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'Are you going home already?' The long hours culture, women managers and patriarchal closure; Time and Society 2001vol10(2/3)

Abstract

Drawing on Weberian theory of social closure, this article explores how the long hours culture fostered in so many British organizations, may act as a means of social closure to exclude women managers from senior positions. My research conducted in eight different divisions of two UK companies, an airline and a merchant bank, shows that access to the resource of time is vital to be a successful manager. Women are less likely to have equal access of time because of the gendered division of domestic labour and indeed men's time is often made available to them by their wives at home. At a time when women can offer almost everything that men can in terms of ability, skills and experience, time becomes the differentiating feature which makes men more suitable than women. My research shows the convergence of desire/interests between patriarchal interests and organizational interests.

Key words; long hours; women managers; closure: exclusion

Theoretical background

The central argument of this article is that the long hours culture, prevalent in British organisations, acts as a means of patriarchal closure to exclude women managers from positions of power in those organisations. It comes from a much larger body of work which examines organisational cultures, patriarchal closure and women managers (Rutherford 1999). This builds on theories of patriarchal exclusion strategies at work (Cockburn 1991; Walby 1990; Witz 1992). The concept of patriarchy is used to denote a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate women (Walby1990). The adjective patriarchal then refers to something being in men's interests. I conceptualise time as one constituent of organisational culture. 'At heart long hours working is a cultural attitude and the example is often set by senior management' (Kodz, Kersley et al 1998). Culture as a means of social closure has been identified before. Collins' (1979) work on education and closure specifically focused on cultural markets and cultural production. Crompton (1987) cites Collins' work when acknowledging the role of organisational culture in her work on credentialism and women and the professions

The processes of gender exclusions via indigenous culture production within organisations are extremely difficult to research and quantify. They must however be recognised as a crucial element to organisational power and in the allocation to organisational positions.(Crompton 1987 p.423)

Drawing on this work I aimed to adequately define and conceptualise cultural barriers in order to theorise organisational culture as a means of closure to women managers. The long hours culture is one important barrier to women's progress in organisations.

Why work long hours ?

British employees work some of the longest hours in Europe. National data shows that over one quarter of full time employees in the UK work more than 48 hours per week (Labour Force Survey 1997). A recent study on work-life balance showed that 11% of full time employees worked more than 60 hours a week (Institute of Employment Research 2000). Long hours may be thought of as a material aspect to a job, yet very rarely is a long working day a formal requirement of a job, particularly for professionals and managers. Certainly in the businesses of this study on managers, there was nothing written in the employment contracts for managers about hours. Most people's formal working day was 9am-5pm or 9.30am-5.30pm. There is no overtime for managers, conversely there is the unspoken expectation that they will work as hard and for as long as is required to do their job adequately. This leads to a kind of self-imposed overtime. Workload pressure, company expectations, peer group pressure and ambition have resulted in what is now a widely accepted concept - the long hours culture. The reasons given in an Institute for Employment Studies report (1998) for the long hours worked by respondents was:

- Work pressure and increasingly demanding customers, greater competition, fewer staff and tighter budgets.
- Cultural attitudes which see long hours as demonstrating commitment.
- Enjoyment and commitment to work and/or desire to enhance career prospects.

In an increasingly competitive environment, time can be seen as a resource to be drawn on in order to progress in an organisation. Massey found an element of individual competitiveness in explaining the long hours worked by scientists in her study on high technology workers (1997).

Within workplaces, too, the interaction between employees can produce a culture which glorifies long hours of work. This may derive from competition between individuals but it

may also result from various peer- group pressures - the need 'not to let the team down', for instance can become a form of social compulsion. (Massey 1997 p.110)

Organisations may exploit this competitiveness and, indeed, harness it to extract maximum work output from employees.

Moreover if there is indeed a form of masculinity bound up with all this, then the companies in these parts of the economy let it have its head: they trade on it and benefit from it and they thereby reinforce it. (Massey 1997 p.116)

The Labour Force Survey (1997) showed that men are more likely to work long hours than women, but that women's hours are increasing as more are entering senior positions.

