gender mix at management levels higher than the women themselves. As 85% of women in the sample worked in organisations which were predominantly male at these top levels, it was necessary to divide the group into those where men outnumbered women by a ratio of 5:1 or less at these levels (top heavy) and where men outnumbered women by a greater ratio than 5:1 (very top heavy). In this case, where divisions were made according to the gender mix at the top of the organisation, nearly three quarters of women (73%) claimed long hours as a pressure in very top heavy' organisations as opposed to only 62% of women in the less unequal top heavy'. So whereas gender mix appeared to be a factor behind the incidence of long hours, it was male dominance at the top of the organisation which appeared to be more important over gender imbalances further down the hierarchy.

Presenteeism and Gender

Reasons given for working long hours were taken to indicate the extent of presenteeism in the organisation ie the extent to which managers remained at work when the demands of the job did not require it. From the interview data three main reasons emerged for working long hours

which conformed largely with previous studies in this area (IM, 1996; Hays Accountancy Personnel, 1996; Austin Knight, 1996).

Firstly, some managers worked long hours simply because the job demanded it especially if there were sudden deadlines to meet or if the job were a relatively new one. Long hours were under these circumstances seen as a one off necessity or as a temporary phenomenon while a new skills or procedures were being learned.

Secondly, managers worked long hours because restructuring lead to higher work loads either because of loss of staff or because of the demands of continual job changes. One female manager summed up this situation:

,,I can't do the job until I understand what there's to do because I've got to understand what's needed because things keep changing. So there's a lot more work to do if it's a changing organisation than if it's a stable organisation"

Thirdly, many managers who had been through restructuring were made to feel that they could only retain their position by working long hours as a way of demonstrating visible commitment to the job. In other words they were under pressure ,,to be seen to be working long hours". Such presenteeism, however, was much more likely to be recognised by women than by men and was more likely to be a feature of male behaviour though women were clearly affected by it. Men tended to accept long hours as part of the job or to deny working longer hours than necessary. As one male manager put it:

,,I don't think about it (long hours and work loads). I just get on with it"

For another male manager:

,,I don't (work long hours) but lots and lots of people do...my own personal effort has always been to put in the hours needed and no more"

Both managers, however, later admitted to sorting out problems after official working hours either in the office or, informally, at the pub. So although from the survey data men were more likely than women to claim long hours as a key pressure, they were less likely in interviews to recognise presenteeism beyond the immediate need to get the job done. This meant that an analysis of factors behind presenteeism relied heavily on women's expereinces and interpretations and it was through their

eyes that most of the subsequent findings emerged. This more questioning and critical approach on the part of women may reflect the fact they are more aware than men of work culture, particularly relating to gender, and of its potential impact. Men on the other hand are more likely to feel comfortable with prevailing attitudes and practices which they perceive as gender neutral and as normal' (Kanter, 1977; Freeman, 1992). One common theme that emerged from the interviews with women was the relationship between long hours and a masculine culture:

> „And there's this well who's looking over my shoulder sort of thing and am I being seen to be doing enough and it gets quite macho..they all compete with each other sort of thing..."

Such competition was found to occur in large, male dominated organisations where career structures had been significantly reduced. A similar situation was observed by Cockburn (1991) in her study of a male dominated computer division within a retail organisation. Here the change to a flatter hierarchy lead to competitive relations between men particularly over technical expertise and, significantly, over career pace. This heightenend competition between men could well reflect the greater impact of restructuring on male careers in terms of uncertainty and reduced promotion opportunities referred to earlier (Goffee and Nicholson, 1994) and could also lead to dysfunctional outcomes such as presenteeism. Where the gender mix was more balanced and where restructuring had also occurred, presenteeism was not recognised to the same extent.

However, from both the survey data and the interview data it was the gender mix at senior levels (ie very top heavy organisations) that emerged as a significant factor in terms of the reasons for long hours. For example, in one NHS trust with an equal gender mix among senior managers, long hours was discussed by women managers in terms of the larger work loads caused by restructuring. In other words people worked late because there was more to do not because they felt driven by a culture of insecurity even though restructruing had been far reaching and had led to several job losses. In a comparable organisation, however, within the same sector (a health authority) where restructuring had also taken place and where there was only one woman senior manager among several men, long hours was discussed by that woman in terms of the politics and culture of the organisation and in terms of competitive behaviour by men.

