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**Organizational cultures, women managers and exclusion**

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**Abstract**

The article looks at broad approaches to organizational culture and offers a brief review of some recent work on gender and organizational culture. The possibility of seeing culture as a means of closure is explored. The article also seeks to define and operationalise organizational culture in order to test the theoretical hypothesis on two case studies, and identify the ways in which aspects of culture acted to close off areas of work to women managers. The constituents of this definition are described with reference to data from two case studies, and examples of the ways in which these different constituents of culture may act as means of closure to women managers in the organizations are considered. The author suggests that the approach provides a useful starting point for further research on organizational culture and gender as well as giving a practical model for practitioners and consultants looking to develop a diversity inclusive culture.

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## **Gender and Organizational culture**

Many feminist academics have noted the existence of cultural barriers in their analyses of specific organizations<sup>1</sup>. Other writers have concentrated their efforts on decoding organizational culture for its genderness and have explored different approaches of problematising gendered cultures ((Hearn 1992; McDowell 1997; Gherardi 1995; Wacjman 1998; Maddock 1999). Catherine Itzin (1996) connects the maleness of organizational cultures to the gender inequality that exists in wider society. Alvesson and Due Billing (1994) develop a theory which incorporates discrimination into organizational cultures by showing the gender symbolism of various functions, professions and positions. They use gender as a metaphor and usefully show the variety of different cultures which may exist within one organization. Following a symbolic, interpretive approach to culture and drawing on the symbolic order of gender Sylvia Gherardi (1995) provides fascinating evidence of the gendered nature of cultures, and the ways women have to do ceremonial work to redress the gender imbalance that is caused by their moving into the public male world. Linda McDowell's Capital Culture (1997) provides rich data on gender at work in the City, seeing work as an embodied performance and as the playing out of masculinities and femininities. Maddock (1999) gives a more materialist analysis of gender and culture in public sector organizations, in her book Challenging Women. She refers to gender cultures, saying,

“Male cultures vary from organization to organization but there are common themes one of which is that .....men continue to underrate and undervalue women in general....” (p.192)

Wacjman explores many cultural issues in her book 'Managing like a Man', and asks that the material conditions of inequality are acknowledged, warning against a preoccupation with cultural processes at the expense of an analysis of the structural conditions in which cultures operated.

‘A central issue is how culture is conceptualised that is whether it encompasses institutions, roles, rules, bodies and buildings as well as how people speak and relate to each other.’ ( p53)

She is concerned that seeing everything at the level of discourse ignores the materiality of the conditions which make up women's equality at work.

Some writers have attempted to go beyond calling the culture male and try to identify some types of cultures. All the cultures in Maddock and Parkins' six point typology (1993) are readily identifiable to most people – gender blind, gentleman's club, barrack yard, locker room, feminist pretenders and the

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<sup>1</sup> Sophie Watson on the Civil Service (1990); S. Lewis on family friendly issues(1996); Amanda Martin Palmer on HM Customs and Excise 1996. Some writers discuss culture in relation to a particular organisational issue (Alimo-Metcalfe on leadership (1994); Jennifer Rubin on performance assessment (1997)

smart macho. Collinson and Hearn (1994) identified five different masculinities and link them to different management styles: authoritarianism, paternalism, entrepreneurialism, informalism and careerism. The theme running through all these masculinities is the importance of the workplace to men's identities.

In depth analyses and descriptions of male cultures give us much material to identify with, investigate further and in practice target for intervention, yet there is a distinct lack of theorizing in most of the work. Itzin (1995), Maddock (1999) and Wacjman (1998) all emphasise the need to tie in the cultural obstacles women face in organizations with the wider social devaluation and material situation of women. However there is no need to put culture on one side to do this. Whilst it is unfashionable to use overarching theories and putting women together in one group inevitably masks their many differences, the reports of continued male domination of organizational cultures and men's resistance to women's equality, makes it pertinent to consider a 'meta' theory. I think it is appropriate to conceptualise organizational culture as a means of patriarchal closure.

