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Chronic Presenteeism: The Multiple Dimensions to Men' s Absence from Part-Time Work

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Abstract

While there is considerable debate in the popular press about the changing roles of men and women, labour force statistics suggest that there has been little change in the work patterns of men and women. Despite the increasing availability of part-time work, men in professional and managerial roles are not considering part-time as an option for them. Rather there are increasing organizational pressures for men to be working long hours in the paid workforce. In this paper, men's absence from part-time work is considered from a multidisciplinary perspective. Factors operating at the individual, social and organizational levels are identified and explored in terms of their impact on men's working patterns. A model is presented that characterises men's absence from part-time work as a result of the mutually reinforcing nature of these factors.

Key words: part-time work, gender, masculinity

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'My little boy will give up his afternoon sleep soon. He will go to bed earlier at night and I will never see him then. That leaves an hour or so in the morning, up to six days a week. This was not supposed to happen to me. I was supposed to be a new kind of father, to be riding a generational wave of change that took me away from the 1950s absent dad phenomenon. But that notion has gone the way of the paperless office.'

(Bachelard, 2001: 22)

This moving excerpt from an article by a new dad, Michael Bachelard, bemoaning the lack of time with his son was part of a recent series on work and family issues published in a national newspaper in Australia. In the article, Bachelard describes the pressure he faces to conform to the time demands of his professional role as a journalist, with an apparent unquestioning acceptance of these demands. His obvious anguish highlights the dilemma many professional and managerial men face in a society in which we often talk about the changing roles of men and women, but where we see little change in the actual roles within the family and workplace for men and women. While part-time work is often espoused as a means by which working parents can negotiate the time commitments of their work and family roles (Napoli, 1994; Glezer and Wolcott, 2000), it seems that men, especially men in professional and managerial roles, are not considering part-time work as an option for them. Just as the father speaking above seems to take as given that

there is no choice for him in his unrelenting work schedule, the labour force statistics would suggest this is a widespread phenomena.

Despite the increasing flexibility apparent in the labour market, women continue to dominate the ranks of part-time work and men are still more likely to work full-time than part-time. In the Australian context, full-time workers are defined as working more than 35 hours a week, while part-time workers are defined as employed people who work less than 35 hours per week (ABS, 2001). From 1991-2001, the number of people employed part-time increased by more fifty per cent to reach 2.6 million (ABS, 2001). The increase in the availability of part-time work has been attributed to restructuring within the Australian economy and in particular the relative growth in service industries, the deregulation of the workplace and the adoption of new technologies (ABS, 2001).

While men's proportion of part-time employment has increased over the past decade from 23.5% to 28.8%, the median age for men working part-time is 15-24, while for women it is 35-44. There appear to be quite different patterns between men and women in seeking part-time employment, with the largest proportion of men working part-time being found in the younger age group where part-time employment is often used as a source of short-term jobs while participating in full-time and part-time education (ABS, 2001). A larger proportion of male part-time workers would prefer to work full time than female part-time workers (ABS, 2001). Baxter (1998: 274), in her analysis of part-time work in Australia contends that 'male part-time workers are less likely to be married and less likely to have children compared to male full-time workers'.

The Australian statistics are consistent with those cited by Hakim (2000) who claims that the rise in part-time work among men in Europe is because of the significant growth in student employment and the increasing number of older men taking early retirement and working part-time to supplement their pension. Delson (1998), in his review of men's part-time work in OECD countries, also cites the U-shape nature of men's part-time work patterns, with above average proportions of men working part-time in the 15-24 and over 55 age groups.

In the occupations in which men have traditionally dominated, for example, management, part-time work is not a common practice. Less than 2% of the management jobs in the private sector are part-time jobs (ACIRRT, 1999). In fact, managers and professionals are working longer hours of work. While the standard hours of work in Australia are between 35 and 40 hours per week, in 1999 half of all managers and professionals were working 49 or more hours per week and a further quarter were working between 41 and 48 hours per week (ACIRRT, 1999).

While there has been considerable debate about why women choose part-time work (e.g. Hakim, 1995; Blossfeld & Hakim, 1997) or why they are confined to part-time work (Gin, Arber, Brannen, Dale, Dex, Elias, Moss, Pahl, Roberts & Rubery, 1996), little has been written about men's apparent inability to access part-time work. In this paper, the working patterns of men and women are considered, not in the light of the traditional question of 'why do women do part-time work?' but in terms of 'why don't men do part-

time work?'. As such, the normal is being problematised (Beechey & Perkins, 1987). To answer this question, in this paper I am focusing on the experiences of men in professional and managerial roles, not because they are the only ones for whom the question is relevant, but to contain the discussion to a manageable degree.