Competitive Presenteeism

Those women who encountered heightened competition in their organisations therefore saw it as a male phenomena with long hours, as the above quote suggests, associated with „macho" behaviour and attitudes. This is supported by Collinson and Collinson (1995) who found that long hours could become a test of manhood with some male managers enjoying the buzz of staying at the office late into the evening. This also helped to recolonise' management as a male preserve as few women were willing to compete on these terms. Such competitive presenteeism' can also pressurise those lower down the hierarchy to adopt the same practices, helping it to become an endemic part of the organisational culture. From this study, young men emerged as being particularly vulnerable to the pressure to work long hours – reinforcing the results of the survey data discussed earlier. As one senior manager in the City commented:

> „I feel sorry for the (male) graduates. They're here until 7 or 8. And they do seem to find it difficult if two or three are working and their boss is still there...you tend to find there's a pressure on the others"

While young men may identify more with the organisation as a means of acheiving career success and are therefore more vulnerable to pressures to stay for long periods of time in the office, young women may be less willing to compromise other, more highly valued aspects of their lives. Despite the growing successes of women at work, it could still be the case that young women do not give career achievement the same importance as do young men so that they are not willing to make the sacrifices long hours demands of them.

Competitive presenteeism was found to involve the sacrifice not just of leisure time after work but also of recuperation time such as after working trips abroad (one male manager returned from an Australian business trip in the morning and arrived at the office in the afternoon) or of holiday entitlements which the men frequently did not take up. Many women tried hard to resist the culture without appearing to be „shirking".

> „I stay as long as I have to stay to do something, but I find I try very hard not to be pressurised into staying late if I'm not busy sometimes. But it's very difficult if all the others are still around...I feel quite guilty and I'm sure they all notice and think..there she's off home again!".

Project Rivalry

Competition over hours worked was not the only area of rivalry between men in male dominated organisations. A second area of competition concerned the ownership of projects or tasks with managers anxious to display their commitment and their ability to perform effectively. This was often linked to growing uncertainty over job security and to fear of redundancies. Under these conditions it was important to be seen to be doing the job and doing it well with as little outside help as possible so as to prevent the credit for effective performance being claimed elsewhere. One woman manager commented:

„People are more competitive all round and you've got to demonstrate that you can do your job because another 5 people are queueing up for it. It's very much we got to do that – we got to demonstrate we can do that"

This helped to create an individualistic, non cooperative culture. Each manager or team developed an insular approach which often meant work was repeated. Consequently, ownership of a project or task could become a contested area in itself as the following quotes, from two senior women managers both of whom worked in large male dominated organisations, suggest:

„People don't want to accept what any one else has done. There's an awful ot of work gets redone – everybody does it all over again"

„Everyone is trying to demonstrate that they're doing a good job and it's not a sharing culture at all.You have to be able to demonstrate that you can do this all yourself. So there's an awful lot of jokeying for position"

„There's lots of time wasted in little territorial battles and that tends to be quite aggressive. It's very male dominated. There's not much compromise. It's very much WE want to do this – a lot of not talking to people"

Territorial battles of this kind may well reflect a heightened competition over career pace referred to by Cockburn (1991) as well as an increased emphasis on performance which, according to Goffee and Nicholson (1994) has emerged as a result of the intensification of

managerial work. Managers who previously monitored the performance of others are now subject to similar processes of performance targets themselves with career threatening sanctions if they fail to meet them (Goffee and Nicholson, 1994). However, because much of managerial work is complex and multidimensional and because of the interdependent nature of many managerial tasks, the agentic isolation of individual performance is not easy to achieve. It is difficult therefore for an individual manager to demonstrate effective performance when other people or other teams are involved in producing the same outcome. An individual's contribution to the overall task is consequently contestable. One outcome of this difficulty may therefore be a greater competition over project ownership with each manager attempting to demonstrate visible and effective performance and to claim particular tasks as his own.