Time as a patriarchal resource

Obviously, working long hours is harder for employees with caring commitments. Even managing a household without children is hard if you are in your office for ten or eleven hours a day. The Work-Life Balance Survey (Institute of Employment Research 2000) showed that those most likely to work long hours were men in couple households with dependent children. More than one in eight of them worked more than 60 hours per week. The authors surmised that this was either because they needed to earn the most money and/or because they were able to work more (with a partner at home). The concept of a worker is still one whose bodily and emotional needs are cared for by someone else (Acker 1990). On the whole men do not do that for women. Starkey (1989) has argued that how time is constructed, manipulated and experienced is crucial to our understanding of organisations.

Buswell and Jenkins (1994) see the use of 'time' as being one patriarchal strategy to segregate and disadvantage women within the labour market and labour process. Organisations construct jobs around the availability of women's time i.e. when they are freed from domestic labour and this has become an invaluable source of cheap labour. Between 1971 and 1993, 93% of the increase in women's employment was in part time work, where women make up 85% of the work force (Social Trends 1996). Using research in organisations where an equal opportunities discourse operates, Buswell and Jenkins show how these policies allow men to deny that inequality exists whilst simultaneously redefining the 'good worker' as the one who gives most time to the organisation

(Buswell and Jenkins 1994). Buswell and Jenkins see 'time' as a resource which is more available to men, who use it to segregate and disadvantage women within the labour market and labour process. They see segregation as the main strategy of public patriarchy (Walby 1990) with the labour market being constructed using the part-time/full-time division as a real operating division.

As referred to above, Massey (1997) has described the working of long hours by high technology scientists as being bound up with a specific form of masculinity. Her case study respondents were not only forced to work long hours by the specific demands of their kind of work, but they actually wanted to because they loved their work (Massey 1997 p.110). Hence the particular form of masculinity to which she refers is bound up with the attachment to their jobs, which require abstract and rational thought, traits that are associated with masculinity. She suggests that the long hours reinforce the separation between 'other possible sides of life' from the abstract conceptual 'pure' mode of being, emphasising the dualism of home and work.

Conceptualising time as a resource is useful, particularly as time is made available to men by women's labour. Men can only spend more time at work if they do less domestic work at home, and as their pay increases so does their exemption from domestic sphere. Hochschild's study of an American company, *The Time Bind*, shows clearly how time is used in a competitive way among aspiring managers.

Time has a way of sorting people out in this company. A lot of people that don't make it to the top work long hours. But all the people I know who do make it work long hours. By the time people get to within three or four levels of the Management Committee, they're all very good, or else they wouldn't be there. So from that point on what counts is work and commitment (Senior executive quoted in Hochschild 1997 p.56)

There may be potential differences among men and women in their approaches to work and, in particular, senior well paid employment in management, which my survey covers. It has been argued that women do indeed lack the intensity of commitment that men have when it comes to careers (Coward 1993) although work done by DEMOS shows that the younger generation of both men and women want a balance between work and family life.(Wilkinson and Howard 1997)

The Research

The data was gathered from two large private sector organisations. The first was an airline, Airco, where five divisions were studied, Cargo, Cabin Services, Marketing, Human Resources and Finance. The second case study was an investment bank, Serco, where three divisions were studied- securities (SSEC), corporate finance, (ECFD) and fund management (SIM). A mixture of methods was used. A survey (200 questionnaires sent out, receiving a 75% response rate) provided statistical data, whilst forty five interviews with men and women managers and shadowing key managers provided rich qualitative data. The aim of the research was to explore how time was managed in the organisations, to find out whether long hours were worked and, if so, where and by whom and why? I tried to ascertain how important the hours worked were to the person and the organisation, what long hours signified and whether private lives suffered as a result. How were long hours justified? If long hours have become a characteristic of a particular job this effectively silences any opposing discourses of family commitments and work/life balance. The reasons for working long hours may be different in different businesses. Was there any evidence that women were unable/unwilling to work the same hours as men and at what level or function did this matter? Was there any evidence that the requirement of working long hours acted to exclude women managers from certain positions in the organizations? In this sense could the long hours culture be said to act as a means of closure to women managers in certain areas?