If one is willing to think in a multidisciplinary way, there is scope to mine a rich vein of literature and ideas (Collins, 1998; Tannen, 1998). Taking this view, in this paper I consider the issue of why men in professional and managerial roles do not do part-time work from a number of perspectives, including sociology, feminist psychoanalysis, organizational theory and economics. These are not the only perspectives that are useful in considering the issue, but they do reflect the disciplines that have factored most strongly in my teaching and research in a business school. From my reading, the factors identified as influencing men's capacity to access part-time work can be categorised into common levels: at the individual level, at the social level and at the organizational level.

While I discuss each of these in turn, and for the convenience of presentation, in somewhat discrete terms, I am not under any illusion that these categories are completely independent. Rather, as depicted in Figure 1, the interconnections are real and are explored in the discussion as mutually reinforcing processes. In effect, the model as presented in Figure 1 represents an application of Fagenson's (1993) 'gender-organization-system' (GOS) theory which examines the status of men and women in organizations through the complex interaction of the individual, the organization and the social. Two assumptions that underpin the GOS theory are that an individual and her/his

organization cannot be understood in isolation from the society in which she/he works and that when the individual, the organization or the system in which they are embedded changes, other components will change too.

I also argue that there are economic forces impacting on each of these levels of analysis which reinforce traditional working patterns for men and these, too, need to be considered when seeking to understand men's absence from part-time work.

Insert Figure 1 here

It is only when we consider the individual, social and organizational factors together that we can more fully appreciate the impediments to changing working patterns for men and why men appear to suffer from 'chronic presenteeism'.

Before embarking on the three levels, individual, social and organizational, it is important to foreground the constructed nature of gender stereotypes as these underpin much of the discussion that follows. Masculinity and femininity are relational concepts, with the meaning of one derived in relation to the other, and as a cultural opposition (Connell, 1995). It has been well-established how gender constructions of masculinity and femininity dictate appropriate roles for men and women, and how these conform to a private/public split (Marshall, 1986; Schein, 1973). Briefly, relations between men and women are frequently shaped by predefined stereotypes and images as to how they are expected to behave. In Table 1 some of the more common traits traditionally associated

with being male and female in Western society are presented. The cultural opposition to which Connell (1995) refers is clearly evident in such a presentation.

Insert Table 1 here.

According to traditional gender roles and stereotypes men are given the primary role of breadwinners (work orientation) while women are responsible for nurturing children and maintaining the home (family orientation). This is not to say that stereotypes necessarily reflect reality. Rather, stereotypes represent culturally shared beliefs about what individuals will be like and, in a prescriptive sense, what they should be like. Clearly, as these stereotypes have been challenged, they are in flux, but expectations about appropriate roles are slow to change and these stereotypes exert considerable influence on our expectations about appropriate roles for men and women (Schein, 1994).

Individual level

To understand men's absence from part-time work from the individual level, I consider the self and identity as fundamental to the investigation. The notion of self is a highly contested domain. Hypotheses about the nature of the person, or the self, have been the focus of considerable attention by a diverse range of thinkers for centuries (see Casey, 1995 for a review of the various discourses of the self). In order to incorporate elements of the self as fundamental to our understanding of men's resistance to part-time work, I necessarily base it on my own notions of 'self'. While there are those who view the self

as a structured cognitive system with a core of ‘hard-wired’ mechanisms, my own position is one that takes the self more as a process of historical, cultural and institutional constituent elements that are mediated through internal processes (c.f. Casey, 1995).

It is often suggested that there are clear sex differences in identity formation and self-concept. In particular, various writers (Chodorow, 1974; Gilligan, 1982; Marshall, 1986; Benjamin, 1988) have observed that women have a greater social orientation than men and have sought to explain these differences by a variety of means. While mass generalisations about women’s and men’s psyches reaffirm stereotypes and leave me feeling very uneasy, there is some merit in canvassing these arguments as they can provide some insight into many men’s incapacity to access part-time work.