### **Theorising organizational culture**

Most of the managerial literature on culture refers to its inclusive properties. It refers to the intangible part of an organization, which gives it its cohesiveness. Cultures embody systems of meaning and signification. They may act a defense against the unknown and a means of providing stability eg. the role of rituals in people's lives. People form great attachment to their cultures which explains why there is always a lot of resistance to culture change. But cultures exclude as well as include. In order to conceptualise culture as a means of closure we need to see it as dynamic, as process, and as boundary-making practices. This requires linking culture to people – we speak of a male culture or masculine culture but culture is produced by people.

'While people are working they are not just producing goods and services, pay packets and careers, they are also producing culture' ( Cockburn 1991 p134)

The anthropological concept of culture has been adopted into organizational theory, yet culture has sometimes becomes totally divorced from practice and becomes instead 'shared meanings' 'values, assumptions, beliefs', residing only in the minds of employees. It is both belief and behaviour.

### **Exclusion and closure**

This research builds on the work of theorists who maintain that patriarchal exclusionary practices have marginalised and excluded women from areas of employment (Walby 1986; Witz 1992; Bagguley 1991). Some writers also noted that informal as well as formal barriers acted to prevent women's progress (Bradley 1988; Bagguley 1991) in organizations. The concepts of exclusion and segregation are still relevant and important.

Witz (1992) applies the concept of patriarchal exclusion strategies to the professions, using the Weberian concept of social closure. Weber used the term 'closure' to refer to the process of subordination whereby one group monopolises advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it which it defines as inferior and ineligible (Murphy 1988). I think it is possible to take Weber's idea of social closure and include more subtle, informal kinds of exclusionary practices. The construction of a boundary may include a cultural boundary.

Although there is good reason to believe that credentials are becoming more important in the processes surrounding the allocation of individuals to positions of organizational power, nevertheless access to 'property in positions' is still, to a considerable extent, determined by indigenous organizational culture - 'minimal exchange upon practical matters ..or .. talk containing larger proportions of discussion, ideological debate, entertainment, gossip, or personal topics' (Collins 1979 p.58) (Crompton 1987 p.421)

Crompton acknowledges Kanter's assertions that male culture tends to dominate in organizations and says that

the processes of gender exclusion, 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 of organisational positions. Research difficulties cannot be used as an excuse for ignoring these important social phenomena.(Crompton 1987 p.423)

### **Operationalisation**

Many authors writing on women in management use the concept of organizational culture without defining what they mean by it thus leaving it to the readers' interpretation (Coe 1991; Rigg and Sparrow 1993; Lewis 1997) or they import definitions from management writers without further discussion (Pemberton 1996, Itzin 1995). There seemed to be a need for further research

‘Little work has been put into identifying the values and attitudes, accepted codes and patterns of behaviour at various levels of management within organizations and industries. If change is to occur, the cultural dimensions that prevent women from reaching the top need to be identified. (Still 1994)

However the meaning, definition and impact of culture on organizations has been thoroughly discussed in the managerial literature (Schein 1985; Trompenaars 1988; Sackmann 1997; Brown 1995) although gender there has been neglected. There are a multitude of different definitions for a researcher to take but drawing on Strati (1992), like Gherardi (1995) and developed during the research, I take organizational culture to *be the symbols, beliefs and patterns of behaviour of organizational members. It is expressed in the management style, work philosophies, language and communication, dress, physical artifacts, informal socialising and temporal structuring of work, and in the gender awareness and expression of sexuality.* The background of an organization will also inform its culture. These made up my list of constituents to be researched: Background, physical artifacts, gender awareness, management style, communication and language, work ideology (home/work divide), informal socializing, time management, and sexuality. The list is not exhaustive and to some extent the researcher's interest will determine which constituents of culture will be the focus of study, but these constituents provided a blueprint for my research.

## **GENDERED ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

### **Background of organisation**

history, location, ownership, employee profile

### **Physical layout and artefacts**

decor, buildings, office layout, pictures

### **Gender Awareness**

equal opps./awareness

### **Management Style**

masculine/feminine/business

### **Work Ideology**

public/ private /work/home

### **Informal Socialising**

drinks/sport/networking

### **Time Management**

long hours

### **Sexuality**

sexualised cultures/harassment

### **Language and Communication**

metaphors, humour, meetings, talk

Obviously the boundaries of each constituent are not as definitive as I set out above, for example, sexualised language may be part of language or part of sexuality, meetings a part of communication or management style, sexual entertainment may be part of sexuality or informal socialising, but I felt it was important to keep the constituents as conceptually distinct as possible for research purposes. All these constituents of organizational culture have a direct or indirect impact on gender. By taking each constituent separately and analysing each with reference to a specific division, it becomes possible to reveal the more subtle cultural barriers to women managers.