Airco

My first impression of the airline was how hard the managers worked and the questionnaire data backed this up. The management structure is two tiered with MG's (management group) and SM's (senior management). The average pay for a MG at this time was £30-35,000 and for a SM was £50,000. Whilst good enough the pay was poor compared to the other industries like accountancy or the City. Loyalty to the airline was phenomenal and staff turnover very small. People came as graduates and tended to stay moving to different divisions and different parts of the world throughout their careers. The overall average number of hours worked per day was 9.8 with a one hour differential between MG's and SM's. MG's worked an average 9.4 hours, whilst SM's worked an average 10.4 hours. It was frequently described to me as a place which was hard to leave at the end of the day. On top of these hours, 88% of all respondents took work home and 40% of these took work home two or three times per week. 79% said that the amount of hours worked infringed on their home/personal life.

Most of my interviewees saw the average day for an airline manager as 8am-6pm, although early morning meetings have become increasingly popular.

Table 1 **Divisional Breakdown of Average hours worked by Airco managers**

<u>Divisional Breakdown</u>	
<u>Division</u>	<u>Average Hours worked per day</u>
Cabin Services	10.1
Cargo	10.0
Human Resources	9.5
Finance	9.5
Marketing	10.6

Reasons for the long hours

Workload pressure was cited by most respondents as the reason for the long hours they worked. Yet there was also a philosophy that long hours showed hard work, commitment and loyalty to a company and workplace culture was often given alongside workload as a reason for the long hours. Computerisation and telephone systems like voice mail as well as the use of E-mail meant that the secretarial backup had been greatly reduced and managers were responsible for their own correspondence, meetings and memos. Technology has speeded up business and enabled managers to be contacted around the clock through e-mail and mobile phones. This makes it hard to ignore messages, or to sit on tasks. People demand an immediate response. One manager had been out of the office for two days and found seventy two e-mails waiting for him on his return. The paradox of 'time saving' technology was apparent to me in my time there. Non senior managers' diaries were computerised and everyone had access to them so if you wanted a meeting you booked it in without asking the person involved. Senior managers' time, however, was protected by their secretaries. For many of the managers the number of meetings during the day curtailed the amount of desk work they could do and so they ended up staying late to finish it. The day was punctuated, for all managers, by meetings often in different buildings around the airport site.

I usually have three or four meetings a day and often they are fifteen minutes walk away. About three quarters are necessary, the rest it is politically correct to attend. As a manager I have to go, I can't send an A7 who works for me, even if they are often the experts. (Male MG Marketing)

The airline had a culture of availability and visibility which leads people to take on too much work. No one liked to say no. Productivity is hard to measure for many of these management roles and so, possibly, the discourse of time as a measure of productivity came into play quite a bit. The twenty four hour operational nature of the airline business often meant it was hard to know when work was finished. The continuing buzz, well into the night and at weekends, meant that staying late or going in to work on a Sunday did not seem that odd. The head office is located at an airport so the non stop activity of air traffic is hard to ignore.

Organisational pressure

Some people in the airline felt that the long hours culture was introduced deliberately in the early eighties as part of the fear culture to fire up the management, which had got too comfortable in its state owned days. The former chief executive himself worked punishing hours and stories say that, in the early days of his reign, managers were expected to be prepared to do anything at a few hours notice. For instance, they might be asked at five in the evening to prepare a report for the following day. This was to keep managers on their toes. Managers also felt the need to be visible - another reason for their attendance of so many meetings. In a large complex organisation such as this it is easy to be invisible - only their presence in early morning meetings and late at night marks out a manager from a non-manager. Of course, once this cycle is in motion - expectations of both people's presence in the office and their output are raised accordingly. So, as one woman said, "If I leave at 5.30pm, my output will be a lot less than someone who is working until 7pm."