In considering the level of the individual or self, I start at a somewhat controversial point, feminist psychoanalysis – and in particular, Nancy Chodorow’s work on the reproduction of mothering. The reification of mothering underpins much of the discussions surrounding parenting and subsequently men’s and women’s division of time between the private and the public spheres. While Chodorow’s work was first published in the 1970s, and has not escaped its share of criticism (Connell, 1987), it has recently been re-released (Chodorow, 1999). As Casey (1995) notes, feminist psychoanalysis has been rejected or disputed by other factions in empirical self-psychology as being reductionist. Nonetheless, in cultural criticism the distinctions feminist psychoanalysts observe between men and women continue to provide important insights into contemporary social life. Chodorow’s work deserves attention at two levels when trying to understand

gendered patterns of employment. The first level relates to Chodorow's analysis of typical aspects of many women's and men's psychic life. The second relates to how Chodorow's reflections on motherhood reinforce the gendered divisions in parenting roles.

Chodorow's analysis leads to a character typology, based on a fundamental distinction between femininity and masculinity. She argues that because they are primarily parented by women, men and women develop differently constructed selves and they experience their gender and gender identity differently. Because of their early relationship with their mother, girls grow up with a sense of self continuous with others: 'The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world' (Chodorow, 1989: 184). From having been mothered by women, women develop with 'relational capacities and needs, and psychological definition of self-in-relationship, which commits them to mothering' (Chodorow, 1989: 184).

In contrast, as a reaction to having been mothered by women, men develop a self more strongly based on denial of relations and connection and on a greater need for separateness: 'the basic masculine sense of self is separate' (Chodorow, 1989: 184). Connell (1987: 202) provides a neat summary of the distinction Chodorow makes between girls and boys: 'girls grow up with less sharply defined boundaries of the self and a greater need for emotional completion in relationships, boys with more clear-cut ego boundaries and a greater need for separateness'.

Gilligan (1982) used Chodorow's concepts of attachment and separation to delineate the different modes of self-definition of men and women. Her research revealed gender differences in experience and understanding of the relationship between self and other. These differences were reflected in self-descriptions. Women reflect their sense of identity primarily in terms of their connection to others, for example helping, supporting and not hurting others. She claims that while women develop empathy, men emphasise their sense of separateness as opposed to their sense of 'being' in relation to others. Men derive their sense of identity by differentiating themselves from others in terms of abilities and attributes.

Such psychoanalytic inspired readings of men and women have been criticised as taking a monolithic approach to personality development and not taking into account difference by race or class (Britton, 2000). As well, Connell (1987) argues that such approaches assume a fairly straightforward displacement of affect from individual family figures in childhood to whole categories of people in later life. While recognising the legitimacy of such criticisms, it seems to me that Chodorow's explanation can, to paraphrase Britton (2000), suggest the 'motor' for many of the processes described by theorists of gendered organizations. As far as it represents a splitting of one's priorities, and a recognition of the interdependence of others, *part-time work just doesn't come into men's psyche, whereas it does come into women's*. Clearly, this position can be criticised as a vast generalization. Furthermore, Chodorow's account of men's psychological development is very much bound by time and context and a well-established critique of this exists. But, I contend that insofar as most men in management positions in Australia have come

from backgrounds where mothers stayed at home and looked after the babies/children; and men went 'out' to work, the sociological effects of this context cannot be deemed irrelevant.

Writers such as Fried (1998), Crompton (1997) and Marshall (1986) also highlight the different approaches taken by men and women to handling the separation of the public and private in their lives. For example, Fried's (1998: 80) work on parental leave provides some examples of how men tended to self-report 'compartmentalising' of their lives (and saw this as a good thing). 'I think I can compartmentalise things pretty easily...'. Similarly, Crompton's work on the differences between men's and women's responses to teleworking could be seen as reflecting the gendered perspectives on independence: 'Men value the personal autonomy that working at home brings while women value its domestic flexibility' (Crompton, 1997: 40).

While not writing from a feminist psychoanalytic perspective, Bakan's (1966) work on the strategies of agency and communion, which is taken up by Judi Marshall (1986) in her book, *Women Managers: Travellers in a Male World*, reflects on similar distinctions between men's and women's personalities. Rather than the negative connotations of independence and interdependence others have used to explain women's and men's apparent differences, Marshall (1986) re-visioned agency and communion to reflect a positive valuing of each strategy. Marshall (1986) sees some merit in explaining male-female relationships in terms of distinguishable strategies with which individuals respond to fundamental issues of existence.