Presenteeism as a Form of Male Resistance

In several studies of women in management, men have been found to be culturally active in creating an environment where women don't flourish (Kanter, 1977; Marshall, 1984; Maddock and Parkin, 1993). As Cockburn (1991) suggests, the encroachment of women into the male hierarchy can lead to heightenend resistance by men as they feel their positions of power and sex right' threatened. On this basis, increased insecurity and reduced promotion opportunities through restructuring may not only have created greater rivalry among men in terms of heightenend competitive behaviour but also have actively lead to a hardening resistance to women in the organisation. Often exclusionary tactics can be quite oblique but the end result is a masculine culture which men have created for themselves, often involving drinking and socialising at the end of the day, which proclaims to women „you are out of place here" (Cockburn,p65) .

Staying late in the office can be an effective weapon in this war of resistance and, according to Collinson and Collinson (1995) can serve to recolonise management as an inherently masculine function, confirming in men's eyes their sense of „owning the organisation" (Cockburn, p46).This was recognised by Watson (1994) in a study of managerial practices where working long hours into the evening was found to marginalise many women. In fact, male managers deliberately stayed late at work into the evening, artificially extending meetings and then criticising those managers, especially women, who left earlier even though this may in fact be well after the official end

of the day. One impact of extending office hours in this way is the timing of informal socialising which is often pushed later into the evening. As one woman manager commented:

> „Most companies have moved away from such things as drinking at lunchtimes – but people would go out after work and they tend to and it tends to be later on. So it's not shall we go out for a drink at half five. It's like when we've finished work at maybe 7 o'clock and it's not the sort of thing I could get into if I've got the children to pick up..."

Informal networks have been shown to be important in terms of gaining insight into the politics of the organisation – not simply in terms of gathering valuable and up to date information, though this is important enough in its own right, but also in terms of establishing relations, evaluating colleagues and obtaining feedback on work related issues. In Cockburn's study, the men recognised the value of their socialising while the women felt that their absence from these gatherings cut them off from important aspects of organisational life. Lack of opportunity to build important networks and relationships emerged from this study as one major area of disadvantage as the following woman manager confirmed:

> „It (socialising after work) means you've got a much closer relationship with some people – and if there's a problem or if there's an opportunity then they'll go to the person they know better which is likely to be another man because that's who they go drinking with.."

With promotion opportunities in short supply and given the increased emphasis on managerial performance referred to earlier, a competitive edge can be gained over other colleagues by finding out about new jobs or new responsibilities as early as possible and by speaking to the right people in an informal setting. As one woman middle manager pointed out, the allocation of key tasks would ultimately depend on who you had made contact with on an informal basis:

> „...if there's something big – if there's a job coming up or there's a particular piece of work that needs doing who are you going to recommend to your boss? A lot of it is very informal and that's how things get done"

Promotion, too, was increasingly allocated by such informal methods rather than being subject to formal channel of recruitment procedures:

> „Particularly because the company's downsizing and there are very few formal opportunities to apply for jobs now a lot of the changes in jobs and promotions tends to be done on who you know and who knows you because people tend to get asked to do something now rather than a job being advertised and people applying for it..."

A masculine culture, or what has been referred to as the Men's Club (Coe, 1992), therefore marginalised and excluded many women from key sources of information and networking. Not only were there practical problems in terms of timing to joining such groups but cultural problems too. As Cockburn pointed out from her study, women are often reluctant to take part in these all male sessions even if their circumstances permit it. They are made to feel unwelcome and out of place and there is often a deep reluctance to spoil the male-male relationships by introducing a female. This reluctance may mean that such sessions become a permanent part of the organisational culture and the ability of women to resist that culture remain extremely limited.

Resisting Work Time Pressures: Strategies and Priorities

While men complained of long hours as a pressure experienced in their working lives, they largely conformed with the demands made upon them. Women, on the other hand, tried hard to resist the pressure to stay late at the office. They were constrained in their resistance, however, by the danger of being stereotyped as the „whingeing woman" which meant they could not openly voice their concerns about work load or working hours. As one woman manager commented:

> „And because just in this particular area I work with men there isn't another woman at my level in this area – and because my boss is a man I can't say and I won't say Oh I'm really sick of working and doing all this evening work because I want to spend some time with my kids – because I'm very aware of the fact that if you start using family commitments then people may very well think – Oh that's women. You know – that's the problem when you get women working in well paid jobs...."