The culture of this company is work. They see it as an expectation, that people will come here, live here and die here. (Male MG Cargo)

It seems to be the culture of the company. It seems to be, if I am honest, an expectation that people, particularly if you've got to manager level, that people will work a twelve hour day. (Male MG Marketing)

Airco's ideal employee would be someone who doesn't show emotion, and who works 14 hours a day. (Male MG Finance)

Somehow this ten hour day has become the accepted working day for managers in Airco. Taken as a 'norm' work was sometimes then spread out accordingly, with time management being very poor.

I suppose knowing that I am here from 8am to 6.30pm I plan to fill that time, taking that bit extra at meetings, on telephone calls etc. (Male SM Finance)

The encouragement from organisations to work long hours quickly leads to employees competing with one another over the number of hours they work, as the following conversation heard during a meeting in Finance shows.

"What time are you in tomorrow, John ? "
" Oh, about seven ."
" You, Peter, ?"
" Oh, yes, perhaps a bit before ,"

Because everyone in Airco stays late in the office the only way of marking yourself out is by coming in very early. This presenteeism, as Professor Cary Cooper calls it, fuels itself and creates an expectation that a manager ought to be in the office early and late. The fear of missing out or being thought lazy will ensure that they all do it. One SM said, "If a manager goes home before six in the evening they can't have much to do."

Divisional Differences

Reasons for the long hours varied according to the division. The relatively short hours of the Finance division (9.5 hours) were made up of the incredibly long hours worked by line finance managers and much shorter hours worked by the tax department (many of whom were women). Line finance where accountants worked out in different divisions, on the line, worked very long hours, particularly around the time of a quarterly or annual budget. These budget periods were, I was told, the nearest finance could ever get to being operational and added a measure of urgency to the division. The result of this was absenteeism following these periods and stress in managers from overwork and lack of sleep.

We unofficially kept a league table of the people who worked the longest. The group that won were here until four in the morning. (Female SM Finance)

I'm usually in at eight and work until seven but much later if its budget time. I take work home most weekends and I'll often come in and work on a Sunday. (Female SM, Finance)

I was told that one of the reasons for long hours in central finance was that some process workers had gone but the new process management systems that were replacing them were not yet operational. Once they were in place the workload would be reduced. There seemed to be little in the way of face time here, it was sheer workload pressure which necessitated the long hours. Finance managers on the line were responsible both to their line managers and to central finance and this often caused tension and certainly added to their hours.

Cargo (10 hours) is an operational division and so this makes a start and finish to the day hard. Yet I was told that life used to be much more relaxed before the new MD arrived. He was quite a workaholic and expected a lot of his team. He set the pace for the managers, regularly organising 7am meetings. Here then, is an example of leadership as an important factor in creating a long hours culture. During a meeting about a special project one man's name was mentioned as having family responsibilities. After an awkward joke about having a creche on site, the Cargo MD spoke directly to the consultant who was outlining the project, saying, "I think you'll find that most of them are willing to work all hours around the clock." This war-like mission demanded total dedication, going beyond most people's sense of loyalty and commitment to their work. The use of battle terminology to describe the war against the unions helped create an environment in which people felt emotionally involved and were willing to make sacrifices - similar to those feelings of soldiers who are ready to give their lives for their country. Whilst sympathetic intellectually to working women, the MD showed no sensitivity to the conflict working mothers felt over long hours.

Marketing, curiously, showed the longest working day (10.6 hours) and yet it is non-operational and employs more senior women than in any other division in the airline. The reasons given to me for the long hours here were workload pressure and expectation from senior management. The head of one

area of the division, relationship marketing, was herself a mother of two small children.

I work from 8am - 6pm, and then I do one and a half hours at home in the evening. I also have two hours travelling a day. (Female SM with two children, Marketing)

I asked her whether she could do her job in fewer hours, and she said she could not, that she used up her time efficiently, always having lunch at her desk and yet still had to take work home in the evenings. It is a fast-moving division with a lot of young single people, ambitious for promotion and willing to give over a lot of their time. Deadlines for campaigns meant that people would work late into the night and come in at weekends to be ready in time.