Marshall (1986: 65) proposes 'agency and communion as twin styles that individuals use to resolve core dilemmas of existence: those of 'being and not-being' and of independence versus interdependence ... Agency is the expression of independence through self-protection, self-assertion and self-expansion; communion the sense of being 'at one' with other organisms. The agentic strategy's main aim is to reduce tension by changing the world about it; communion seeks union and cooperation as its way of coming to terms with uncertainty. Whilst agency manifests itself in focus, closedness and separation, communion is characterized by contact, openness and union'. The parallels between agency/independence and communion/dependence are highlighted by Marshall (1986).

Marshall (1986: 71) further notes that social norms value more highly the characteristics associated with masculinity; for instance a strong sense of identity, self-esteem and confidence. These evaluations have significantly influenced social definitions of 'healthy' human development. Independence is 'good', dependence is 'bad'. In her re-visioning of agency and communion, Marshall reframes the expression of communion, the interdependent principle, in a more positive tone. This remains the exception rather than the rule as we shall see in the later analysis of social factors.

The second level at which I think it is important to consider the significance of Chodorow's work relates to the claims that Chodorow's account has some role to play in perpetuating the official discourses around 'proper' mothers. In that sense, her work

reinforces the notion that women should be looking after children and that has repercussions for women's own sense of their role. In reflecting on men's and women's senses of self, Chodorow's work reinforces the social roles of mothering and feeds into the ideology of the 'good' mother – one who is present for her children; a role which full-time work limits. The collective social arrangements and organizational practices are constructed by such discourses. Men's absence from the family role because of work commitments is framed by such discourse as unproblematic. For instance, the expectation that men are the breadwinners of the family takes as given that the role of 'provider' is what men should be.

Economic influences

The impact of economic issues must also be recognized as a factor operating at the individual level to influence men's working patterns. In most instances of part-time work, it is not possible to earn enough from part-time work to sustain oneself and dependents. As Rubery (1998) notes, the standard full-time employment contract establishes the basis of the standard of living within society. According to Beechey and Perkins (1987) we should not lose sight of the constructed nature of jobs. Part-time work has been constructed as a way for companies to save money, not to provide living wages. While this issue will be taken up further in the section on organizational factors, the impact of this on men's capacity to access part-time work cannot be ignored. In light of the prescriptive nature of gender roles, and the social expectations that men are or should be breadwinners or providers, the pressure for men to work in a full-time capacity to

support a family – or have the capacity to, even if they are not parents – is a powerful force. As well, Moss and Deven (1999) note that the higher earnings of most men relative to their partners means that families lose more financially if the male parent rather than the female parent takes leave. The income differentials between women and men are then reinforced by women's absence from the labour market for family reasons. When a woman re-enters the paid work arena this is often as a part-timer earning less than before the birth of the child. As Rost (1999: 254) claims '(t)hrough this process, the man's role as the primary breadwinner becomes more pronounced'.

Social Level

An important element of any discussion about organizational behaviours, including work patterns, is the placing of the organization in the broader context of social norms and recognising how organizational practices and behaviours observed within organizations both reflect and construct these. Organizations do not operate in a vacuum and must be considered within the wider society they inhabit and interact with (Collins, 1998). To understand the relative absence of men in part-time employment, another useful site to explore concerns the prescriptive nature of gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes prescribing appropriate behaviours

Gender stereotypes define our culturally agreed-upon notions of gender-appropriate (and gender inappropriate) behaviours and traits. These notions have been reflected in the

gendered division of labour within the home and are constantly reflected and constructed in popular culture. As well, they flow through the educational and employment choices and prospects of men and women (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). As noted by Marshall (1986) in discussing men's proclivity for agency, in the public sphere - and in particular the world of paid work - traits associated with males tend to be more highly regarded than traits associated with females (Heilman, 1997). Being strong, **independent** and prepared to take risks is viewed much more favourably in the public sphere than the feminine images of being **dependent**, weak and easily influenced.