## **Methodology**

I chose two large private sector organizations, an airline and an investment bank, for case studies. The airline had a developed equal opportunities policy and the bank barely had one at all. I used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect the data. The questionnaire was twenty three pages long and contained over one hundred questions, roughly divided into sections of the constituents I have outlined above. The order was important e.g. the section on sexuality was left to the end because I thought this may put people off at the beginning. The questionnaire data was analyzed using SSPS. My interviews reflected the same kinds of questions although they were semi-structured and I analyzed them by themes later. I also shadowed some senior staff, which gave me the opportunity to witness day to day work, particularly helpful for material on management style. The three different types of data provided a broad and rich source of information about culture in both organizations. The first case study was a large national airline, Airco, and I spent time in five divisions, Cargo, Cabin Services, Marketing, Finance and Human Resources. Using the model as a basis, I conducted twenty four semi-structured interviews with managers (eight men and sixteen women) and sent out 150 questionnaires, receiving a 72% response rate. My second case study was an investment bank, Serco, where three main divisions, broking, corporate finance and fund management were studied. Twenty managers (seven men and thirteen women) were interviewed and eighty questionnaires sent out, with the same response rate of 72%. By applying the same model to each division I was able to draw comparisons between them. The different cultural constituents from the model are now discussed, using examples from the data.

## **Background** - History, ownership, industry, geography.

No organization exists in a vacuum and manufactures its own culture. Hofstede's work gives particular attention to the importance of nationality to an organization's culture (Hofstede 1980). An organization's culture is also heavily influenced by its past and its environment. Each industry develops a culture of its own and any organization needs to be located within that. Airco's culture was influenced by the fact that it had developed out of the RAF and still carried military overtones, obviously masculine. It had been state owned and then privatised, and was still very bureaucratic. It was also heavily unionised which again informed aspects of the management style and culture,

particularly in Cargo which had a history of difficult employment relations. The culture was heavily influenced by its location an airport and so employees were constantly reminded of their business, which involved the responsibility for many peoples lives. This made work life more intense and urgent

My second case study, Serco, had been founded one hundred and fifty years ago and had been part of an elite group of eleven accepting houses – where discount bills from the Bank of England could be accepted. Traditionally a place of work for gentlemen of a certain class, this culture lingered along with the arrival of a more global fast moving and aspiring set of employees. Many of the employees came from public school and went to Oxford or Cambridge although the net had widened in recent years as the bank got bigger. Serco was still family owned and harboured paternalistic leanings towards its workforce. It is not hard to see how the above constituents of background have an indirect gendered impact. The traditional feel of the bank was formal and distinctly masculine in comparison with Airco, which had employed many women for a long time and so had never been an entirely male domain. Its former military beginnings, however, had still left traces of military life, like the importance of rank and status.

### **Physical artefacts**

Buildings and physical artefacts have a profound influence over an organization's culture (Gagliardi 1990). At Airco, the brand new Cabin Services building which resembled a modern version of the Pompidou Centre provided a glamorous backdrop to that division compared to the old corridor dark offices of the Finance division with their numbered doors. The importance of buildings to culture was illustrated by the fact that the cultural change programme in the Cargo division was focused around its new state-of-the-art cargo centre – the modern building symbolizing modern values and an end to old practices. Recently Airco has moved many of its staff to the Waterside development, a mile up the road from the airport. It gives the impression of being in an enclosed airy shopping mall, the cobbled streets providing a feel of a comfortable country market town - not so good however for those with any kind of physical disability. The centre provides dry cleaners, a gym and shops, creating an inclusive sense of belonging to employees.