In Human Resources there was less pressure (9.5 hours) to work such long hours than in the other divisions. It is not an operational division, requiring twenty four hour attention, and most people were working on specific projects. There was a family feel to the division, with many married women with children and the men were often described to me as family-minded men. Again, the awareness of the dangers of long hours came out of this division. Women on the fast track here took work home rather than stay in the office, a strategy I noted in many senior women throughout both case studies.

The operational nature of the division was the reason given for the long hours of Cabin Services (10.1 hours) with cabin crew coming in and out all day and most of the night.

I guess a normal day would be 8am to about 6.30pm. I also fly about once a month (to keep up with my teams) and this can go over a weekend. There are also other commitments. I work at weekends delivering the Breakthrough programme. Then you have to go to open and closed training courses, which frequently happen at weekends too. There is also the requirement to stay overnight for team meetings. (Female MG Cabin Services)

There existed a strange paradox in this division, which I found otherwise to be very accepting of women working. There was widespread acknowledgement of the difficulties working mothers had and acceptance of taking time off for family events etc. yet there was no overt challenge to the culture of long hours, one of the biggest obstacles any working mother has to face. There was also a dedication and total involvement in this division which I found less marked in other divisions.

Seniority

On average the SM's worked a full hour more each day than MG's, at 10.4 hours.

There is a feeling here that the more senior you are the more available you have to be to the organisation. (Female SM Human Resources)

This contention in itself may inhibit women with families from seeking promotion. The more senior you are the more meetings you attend. This is one of the consequences of managing up (where managers look to a senior to endorse what they are doing and decisions get pushed upwards). Senior managers were far more likely to be married and have children than their female counterparts. The vast majority of male senior managers had non-working wives, who organised home life, enabling their husbands to spend ever increasing amounts of time at work. Senior managers also had secretaries who managed their time at work for them. When I was in the managing director's office in Cargo, his secretary popped her head round the door and said

You're free from 2-3pm, this afternoon. Shall we get together? We need some quality time. (She then turned to me with a wry smile and said) I have to nag him you see..(Secretary Cargo)

When she had left the room, he said

Three people organise me, my boss (chief executive), Yvonne, my secretary and Pat, my wife. (MD Cargo)

Enjoyment of work was undoubtedly a factor in enabling these managers to work such long hours. Their loyalty and belief and desire for the airline's success made them want to work hard for it. McDowell (1997) noted the enjoyment some City workers got from their jobs and Hochschild (1997) has found that both men and women often find their work more exciting and stimulating than being at home.

Gender and time

My analysis shows that the shorter hours are worked by two groups of people in the airline, regardless of divisions - working mothers and older men. The latter may have something to do with the fact that long hours were not part of the old state owned airline culture which they would have known and also, perhaps, with the end of their career in sight and a shift in values, they were under less pressure to

work long hours. However, working shorter hours - or in reality the formal working day - was not popular with other managers. A male manager in Cargo talked of a colleague who had just returned from maternity leave and was leaving work every evening at 5.30 pm

It'll be all right if it's now and again but if it happens consistently people will get pissed off.
(Male MG, Cargo)

My findings corresponded with the Institute of Employment Research survey (2000) which showed that women with dependents were much less likely to work long hours than men living with children.

Many women in the airline adapted their routines to fit in with the long hours culture of the airline.

I start at 9.30 am, which is late but I wanted one part of the day with my daughter, and I think I knew in my heart that once you get into Airco it is difficult to get away at a reasonable time.
(Female MG, Cargo)

Taking work home was one way working mothers found they coped with the workload although they lost brownie points for not being visible.

I try to leave at 6pm but my boss on the main board has an infuriating habit of fixing meetings for 6pm and I have to attend. (Female SM, Marketing)

This woman squeezes in one and half hours work every evening at home when the children have gone to bed.