While there is a great deal of individual variability in what people believe and how strongly they believe it, studies have shown that females are more likely to question the culturally prescribed stereotypes than males (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). Further, it has been argued that the male stereotype seems to be more rigid than the female stereotype and that men deviating from their expected roles will be judged more harshly (Harriman, 1996). This not only holds when boys act in a 'sissy' fashion, but when men choose to place greater importance on 'family' life rather than their paid work (Hochschild, 1997; Wright & Sheridan, 1998). In reporting on research done in the European context, Moss and Deven (1999) highlight how many fathers fear the effects on their careers of taking leave to care for their children as they anticipate the negative reactions of managers and peers. There is much anecdotal evidence in Australia to demonstrate how male parents are ostracised from play groups by the female parents as the men are seen as being in some way deviant (Petre, 1998).

It seems that males view the culturally prescribed male stereotype as highly desirable. Males especially want to possess those traits and attributes that are considered stereotypically masculine. Schein's work on male = manager has been particularly useful in showing how tightly men cling to the prescribed stereotypes (Schein, 1973; Schein, Mueller & Jacobson, 1989; Schein, 1994). If the costs of not conforming to the masculine stereotypes are so high and masculine traits are more highly valued, this is hardly surprising. As the father, Michael Bachelard, cited in the opening paragraphs further notes in his reflections on his absence from his son's daily routines,

‘there are big rewards for working long hours as a journalist. My job gives me immense satisfaction, a regular pay cheque, a place in the social order and, at its best, the feeling that I am making a difference’. (Bachelard, 2001: 22)

As Collinson and Hearn (1996) note, in a gender, hierarchical and class sense it is professional men and men in management, who most closely resemble hegemonic masculinity. It is the successful claim to authority that marks hegemony (Connell, 1995). For Bachelard (2001) the ‘place in the social order’ marks his hegemonic status. Individual men who seek to challenge such cultural norms find themselves in a precarious and isolated position (Kirton and Greene, 2000), unless they are already ‘successful’ and can reflect on their lives from a distance. In the 2002 Business Review Weekly dedicated to the 200 richest people in Australia, Ted Lustig a property developer, was identified as being worth \$265 million and quoted as saying when he reached 80 years of age, ‘Prosperity has robbed me of so much time – time to learn, time to reflect, especially time with my family’ (Business Review Weekly, 2002: 99).

Economic rationalism

Another factor operating at the social level that has had a profound impact on Australian organizational practices and opportunity structures for men and women concerns the dominant discourse of economic rationalism which has bred a 'cult of efficiency'. John Ralston Saul has written of this reification of economic rationalism and its accordant cost to a civil society from a Canadian perspective, which has struck a chord in Australia (Saul, 1995). With increasing globalisation, there has been a significant impetus in debate at the macro level for business to become more 'efficient' (ACIRRT, 1999).

It is argued that if Australia is to survive in the global economy then organizations need to 'flex up' to become more efficient; that is, labour rigidities that hampered an organization's capacity to respond must be removed - such as limits to the proportion of a workforce that can be part-time, or the minimum number of hours worked (Heiler, 1998). While Australia has traditionally had a fairly regulated labour market, the current dominance of economic rationalism has resulted in an increasingly deregulated labour market over the past ten years. Simultaneously, the traditional patterns of employment have been affected by the increasing significance of the service sector as an employer of Australian labour (Donaldson, 1996). The distinguishing feature of services is that the output is consumed at the point of production; a service can't be stored. The capacity of part-time workers to provide flexibility to meet peak scheduling demands is one of the most frequently cited reasons by employers for the use of part-time workers (Barling & Gallagher, 1996; Baxter, 1998). Facilitating the meeting of demand for services has been

a significant motivating factor for moves to greater labour flexibility. As such, part-time work has become widely available, but in occupations and industries which have traditionally been dominated by women and which are characterised by low wages and poor promotion prospects (Bennett, 1994; Barnes & Fieldes, 2000).

The jobs that are being created in this more 'flexible' format to meet business goals of numerical flexibility are not being created in the traditional sites of masculine power. The jobs in the senior levels of organization are not changing (Junor, 1998). Longer working hours and availability on the employer's terms are required from those seeking to advance in the corporate setting, as evidenced by the opening quote by Bachelard (2001). While shorter hours and temporary work are offered as flexibility, these are commonly based on casual conditions with little prospect of career advancement or income security (Garnsey & Rees, 1999; Baxter, 1998).