While women, especially those with children, had to adapt to prevailing masculine norms, reinforcing the feeling that they don't belong, men were generally seen as having an easier time in terms of workloads and domestic responsibilities:

> „It's different for men. My boss goes home and his wife doesn't work and his wife's got the supper on the table so he spends 10 minutes with the kids while he does what he likes for the rest of the evening – whereas for us – go home, get the supper, bath the kids, put them to bed, do the ironing and then it's 10 and you've got to start working."

Women with children working in male dominated organisations seemed to experience work time pressures most keenly and, as the survey data confirmed, to have greatest difficulty reconciling the conflicting demands of home and work. In more evenly mixed environments, although long hours might be a problem, the demands of home and work were often acknowledged and catered for in a supportive way via flexible leave and other arrangements. It was often common practice, for example, for women and men to work at home whereas in male dominated organisations there seemed to be a greater pressure to remain within the workplace.

Childless women accommodated the demands of long hours more easily than women with children and this is somewhat at odds with the survey data where it is childless women who are more likely to experience long hours both as a pressure and as the single largest pressure in their working lives. However, from the interviews a clear picture emerged of the boundaries that women with children drew between work and home and of their priorities. Limits were set in terms of how much time women were prepared to give up at the expense of their children and they were firm in their commitment to keep to those limits. Single women, on the other hand, were less rigorous in this respect and may therefore be more vulnerable to the pressures to stay at the office for long periods. As one single women put it:

> „...it can become a habit – getting into the habit of rather than saying right I'm going home now you sort of fall into someone's office and have a chat about some problem or other"

For another women with no children:

> „I know that on occasion when I've got to get home to something I will get on with it (the work) and go"

Not only does this raise issues concerning the productiveness of working late (does having a „chat" count as work? Why stay late when the work could have been finished anyway?), it also suggests that women with children have managed with a certain determination to carve out time for themselves and their families. The following quotes support this view:

> „I won't compromise my time with the kids so what I do is I'll spend time with the kids and they go to bed at 8.30 and at 9 I sit down and start working..."

> „I mean I'm not prepared to work 50, 60, 70 hours a week. I'm supposed to do a 42 hour week"

> „I'm not militant in that sense but I want to have a flexible – particularly with children and that and I have other interests outside work as well which I want to have time for. I don't want to spend my holidays doing work – I'm not prepared to do that"

Referring to a recent restructuring and job change, one woman manager commented:

> „maybe it (the workload) will settle down but if it doesn't I'm not going to do this for the next few years because my kids are more important".

At the same time women developed their own strategies to circumvent the problems of keeping enough time for their families and this often involved some element of subterfuge. One strategy was to create a sense of uncertainty concerning work time location so that time taken to attend non work activities went unnoticed. As one manager said in relation to school functions she sometimes wanted to attend:

> „I keep it very quiet. It suits me fine. My immediate boss is based in Swindon so I don't see him very much so nobody knows where I am most of the time and I'm happy to keep it like that"

Other women were deliberately vague about reasons for absence if this involved some childcare activity such as a visit to the doctor:

> „I'll say I can't make a meeting on that day because I've got something else on. If it's someone I know well I might tell the real reason. I wouldn't say the

real reason generally because that would be frowned upon"

One woman manager commented bitterly that although the organisation she worked for had an equal opportunities policy and were very keen to be flexible, in practice she felt „it was not the done thing to take time off for your own children". If children were ill, some women preferred to take sick leave themselves as it was felt this would be more acceptable:

> „It has happened that the children and the nanny have gone down with flu or something and then I've had to stay at home and what I've tended to do – I've never rung in and said the kids are ill I've always said I'm ill. But when you are ill it makes you feel bad because you can't take too much time off"

Men, it was felt, were judged by different rules especially as far as domestic responsibilities were concerned making it easier for them to fullfill occasional domestic responsibilities during work time:

> „And certainly there's been a time with a number of male colleagues have been off when their wife's ill and they're looking after the kids and I think everyone accepts that from a man – but with women it's oh well what do you expect..."