Sercos was set in more opulent surroundings, a series of smart buildings in the City of London, which lent a traditional and wealthy feel to the organization's culture. Two uniformed men greeted you in the reception area. Restrained grandeur was the way I would describe the working environment. There were huge mahogany dining tables in the offices of corporate finance, the elite section of the bank, whereas the meeting rooms for the broking department were much smaller with just a coffee table. Portraits of family members hung on the walls and there was little in the way of colour. All kinds of conditions can be analysed in this section providing many clues as to the state of gender relations in the organizations. From the layout of the offices, to whether secretaries sit as gatekeepers to the important men in their private offices, to the car parking facilities and safety procedures for women working at night. Does everyone eat in the same canteen, are there flowers or plants, pictures or posters etc. etc.? All these details will impact how comfortable different groups of employees feel in their working environment.

### **Gender Awareness**

Organizational awareness of gender is a constituent of organizational culture as attitudes to gender pervade the workplace and influence the men and women who work there. What is the level of awareness around the issues of women working and is there a culture of equality? The implementation of equal opportunities policies may act as an indicator of gender awareness (Rutherford 1999). However, organizations may be gender aware without an equal opportunity policy and this would be transmitted through the attitudes expressed by men and women in the organization. This constituent deals specifically with the organizations' history of employing women, their equal opportunity policies, overt support for women from the organization, as well as men's and women's views of women managers, how women themselves are received in the workplace and whether respondents think that their organization creates a culture which encourages and nurtures women in their careers. How gender aware or in what ways is gender recognised by the organization and its employees?

Airco was overtly gender aware with a highly developed equal opportunities policy and Sercos had so far ignored gender issues. An effort to create a culture of equality, where equal opportunities are strongly backed by senior management, creates a better working environment for women (Rutherford

1999). A historically male culture, like Serco, which denies gender difference, and operates under free market mechanisms, masks gender inequality and is exclusionary to women ( Rutherford 1999). In Airco, women's grievances were channelled through the discourse of equal opportunities, and were accepted, up to a certain point, as organizational issues. In the bank there was no such available discourse and women's grievances were individualised. The hegemonic discourses of biological and psychological difference prevailed in the bank to justify the scarcity of women and this was accepted by many of the women themselves. A culture which represents women as 'naturally' wanting to be at home or 'exceptional' to work in certain areas - like corporate finance, or at senior levels or combining work and family - is exclusionary to women.

### **Management Style**

Management style is an important part of organizational culture and, as such, can be analysed to see whether, or in what ways, different management styles have any effect on women managers (Rutherford 2001a). My use of the concept management style is restricted to the manner in which the business of an organization/division is conducted. It may be identified in the decision making processes, hierarchy, reward systems, and by looking at which work attributes are most praised. It makes up one constituent of the overall organizational culture.

In the women in management literature, management style has been much debated as a possible reason for women not achieving progress on a par with men. In the years following the equal opportunity legislation, there was an emphasis on women managers' sameness to men and their real or perceived difference was regarded by some as the reason for their failure to progress. I identified a number of styles in the different divisions of my case studies and concluded that it was the business of the division that most influenced management style not the gender of the manager. However, women in the study did feel they managed differently and better than male managers but that this was not recognised by the companies. Neither was it recognised by male managers.

So management style in this study was not in itself an indicator of women's unsuitability for senior management. However, the naturalisation and hence lack of recognition of women's skills, combined with prevailing management's focus on status, visibility and networking, could be construed as a form

of closure to women managers, particularly at senior levels. In the strongly male area of Cargo, the management style was very combative and aggressive, which the few women there felt to be alien to them. Similarly in the trading division of the bank,

"It is a much riskier and tougher environment than fund management. You have to project yourself all the time in a fairly hostile environment, sell,sell,sell which is perhaps harder for women to do." Male director, Securities, bank.

So the valuing of certain styles over others may be construed as exclusionary to women who do not display those styles.

### **Long hours culture**

The concept of a long hours culture is now widely accepted and as such I include it as one of my constituents of organizational culture. At first glance time management and the long hours culture seem to be gender neutral - there are no innate talents and skills in men that cannot be matched by women- stamina and energy are equally shared out. But it has an indirect effect on women in the workplace, in as much as women still take primary responsibility for childcare and household management and thus the burden of working long hours adds to the pressure they already have managing both family and career. Organizations and their divisions can be analysed to see how what kind of hours people work and why. How important are the hours? Is it workload or just visibility and availability? A recent court case concluded that a banker should be expected to work fourteen hours a day even though she had four children because she earned a lot. In both organizations in my study, senior management worked on average one hour longer than other managers (average time for senior managers was 10.4 hours per day). There was almost a requirement of omnipresence for senior managers, which in turn set the standards for the managers who worked for them. Divisions varied as to the hours worked with the most elite division in Serco, corporate finance, working the longest hours.