I work from 4-6am most mornings at home so that I can get home in the evening at a decent time and spend time with my son and husband. (Female MG, Finance)

Even women who were married but had no children found it hard. The woman MG in Cabin Services who was also an airline wife said she would like to go part-time so as to have more time running the household. On top of formal hours at work, many managers in the airline spent extra time for personal development, whether done alone or through work. There were many awaydays to further management skills and build teams, which were often held at weekends. Many I spoke to had studied for MBAs and personnel management exams in their own time at home. By any standards these managers all work long hours particularly when you consider that 88% of respondents took work home too. There were no obvious discrepancies between divisions as far as women with children were concerned apart from HR where family commitments were more apparent with both men and women and appeared to

be more easily accommodated. Throughout the organisation, it appeared that any flexibility of time was very much down to the individual and their relationship with their boss.

In the airline throughout all divisions, women made up 16% of Senior Managers and 25% of Management Group. In a section on home/work I had asked about marital status and children

Table No.2 Marital status and children of Airco SM's

Senior Managers	Married	Cohabiting	Children
Men	72%	10%	61%
Women	48%	14%	23%

There was a discrepancy between the percentage of male SM's who were married compared to the female SM's – 72% compared to 48% and nearly three times as many male SM's had children as female SM's. This is despite the fact that there was a very high rate of return to work after maternity leave in Airco.

A manager in HR told me that, two years beforehand, the airline had run a campaign to halt the long hours - displaying posters of family life, and telling employees that there was life outside work etc. What happened to it? No one knew. Seventy nine per cent of all respondents said that the workload infringed on their personal life and it was cited by many as one of the areas the airline could change to improve the culture for women.

Serco

Management structure at Serco was three-tiered – managers, assistant directors and directors. This company was unusual in the City because it was still owned by one family and as such enjoyed the protection of a paternalistic culture, resulting in a lower turnover of staff than is normal in the industry. The bank had a reputation for being a nice place to work (not many left in the City) but not a particularly good payer. This is entirely relative and salaries are extremely high with managers enjoying a starting salary of £60,000 per year. Again, I found managers and directors working very long hours, with a big variation in division and seniority. The average (mean) number of hours worked among the sample study was 9.9 hours per day, with people working longer hours the higher up the

organisation they were.

Table 3 **Breakdown of average hours worked by Serco managers**

<u>Level</u>	<u>Hours per day</u>
Director	10.3
Assistant Director	10.1
Manager	9.4

Reason for long hours

When the City was a gentleman's occupation days were short, particularly on Fridays when bankers and brokers would leave London to go to the country for the weekend. The Stock Exchange used to open at 10am and close at 4pm and, even fifteen years ago, people would work pretty much 9am-5pm or 9.30am-5.30pm. One of the consequences of the deregulation of the Stock Exchange in 1986 has been the lengthening of the working day as the influence of global trading is felt. This forces brokers and traders to get in early to catch the Japanese market closing and stay late to see the opening of the Dow Jones and increased competition from foreign banks have been felt. An expectation to work long hours has developed as salaries have rocketed and working long days is seen as some kind of justification for earning a fortune. There was a big divisional difference in my study with two hours between the average day of SIM, the investment management division and ECFD, the corporate finance division.

Table 4 **Breakdown of Average hours worked by Serco divisions**

<u>Division</u>	<u>Average Hours per day</u>
SIM	9.4
SSEC	10.2
IPD/ECFD	11.4

Traders and stockbrokers have the earliest start as the stock market opens at 8am, and the new chief

executive at SSEC had recently made it even earlier. Morning meetings, where analysts tell brokers any relevant news or results, now take place at 7.30am and all sales desk and analysts have to attend. If they are commenting on results the analysts will have to be in even earlier in order to prepare what they are going to say.