Management jobs, constructed as they are around notions of commitment to the organization, have not been part of this 'flexing up' process. The role of management has been reified; it has been constructed as being too important to be done 'part-time'. Men and women in management, rather than reducing working commitments in the more 'flexible' organizations, report greater time requirements (Heiler, 1998; ACIRRT, 1999).

A perennial problem in management is how to measure performance. Consequently we have seen the proxy of 'face time' come into play within organizations. The assumption is often made that someone must be 'performing' if they are working long hours. Within

organizations myths develop around, for instance, the all-nighters that have to be put in – very much in the tone of ‘heroic’ behaviours. As Simpson (1998) suggests, endemic ‘presenteeism’ now characterises many organizational cultures. Given that studies have shown a decline in the quality of performance with length of hours (Heiler, 1998; Simpson, 1998), the logic of this remains hard to fathom if we don’t appreciate the gendered construction of this assumption. Such an assumption reflects a normalising of men’s working patterns and a devaluing of women’s working patterns (which have traditionally encompassed fewer hours than men’s).

Organizational level: practices acting as a disincentive to part-time work

Gender, as an organizing principle within organizations, was not well-recognised by organizational theorists until the 1980s. Organization theory has traditionally neglected gender as employees have been viewed either from a supposedly gender neutral (masculine) perspective or from a point of view that considers only the male employees as interesting. Only through analyses by feminist researchers has it become apparent that male genderedness is a fundamental structuring principle within organizations (Calas & Smircich, 1992; Burton, 1991; Kanter, 1977) and that organizations are saturated with male values.

Writers such as Acker (1990; 1998), Calas and Smircich (1992), Cockburn (1991), Crompton (1997), Beechey and Perkins (1987) and Fondas (1997) have been able to constitute a powerful critique of abstract, gender-neutral organizational theory for its

failure to represent what actually happens in and between organizations. Over a relatively short space of time, writers in this domain have generated a substantial amount of knowledge pertaining to:

‘the gendered structures of organizations, the practices and policies that perpetuate unequal power, rewards and opportunities, the interpersonal interactions that confirm and recreate gendered patterns, and the ideologies that support these processes’. (Acker, 1998: 195)

In particular, many studies have shown how reward systems and job evaluation systems privilege masculine traits and men’s working patterns (Steinberg, 1995). Maier (1999) labels this gender substructure of organizations as corporate masculinity.

The construction of the ‘normal’ working day is a good example of the previously taken-for-granted assumption of a gender neutral practice being reconstructed as saturated with male values. The normal organization of hours can be regarded as normal insofar as we do not question the gender orientation that sustains that ‘normality’ (Calas & Smircich, 1992). Men’s working patterns, with their assumption of a stay-at-home wife looking after the domestic sphere, have overwhelmingly influenced what is now taken as given as the time requirements of the ordinary job (Halford, Savage & Witz, 1997). That full-time work is seen as normal reflects men’s working patterns and is built into job evaluation systems (Crompton, 1997). The organization of work helps to recreate the gendered divide between paid work and unpaid family reproductive work, consigning the latter, and women, to a subordinated and devalued position as practice and belief privileges the

demands of the work organization over the demands of the rest of life (Acker, 1998). In light of the unequal domestic responsibilities of men and women, women have been unable to participate in the paid workplace in the same manner as men; and their participation of fewer hours has been defined as inferior, a common outcome of the tendency to polarise. Organizational practices have thus evolved around the 'normal' working week - read 8am to 6pm, 5 days a week.

What Acker (1998) refers to as the gender substructure is not just ideological, but is manifested and reproduced through the apparently gender neutral practices and activities of doing the work of organizing, including the specification of work tasks, responsibilities, coordination of activities, wage setting procedures, promotion processes, performance assessments etc. A 'career' person, by (current) definition can not be part-time. Part-timers, in not working as many hours as full-time colleagues, are perceived as less committed to their work and hence less deserving of opportunities for career progression. As Hochschild (1997: 93) recounts in her analysis of Amerco, the informal script of the organization undermines the legitimacy of part-time work: 'part-time, as its name implied, was only part of a whole. To work part-time was to renege on an agreement to do a whole, complete job.' How these organizational values impact on individuals can be seen in the words of Bachelard (2001: 22):

'I made a vow that I would be different – available. I was there at Alex's birth. I took three weeks of (annual) leave to settle him home. But now I am absent more and my commitment to my job means the future holds only longer hours'.