I don't mind women working here as long as they put in the hours (Male director bank)

It seems to be the culture of the company. It seems to me, 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 Manager, Marketing, Airline)

It is not surprising that far fewer senior women, in both case studies, had children than did men. There

is then a convergence of this new masculinity (Massey 1997) with the interests of the organization as this aspect of culture is readily manipulated by management. Men are more likely to be able to work the long hours which are required for the most senior jobs because they do not carry primary responsibility at home. Time here can be seen as a resource to which more men than women have access to. These patriarchal interests may converge with business interests in that people supposedly work longer and are more productive.

If I leave at 5.30pm my output will be a lot less than someone who is working until 7pm  
(Female Manager, Cargo)

I suggest that the requirement and, indeed, expectation of working long hours for certain elite jobs and senior management acts a means of closure to exclude women because far fewer women than men are able to comply ( Rutherford 2001b).

### **Work Ideology -Public/Private Divide**

The purpose of including this as a constituent of organizational culture is to make visible what always goes invisible - the assumptions about the meaning of work. The separation of home (private) and work (public) may pervade an organizational culture and have an impact on men and women in different ways, both in a material sense and through the gendered representations that this dualism brings about. The public/private divide is becoming an important focus for research into gender and organizations (Massey 1997; Halford, Savage and Witz 1997; Lewis and Lewis 1996). An organization's culture indicates whether this divide is marked or being challenged, and whether it is being challenged on behalf of women only or for both women and men. The divide holds many representations of gender and ideologies which have repercussions in the workplace (Halford, Savage and Witz 1997). It has very real practical problems for women who may carry a dual burden, but it also provides a rationale for organizations to be wary and even discriminate against women - 'she's bound to be off having a baby in a few years.' It also provides men with a distinct advantage in that they are not held responsible for domestic affair (Acker 1990).

The two worlds of work and home are usually spatially and temporally dislocated, but these boundaries

are being eroded. Home has become porous as worklife seeps into it. This is particularly so for professional and managerial groups. People take work home in the evenings and at weekends, they have communication links at home, computers, faxes, e-mails and mobile phones. They are available to work even when they are at home. Yet, apart from a few workplace nurseries, the responsibilities of home life have not invaded work space.

I don't consider childcare to be an organizational issue. How people manage their family life is their own business. Obviously if there is a crisis they can take a day off or whatever but the day to day management of childcare is not an airline matter (Senior Manager Cabin Services, Airline).

Men in Airco were, on the whole, very aware of the debt they owed their wives who bought their children up single-handedly, bought their godchildren their birthday presents, did their laundry, organized their dinner parties and looked presentable at corporate dinners, but they were less ready to acknowledge that the women they worked with may have to do nearly as much themselves when they got home. All the women in my study apart from two took main responsibility for domestic matters. Many women managers took work home to do in the evenings so that they could spend a couple of hours with their children, before settling down to finish what couldn't be done in the office. Others got up early in the morning to do some work before their family had got up. As part of an organization's culture the public/private discourse can perpetuate the reality of a dual burden for women and continue to act as a rationale which makes it more fitting that men dominate senior organizational life than women, who in the back of many men's minds really belong somewhere else. In this way it can be seen to contribute to closure to women managers.

### **Language and Communication**

Language and communication are important aspects of culture, containing a wealth of information about social meanings (Bate 1990). There are three kinds of language prevalent in organizations - military language, sports language and sexual language. None of these feature in women's everyday language. Whilst the use of sports and military language is not in itself offensive to women, women may find their use alien. References to sport and sporting metaphors are often used as short cuts to convey meanings, some of which may be lost to those unfamiliar with the sport. Sports language is also

used as a communicating mechanism for men. So men can exclude their female colleagues from personal networks and informal communication systems by, for example, talking endlessly about sports.

Meetings were an important part of Airco's airline managers' day. More women (70%) than men (50%) felt that they were not listened to enough. One senior woman had been in the Cargo division for seventeen years and was widely respected. The new managing director of the division had brought in some new men.

