



Women in Management: Barriers to Career Progress

Volume I

Jean Geddes

**A thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of
London Guildhall University
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
October 2002**

Acknowledgements

This study was possible only because of the co-operation and encouragement I received from individual women and men managers at all levels in BT who took an interest in its development. BT women from all divisions were prepared to discuss their experiences and I never lacked encouragement or food for thought from these resourceful women with whom I share the satisfaction of publishing this work. I am grateful to BT for sponsoring the study and providing me with the basic information that made this work both possible and meaningful. To the founding women managers of the BT Womens Network, I would like to extend my particular thanks. It was only as part of that organising team that I became aware of the different ways that women managers in BT were treated and the disparity in opportunity that accompanied where in the organisation and for whom women worked.

Sadly, both my dear sister Rene Morrison and my first mentor in BT Carol Hinds died before I could finish. Carol was one of the group of constant and balanced coaches, including Julie Gilbert of the Institution of British Telecommunications Engineers, Denise McGuire the President of Connect and Helen Mouldsley now a consultant, who helped by discussing ideas. My brother-in-law Alan Morrison, who is employed with BT and my nephew William, helped to stuff envelopes at the beginning of the study and proof read the document at the end. Dr Margaret May my supervisor was tolerant of my shortcomings, constructive in our numerous discussions and generous with her valuable time.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the enormous debt due to my partner Paul Barker and my two sons, Sean Geddes Moody and David Harper Moody. Throughout all of my studies they have encouraged and cajoled to the finish.

ABSTRACT

This study of women in management was initiated to explore, through women managers themselves, the barriers they thought were hindering their progress up the management hierarchies in BT. To facilitate this study the first former utility organisation to be privatised was approached to be the case study. At the time the organisation, which was undergoing a major organisational change programme aimed at taking it from the utility provider it had been to the dynamic private company it wanted to be, was gaining a reputation for enlightened equal opportunity policies. It had a vigorous gender champion and an equal opportunities department that had ensured circulation of the organisation's equal opportunities policies to all members of staff. BT employed a large number of women managers in different functions, working in different locations throughout the UK and in a number of positions in the management hierarchy short of the most senior management or director levels. It therefore presented a unique opportunity to study women in the management pipeline from across a broad spectrum of jobs and backgrounds, women who were not being promoted in the same proportions as their male counterparts.

To examine their circumstances a mixed methodology was used drawing on aspects of feminist, positivist and pragmatic models because each offered an essential element of the mix needed to satisfy the requirements for undertaking the study. As the researcher was both a manager employed by the case study organisation and a woman there were elements of feminist methodology that guided involvement and personal interest in the study. The culture of the case study organisation was such that it was driven by the quantitative measures offered by positivism. An implicit element of the agreement between researcher and case study organisation was therefore that elements of the findings should reflect this requirement. Finally, a pragmatic approach to undertaking the study underpinned the dialogue between researcher and case study organisation as ways were explored for carrying out the investigation.

While it cannot be assumed that the same barriers to progress for women managers found in the case study organisation exist for women managers in other organisations, the findings of this study have nevertheless highlighted issues beyond the borders of the organisation. Firstly, they confirm the conclusions of previous research that women have been both horizontally and vertically segregated in areas of organisations from which progress into top management positions is more difficult to achieve. Secondly, the study casts new light on the pressures that women

face when trying to reconcile the needs of work and caring responsibilities. Women's ambitions are still tempered by their place in the home as carer and partner and many are prepared to subordinate their career opportunities to the needs of their family. Most crucially, the study highlights the extent to which women's aspirations are bounded by their work experiences.

It has been assumed that organisational cultures have been becoming more sympathetic towards the inclusion of women managers and more prepared to encourage women to progress but the evidence of this study is that this operates at the level of rhetoric instead of action. The organisational structures and management styles presented barriers that flattened the ambition of women and exposed them to bullying, intimidation and harassment. Nurtured by an uncompromisingly macho company culture underpinned by an old boys' network, the barriers that women encountered served to suppress initiative and detain them at lower levels of management. Many women felt that because of this they were stifled, inhibited from improving their own or the organisation's performance. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that the nebulous nature of these insidious discriminatory practices renders them almost impenetrable. Just as BT shares a history and culture similar to several other former utility organisations so it is probable that these practices are mirrored in other organisations.