I get in at around seven in the morning, which is about one hour earlier than in my last job, which means leaving the house at 6.15am. I typically leave at around 6.30/7pm although if I have a set of results coming through or I am writing up notes after a trip I will be here until 8, 9, 10, even, 11pm It's all part of the new regime - the burden is on us analysts to produce more, market more. (Female analyst, Director SSEC)

SIM, the fund management arm, is much more civilised and the hours quite predictable. Although for them too the day is longer than it was fifteen years ago, the standard day of 8.30am -6.30pm was one with which most of the interviewees were happy. Their morning meeting was a sensible, lunchtime one at 12.15pm, because it was felt more important to know how the market had started in the morning and discuss the day's events. Each fund manager got on with their own work, checking their fund's performances, writing reports for trustees and talking to stockbrokers about new investments. This was the division with the most women in it.

The days in corporate finance, ECFD, started later at about 8.30am but the pressure to work long hours was more intense here than any other part of the bank. The long and anti-social hours were deemed necessary because of the arbitrary nature of the business. When a deal has to be completed, there is always a deadline. This often means that when a person is working on a transaction ie a merger or acquisition, take over or privatisation issue, they will be up all night on several occasions, as well as possibly working weekends. Also, presentations to pitch for new business have to be prepared and, as this is not core work, it is often done in the evenings and weekends. These crucial times explain some of ludicrously long hours put in periodically but they do not explain why people routinely stay in their office late in the evening. This is when the culture comes into play, where working long hours is seen as evidence of commitment in a division where there is a higher element of competition than elsewhere in the bank. Corporate Finance has always been an elitist area of the investment world and was virtually closed to women as little as twenty years ago. There are plenty of young people more than

happy to put their social lives on hold to work long hours and work their way up the ladder. The discourse of time was used by the organisation to qualify certain members and disqualify others.

I don't mind women working here as long as they put in the hours. (Male Director, ECFD)

One senior director told me

It is ludicrous for the young to work these hours and be sitting here at ten o' clock at night. On the other hand if I saw someone regularly going home at six thirty, then I'd think that he can't have much work to do and I'd better give him some more! Laughter (Male Director, ECFD)

My day starts at 8.30am and, with about one half hour for lunch, I leave at around eight o'clock - that's when I'm not busy. Otherwise I am here till midnight at least. (Female Ass Director, ECFD)

Although workload pressure was given as the main reason for the long hours, some interviewees acknowledged that there was a lot of face time put in in the evenings, and that working late was seen as a sign of commitment.

I can do this job in fewer hours. But it will be seen as not giving the commitment. Being visible is a way of drawing attention to yourself. You are noticed more by being here at ten at night than by consistently producing a good product. (Female Manager, ECFD)

Again, as in the airline, there was an element of macho competition over the number of hours worked.

"We had to do a presentation with only one week's notice recently and one chap worked 115 hours that week," said a senior ECFD director, with a certain amount of pride in his voice.

Senior directors were unconcerned about the length of the day and indeed it seemed to be useful as a way of sorting out the 'men' from the 'boys', testing their stamina and commitment. It reminded me of the way consultant doctors talk about the junior housemen and the number of hours they have to work, "we've all done it, you've just got to get through it."

The other important factor in this division was the extremely high salaries that can be earned here, which may explain why people are willing to put their home lives on continual hold to spend more time in the office. In a good year, as they have had in the past few years, a corporate finance assistant

director can expect to earn about £400,000 and senior directors who are successful in their deals can easily earn well over one million pounds. Desire for wealth then can also be one of the explanations as to why they work such long hours. There is a lot at stake, the rewards are high and plenty of others want it and will sacrifice any leisure time to have it.

Gender and time

Perhaps more than in other division, the long hours and the irregularity of the hours makes working in corporate finance very difficult for women with children. One woman director had recently left, because of the conflict of home and work.

The strain of going abroad and working at weekends was beginning to show on me and the family. (Former female Director ECFD)

This former director was an expert in a very esoteric area of finance and was a great loss to the bank, which she said did nothing to help her manage, and she now works for one of her previous bank clients two days a week whilst 'freelancing' another couple of days. The only remaining woman at director level in corporate finance was 'Superwoman', who has six children. She distinguishes herself immediately.