I've never felt uncomfortable before, but now I do. The new arrivals resent my presence and do not draw on my expertise, even though they must know I can help them. They talk at meetings as though I'm not there, it's very awkward. (Female senior manager Cargo).

I witnessed a couple of meetings in Airco's finance division during which the only women present were ignored throughout. Harlow, Hearn and Parkin (1995) have written about the ways in which men can harass and bully women through silence.

In the City the language has more sexual overtones than anywhere else in business. If women want to take part in the business they have to use the language too because there isn't an alternative. Stocks are sexy or dogs, companies flirt with each other, touch up, get into bed with each other etc. etc. Such is the power of hegemonic discourse that no one stops to examine the language which is accepted without objection by both men and women. Humour is another aspect of communication and may tell an outsider quite a lot about the prevailing culture. In the bank women had to laugh at men's sexist jokes but if they talked in a similar vein themselves it was considered distasteful. Cockburn (1991) says that humour can include women and then marginalize them.

The language is pretty bad and I have to put a stop to it at times. I don't mind them discussing women in the way they do - as long as it's not directed at me. You do need a sense of humour and a thick skin. (Female manager, Securities)

Leadership is vital in establishing modes of communicating and in setting the tone of the organizational language. The unconscious or conscious use of sports, sexual and military language marginalises

women. Men's domination at meetings silences and excludes women.

I feel excluded from social activities like golf and also it was partly conversation, partly values, dialogue and debate about issues that I really didn't share the same assumptions. Nothing that I believe anybody was deliberate about but it made life very isolating. (Female manager Cargo).

### **Informal Codes of Behaviour and Socialising**

Informal networks and their exclusionary power are an important area when studying an organization's culture and its impact on women (Marshall 1984; Rigg and Sparrow 1994; Cockburn 1991). In her study of women managers, Trudy Coe (1992) found that the greatest barrier to women in management was the existence of a 'men's club'. It is therefore important to investigate the reasons for informal networking and socialising and the ways in which these may directly or indirectly exclude women. For the purposes of operationalisation for my research I broke down aspects of informal life into the following - networking, mentoring, socialising after hours (including forms of sexual entertainment), both corporate and with colleagues, and sport. In this way it is possible to gauge the ways in which managers may use informal channels to further their careers, see how important this form of networking is and to examine the potentially exclusionary aspects of this side of work life. Failure to be included in the informal networks of an organization means exclusion from a wealth of potential business information and client contact, and can have severe consequences on career progression as well as isolation and personal distress. The importance of informal life at work is often not really felt until a person reaches a senior position and it is very hard for a woman to research because so much of it goes on behind the scenes. Women managers are very often unaware of their exclusion.

When entertainment of business customers took place I was never invited. Looking back, I can see how many things I was excluded from - the golf days, the dinner parties, the after-work socialising, clay pigeon shooting. Hilary Williams, (ex-director of British Gas after successfully suing them for sex discrimination.<sup>2</sup>)

Informal exclusion is powerful and hard for women to complain about because each example sounds trivial but, added up, the whole picture is one of most women being excluded from a primary organization communication system. My research evidence suggests that informal socialising may act as a means of closure at particular points in organizations. The promotion of explicitly masculinist

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from an interview with Sarah Rutherford in *Towards Equality*, April 1994

activities like male sports, freemasonry (Cargo), sexual entertainment (trading at the bank) excludes many women.

It still appears a boy's club with younger men being more readily accepted into the network of more successful older men by a shared interest in sport. (Female Manager Cargo, Airline)

At the more senior levels of management, informal entertaining with other senior managers and their wives may be more problematic for senior women managers, whether they are single or have partners. Managers need time to socialise and this is harder for women with families, as evidenced by the fact that more women than men felt constrained by domestic responsibilities.

No, I won't do any entertaining and I think my clients accept that. At the end of the day they come to me for advice not entertainment, someone else can do that. (Female Director, Corporate Finance, Bank and mother of four children)

### **Sexuality**

Some authors have been investigating the link between sexuality and organizational culture (Hearn and Parkin 1987; Gherardi 1995; Itzin 1995; Cassell and Green 1996; McDowell 1997). However instead of talking of an organizational sexuality (Gherardi 1995) or the sexuality of an organization (Burrell and Hearn 1989), I choose to theorise sexuality as part of an organization's culture for the purpose of this study and use the term sexualised culture as well as sexual harassment. That sexuality may be embedded in an organization's culture in the same way as gender is recognised.