There is clearly an unquestioning assumption that commitment to work requires long hours reflected in his description of his situation. Bachelard, in common with many men in professional and managerial roles (Petre, 1998), does not seem to be challenging the equation that commitment equals long hours.

One can, however, explore the constructed nature of a full-time job in light of changes to, for instance, retail hours. As retail outlets have increased their opening hours, we have seen compromises made to the notion of the need for managers to be present or in charge all the time, but this hasn't fundamentally changed our notion that manager = full-time.

The gender understructure of the organization pervades work and non-work lives through the ordinary practices of particular work organizations but also, according to Acker (1998) in the ordinary activities through which work activities are coordinated across organizational boundaries. Acker (1998) recounts an anecdote from her own experience in working on a project with a Swedish colleague and how this colleague's pregnancy and subsequent maternity leave slowed down and jeopardised the project. While Acker (1998: 198) acknowledges the woman's right to access her maternity leave and supported her decisions entirely, she also admits to being annoyed by the situation. On reflection she attributes her annoyance to:

‘the basic antagonism between organizing practices of our societies and the carrying out of life-producing activities in the everyday spaces outside of organizations. The research project took place within a web of organizing practices that circumscribed what we could do, when we could do it and where it could be done. Restrictions

were built into schedules and procedures, as well as into the contracts between organizations and organizations and individuals, into the design of technology and plans for implementing change. In this case, the most important constraint was time. The project needed to be completed within a certain time-frame to minimise the effects of technological and work organization change’.

As such, the cult of efficiency (Saul, 1995) that pervades organizations reinforces, if not exaggerates, the ‘rightness’ of long working hours and reinforces the way work organizations dominate employees’ lives ‘greedily’ (Maier, 1999: 71). Collins (1998) suggests that it is rarely the basic nature of organizations or work that are open to change. Rather, it seems that employees are the ones to be adapted to the ‘needs’ of the job; whether it be the longer hours of the core workforce or the shorter hours of the peripheral workforce. Michael Bachelard’s experience is but one example of this adaptation – or perhaps resignation – by the employees.

Economic influences

The attractions of part-time work to employers are the enhanced profits gained from the efficiency of time utilisation (Junor 1998: 87). Part-time work, whether casual or permanent, enhances the scope for fine-tuned variations in staffing levels over an increased spread of ordinary time hours, through measures such as variable-length shifts, staggered start and finish times, and reduced overtime. Permanent part-time employment enhances efficiency by making possible more sophisticated forms of rostering than can be achieved through casualisation. Walby (1997) claims that if employers are seeking

greater numerical flexibility, they are more likely to construct categories of employment that are more likely to be filled by part-time women because they are least cost to the organization. The analysis of British part-time employment patterns by Tam (1997) suggests that employers benefit from the lower wage and non-wage labour costs of part-timers to maximize profit. Tam's analysis shows that part-time workers are not invested with the same on-the-job training to enhance their skills as their full time counterparts and the result is that 'part-time work experience carries cumulative disadvantages and has a negative effect in employment prospects' (Tam, 1997: 243). Baxter (1998) proffers a similar view that employers in Australia have constructed part-time work in ways to minimise costs and the resulting work patterns disadvantage women, as the jobs created are predominantly low paid and exclude women from career paths.

The marginalisation/feminisation of part-time work becomes self-perpetuating as the more it is used as a cost-saving measure, the less valued part-time work becomes, and so the less likely it is that it will be adopted at more 'senior' levels. In a sense, the growth in part-time work is reinforcing the low value of part-time work.

Beechey and Perkins (1987: 9) maintain that gender enters into the construction of part-time jobs and that the division between full-time and part-time work is one crucial contemporary manifestation of gender within the sphere of production. There is nothing inherent in the nature of particular jobs that makes them full-time or part-time. They argue against seeing part-time work as only some kind of 'natural' outgrowth of relations within the family. Rather, they see the vested interests that business has in maintaining

working structures which allow women to perform both paid and unpaid work (Truman, 1992) - this represents the manifestation of the 'flexing up' argument (at the social level) within the firm. Instead of being taken for granted as the norm, as is generally the case in studies of the labour market, full-time work needs to be treated as problematic, and analysed as a social and economic construct.