I am not typical, because I have children. I get in to work by 8am and then I leave as early as possible, say 6.30pm If there is an important meeting, obviously I have to stay but I try very hard for that not to happen. I will then fit my work in by getting up and working from say 4am to 7am in the morning. You do have to be bloody good. I only work in the morning like that if I have to - not for the sake of it but simply to get through the volume of work. I hate working late at night but I do if I have a deal coming to a head. But I am certainly the only one in this division to leave here at 6.30pm (Female Director, ECFD)

A manager in ECFD had requested to do shorter hours in lieu of a promotion so that she could at least see her small son in the evenings - her shorter hours were to be able to leave at 6.30pm. Permission had still not been granted. One female analyst in SSEC had a small baby.

I leave the house at 6.45 am and try to get home by 7pm I see her for five minutes in the morning and then half an hour at night but then she has to go to bed. Even if I leave at 6pm no one says anything but I know the work is there, the pressure is there, it's very subtle. Sometimes I come in at 5am to finish a report. (Female Manager, analyst SSEC)

The predictability of fund management hours makes it overtly more attractive to women with children. The MD, herself a mother of two small children, got in at 9am and left at 7pm, or earlier if she could. She felt that she needed to work those hours to get through the workload but felt that those below her could work less.

Table No 5 Marital Status and children of Serco managers.

	Married	Cohabiting	Children
Men	82% (18)	9%(2)	68% (14)
Women	67% (24)	13% (8)	40% (13)

Again as in the airline there was a much higher percentage of men who were married and had children than women, but unlike the airline most women left to have children and did not return.

Conclusion

The development of a long hours culture and its connection to some form of masculinity, derived from men's ability to draw more freely on time than women because of the domestic division of labour, can be encouraged by organisations which need their workers to take on extra workloads. It is useful to see time as a resource that men have more access to than women and it is a resource that is currently being demanded by organisations. The ability to work long hours has now become one of the most desired management attributes. The research shows this convergence of patriarchal interests (as offering something that women could not and hence a competitive edge), and organisational interests as the most elite and senior positions in both organizations demanded the ability and willingness to work very long hours.

There may also be different reasons for the long hours in different areas of work. It is an aspect of culture that is easily manipulated by senior management. Leaders' expectations forge the pattern for the working day, either by the hours they themselves work, as in the case of Cargo in Airco, or by the demands they make on their managers, as in the case of Serco's securities division. In Airco, the twenty four hour operational aspect of the business made it difficult to view work as over at the end of the day, particularly so in Cabin Services when the workforce arrives at the offices at all hours of the day and night.

Internal competition, particularly in areas of high salaries (corporate finance) can fuel the long hours culture as fear of missing out makes people stay longer and longer in the office. The long hours worked by senior directors ensures that they keep their hold on their positions. There was also the expectation in both organisations that the more senior you were, and the more you earned, the more hours you worked. The outcome is that few women with families can hold these positions. The business rationale for this was not challenged in either organisation.

There was almost universal acceptance that the long hours were an integral part of the job. In an open-ended question on ways in which the organisations could improve their culture for women, the majority of comments concerned long hours.

I don't feel I could work in a more senior position because of my family commitments and the expectations that I can work all hours, basically be on call all the time. To change we need a culture that says it's OK to work shorter hours. (Female MG, Human Resources)

The research findings suggest then that in areas of prestige and high status, e.g. the senior levels in both organisations and in corporate finance in the bank, the long hours culture may act as a form of closure to exclude women. Some women, particularly at the airline where there were fewer cultural barriers of other kinds than in the bank (see Rutherford 1999b: Rutherford 2001 forthcoming) did manage to combine families and working long hours but at great cost to themselves. They were all, without exception, tired, very stressed and felt guilty about leaving their families for so long. The study shows that far fewer senior women than men had families, suggesting that combining the two may be too difficult. Many others, like the woman in the quote above, take a look and decide not to ask for promotion. At a time when women can offer almost everything that men can in terms of ability, skills and experience, time becomes an important differentiating feature which makes men more suitable than women. The requirement of this new management characteristic – to give time- may be theorized as an act of closure blocking off otherwise attainable goals for many women.

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