Maintaining a balance between work and home while avoiding the traditional criticism that women with families are not suited to senior managerial positions was not easy. The enormous gilf between the two lead many women to adopt strategies of subterfuge to meet the twin demands made upon them. At the same time they were silenced on the issue of work/home commitments and on the problems created by long hours: As one women commented:

> „I can't discuss it (long hours) directly but I've begun to argue it on the sheer volume of work and said we've got to recognise there's a problem here"

Fear of being coinsidered a shirker or unsuitable material for senior management helped to create a conspiracy of silence and reinforce the feeling that women don't belong. One women summed up the issue:

> „I don't feel I can bring home to work and talk about it because I do feel than in people's minds that will

create an impression of me – all those bloody women in here, all they want to do is whinge about what they've got to do at home"

The price of silence, however, could be a high one. Several women had already decided to leave their jobs because of the pressures of long hours – either to set up their own businesses, where they would have greater control over working conditions, or to work part time. Two women with younger children were considering giving up work altogether despite the acknowledged career sanctions that would result. None felt able to confront the issue or to discuss the problems they were having with line managers.

Conclusion

Although the majority of managers experience long hours as the most important pressure in their working lives, it cannot be wholly explained by increased workloads. One impact of restructuring has been the emergence of a the new dual status' for many managers who experience increased insecurity and uncertainty. Fear of redundancy can create an imperative to appear visibly committed to the job to maximise limited promotion opportunities and can encourage managers to demonstrate such commitment by staying at the office for long periods of time.

The nature of such presenteeism emerges from this study as being highly gendered. Firstly, it is more likely to be recognised by women but practised by men and it is associated with male dominated organisations particularly at senior levels. Where restructuring has severely curtailed promotion opportunities, dismantling the predictable and orderly career routes traditionally enjoyed by many male managers, competitive presenteeism may occur as male managers compete over who stays longest in the office. At the same time intensification of managerial work can lead to heightened competition over ownership of tasks as each manager attempts to meet peformance targets and claim credit for successful completion of projects or carrying out of responsibilities.

Secondly presenteeism may be part of a new pattern of resistance to women managers by men which, according to Cockburn, is likely to occur where women encroach on male territory and where the male sex right is significantly eroded. Such erosion often occurs where organisations have been flattened and promotion opportunities reduced. Women are doubly disadvantaged in this respect. Firstly they are unable or unwilling to compete over presenteeism itself so that they may not be seen to be fully committed to the organisation. Secondly, the almost

total exclusion of women from late evening informal sessions means they cannot gain access to information or be in the front line in terms of internal headhunting' in which jobs and occasionally promotions are allocated on the basis of personal recommendations and internal networks.

A third aspect of presenteeism concerns the costs to women, especially those with children, of attempting to accommodate the conflicting demands made upon them. For some women their own sense of vulnerability and visibility in male dominated organisations means that they cannot openly challenge prevailing practices and must rely instead on hidden countervailing strategies and subterfuge while for others the costs of remaining in their present positions are simply too high.

Gender mix , particularly at senior levels, appears to be a defining feature in terms of how well women fit into the organisation. Women's experiences differ enormously on this basis.While more evenly mixed environments have not escaped the pressures of managerial overload and the intensification of managerial work, the hidden side of long hours in the form of presenteeism is not so evident. While men, who are less used to insecurity and uncertainty in their careers, may be more disadvantaged than women by the new dual status of managerial work, dysfunctional outcomes such as competitive presenteeism and competition over task ownership is severely disabling for women.

Any explanation of the position of women and men in management must take into account structural features of the organisation in which they work as well as the behaviour and relationships of individuals working within them. This paper suggests that organisational restructuring produces features such as heightened competition between managers that have important gender implications. A full understanding of these processes is required in order to allow a greater fit between organisational culture and practices and the diverse profiles and experiences of all its senior managers.

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