Conclusion

I started with the question 'why don't men do part-time work?'. By reframing the question to problematise men's working patterns, rather than the more traditional approach of seeking to understand women's dominance of part-time work, I sought to highlight the constructed nature of work practices and the gendered underpinnings to them. The argument developed throughout this paper is that the differences in the working patterns of men and women are maintained by a lifelong system of social control which begins with gender socialisation and is continually reinforced and recreated by other institutions - the organization and the family - and ideologies. Social norms and organizational practices and structures shape individual behaviours, which in turn shape social norms and organizational practices and structures. The labour force statistics and the quotes throughout the paper by one father, Michael Bachelard (Bachelard, 2001) exemplify the entrenched nature of these roles and their impact on men's (in)capacity to take up the opportunity of part-time work, despite their desire to spend more time with their families. As Cockburn (1991) notes, while men may strive to change their personal lives to become more equal with women with whom they share their lives, this is not an

easy process. Simply by being male, they continue to be seen by others as being bound to the norms of masculinity. Recognising the complex individual/organization/social interaction helps us to understand men's absence from part-time work.

In its most basic form, the argument is that women are connected to others – so they consider part-time work. Men see themselves as independent – so they don't consider part-time work. These self-perceptions are reinforced through gendered social norms and organizational practices, with economic underpinnings to each. It is not feasible to think that there will be changes to working patterns of men and women by simply having formal work and family policies on the books - we have seen that through previous studies (Hochschild, 1997; Moss & Deven, 1999). As Connell (1995) notes, the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives need to be brought into focus. The pressures on men to be present in the workforce and the organizational norms valuing and rewarding longer hours contribute to the cult of 'presenteeism' that many men in professional and managerial roles experience. Through this analysis of the working patterns of men and women using an adaptation of Fagenson's GOS model (Fagenson, 1993), some of the processes and relationships sustaining these gendered lives are made explicit. Clearly this paper is only a very initial analysis of these issues. Further work needs to be done to better understand the factors reinforcing the chronic presenteeism characterising many men's experiences of paid work and limiting their capacity to access more flexible work practices.

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Figure 1: Factors impacting on men's absence from part-time work

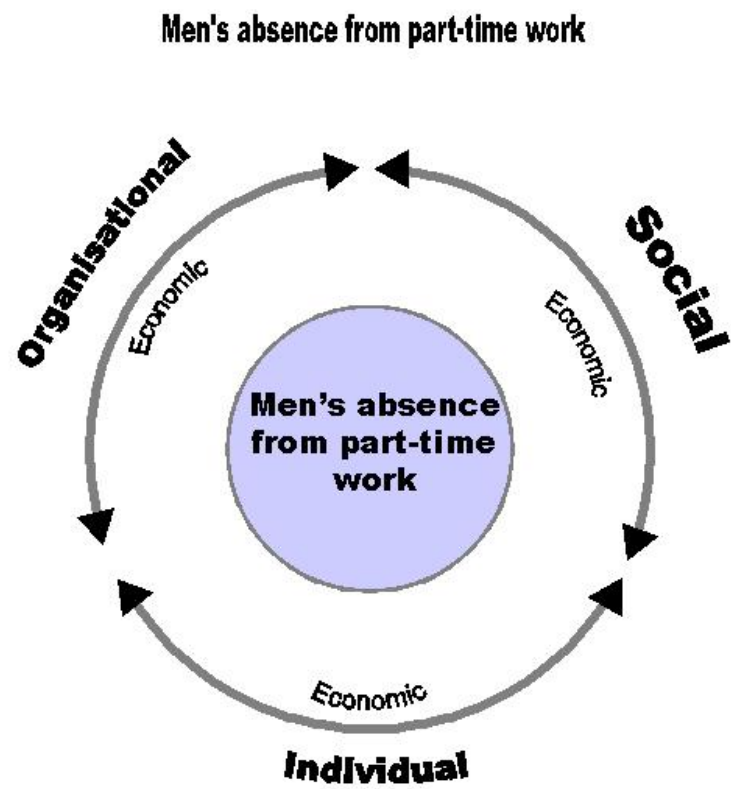


Table 1: Gender stereotypes

Masculine stereotype	Feminine stereotype
Independent	Nurturing
Competitive	Cooperative
Logical	Intuitive
Rational	Emotional
Exploitative	Empathic
Strategic	Spontaneous
Bread winner	Home maker
'A leader and decision-maker'	'A loyal supporter and follower'