Male managers with female subordinates may use sexuality, harassment, joking and abuse as a routine means of maintaining authority. This may be thoroughly embedded in the taken-for-granted culture of the organisation. (Hearn and Parkin 1987 p.93)

I include sexuality in my list of cultural constituents and see it as a resource on which men may or may not draw as necessary in order to dominate/control/marginalise women. As one site of male domination (Walby 1990) sexuality is controlled and defined by men (Pringle 1989; Adkins, 1995). I kept the concept of sexual harassment analytically distinct from sexualised culture, as the research shows that the former may occur in both sexualised and relatively unsexualised cultures.

The sexuality in organizations, that has been surrounded by silence for so long, has been a male defined heterosexuality - some would say a compulsory heterosexuality (Adkins 1995). Initial interviews in Airco alerted me to the fact that heterosexuality was not always the dominating sexuality, so I included the question - "Is there a presumption of heterosexuality in your department?" in my questionnaire for both case studies. Constituents of sexuality which I deemed to be tangible enough to capture through questions included sexual humour in the workplace, swearing and the use of sexual metaphors in organisational language. Other indicators of a sexualised culture may be the dress of the workers and the physicality of the workplace. By this I do not just mean pin-ups of page three girls but other indicators that the organisation may encourage the expression of sexuality, rather than aim to repress it. Two contrasting examples may be a public library and a Soho advertising agency. In this sense I used Gagliardi's (1990) ideas about architectural symbols. This was to capture the overt sexual overtones of the business environment. Management of sexuality has been an important acknowledgement in the lives of women managers (Sheppard 1989) so I asked respondents whether they dressed so as to avoid unwanted sexual attention, whether comments were made on dress and whether these were objected to.

In my findings I found that the ways in which women were permitted to express their sexuality were very limited. "If you flirt you are dead" was one senior woman's response. Many women (37%) dressed specifically so as to avoid attracting sexual attention. I also found that women and men did enjoy relationships at work, and some had married people from the same organization. A high number of gay men in Cabin Services gave me the opportunity to compare this culture with the others where employees were presumed heterosexual. The effects were wide-reaching both on how the women felt working there - they were freer to express their own sexuality and Cabin Services had the highest percentage of women who thought that the organization provided a culture which nurtured women's progress - but also on the management style, which was very 'feminine' and person centred.

Which kinds of sexualised aspects of an organization constitute some form of closure to women managers? The degree to which a division is overtly male-defined heterosexual is important. Women found it hard to work in a department where the air was blue with dirty jokes and bad language. Some of my findings would undoubtedly constitute sexual harassment, but the women who worked there

attributed the language and behaviour to the job not the men. Most of my respondents thought of sexual harassment as one man harassing one woman privately. I asked specifically about sexual harassment incidents and was surprised at the high rate reported. (30% of all women reported having been sexually harassed on more than one occasion). Aggressively heterosexualised cultures are undoubtedly exclusionary to women yet individual harassment may occur in the most 'feminine' of cultures. Indeed in Airco the highest rates of sexual harassment occurred in the Marketing department where the senior managers were nearly 50% women. None of my respondents had reported any incident of harassment, despite nearly all of them having experienced recurring incidents. The cultural conditions which made reporting the incidents worse than the harassment itself are an indicator of the fact that women were not accommodated within the organization.

### **Conclusion**

This approach to gender and culture is by no means meant to be exhaustive and each research project will necessitate its own particular changes. But it is hoped that by incorporating gender into the heart of organizational culture, it shows that there is no level at which gender is not somehow implicated and by breaking down culture into different constituents it is possible to reveal the particular ways in which cultures may in fact marginalise and exclude women. Divisional analysis is vital and this may provide some explanations as to why women fare better in some areas of organizations and not others. It can be of no coincidence that there are fewer women in the most prestigious, powerful and elite areas of organizations. These cultural barriers are hard to identify but that is no reason for them to go unrevealed or unresearched. As well as aiming to develop a practical approach for research, I wanted to pull the many different barriers excluding and marginalising women managers in organizations together under the umbrella of a feminist theory of patriarchal closure.

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