Finally, the assumptive base of some recent analysts question the ways in which women are likely to progress in management. It has been assumed that the excellent educational achievements of women in recent years will automatically translate into increased opportunities for high office in organisations. However the findings of this study show that the organisational climate in which women find themselves has a larger impact on their progress. In this study the women with the highest qualifications were clustered in the lowest ranks in the division of the organisation that showed most resistance to gender diversity. Therefore while education may enhance a woman's opportunities, it does not automatically position her for higher office.

The other assumption that women are increasingly limiting their own career opportunities by making positive decisions to remain at the lowest positions in the management pipeline, through positive lifestyle choices, are challenged by the findings here. It was only when women found themselves hampered and unlikely to progress or thought that the harmony of their home lives was threatened that they decided to limit their options. Otherwise, many of them stated, they would have relished the challenge of higher office. As this study shows, it would clearly be a disservice to these women managers to confuse their forfeiture of ambition because

of the prevailing hostile organisational climate or for family reasons, with their positively deciding to limit their careers.

CONTENTS

Volume 1

ABSTRACT	III
PRELUDE	XI
CHAPTER 1	1
WOMEN MANAGERS: INTRODUCTION	1
Positioning this study.....	1
Aims and Approach	10
CHAPTER 2	26
WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: THE EVOLUTION OF SEGREGATED WORKPLACES	26
Theoretical explanations of women's employment patterns	27
A historical overview of women's employment	37
Horizontal segregation	53
CHAPTER 3	70
WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: PROPPING UP THE GLASS CEILING	70
Vertical segregation	70
Countering the Glass Ceiling	89
CHAPTER 4	102
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: PERPETUATING INEQUITIES	102
The culture of the engineer-manager	103
Old Boys' Club.....	111
Organisational barriers persist	118
New ways to work.....	128
CHAPTER 5	139
IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT	139
The legacy of the past	139
The impact of privatisation	148
Restructuring and equal opportunities policies in BT	159
The BT experience has thus far failed women managers	174
CHAPTER 6	178
RESEARCH RATIONALE	178
Rationale for studying women managers.....	179
A case to answer	182
A mixed methodology.....	191

CHAPTER 7	199
RESEARCH METHODS	199
The population to be studied	200
Questionnaire design and analysis	210
Replicability	213
On reflection	214
CHAPTER 8	217
WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: SEGREGATED WORK AREAS	217
Gendered organisational structures	219
Divisions and work areas	236
Qualifications and aspirations	242
CHAPTER 9	251
BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES	251
Industrious women	251
Tempering ambitions	256
Macho management and the tactics of exclusion	270
Homogeneity	302
CHAPTER 10	305
N&S: A DISTINCTLY GENDERED CULTURE	305
Slow progress in the engineering environment	306
Macho management	310
CHAPTER 11	315
BT IN CONTEXT: LINKS WITH OTHER STUDIES	315
Theoretical perspectives	315
Critique	322
CHAPTER 12	325
CONCLUSIONS: A MICROCOSM OF BRITISH INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE	325
In the management pipeline	334
Horizontal segregation	338
The paradox of BT	341
On reflection	345
BIBLIOGRAPHY	348
1. BOOKS	348
2. GUIDES, REPORTS AND REVIEWS	367

Volume 2

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE DISPATCHED TO 889 WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT IN JANUARY 1996

APPENDIX 2

LETTER AND SURVEY RESULTS SENT TO RESPONDENTS WHO REQUESTED A COPY

APPENDIX 3

RESPONDENTS' ADDITIONAL COMMENTS GROUPED BY SUBJECT

APPENDIX 4

BT MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES BY GENDER AT 31 MARCH 1995

APPENDIX 5

BREAKDOWN OF SURVEY SAMPLE BY BT DIVISION AND MANAGEMENT GRADE

APPENDIX 6

COMPARISONS OF RESPONDENTS' GRADE BY TIME SERVED AND GRADE INCREASES FOR N&S AND THE COMBINED RESPONSES OF PC, NBC AND GC

APPENDIX 7

EXAMPLE LIST OF SUB-MANAGEMENT GRADES

APPENDIX 8

COMPARISON OF RESPONSES FROM N&S WITH COMBINED PC, NBC & GC RESPONSES

PRELUDE

At the Consultancy Skills workshop¹ we were split into two teams of six which, said the tutor, would be more fun if it were by gender. The teams, who were rendered to the same number by using the excess males on this management exercise as 'observers', were to make as many paper boats as possible using the instructions provided by the course tutor. Following the ten minutes allowed for the exercise, the teams were to return to the classroom to explain what had been learned on the exercise. We women sped off to our syndicate room to study the plans for folding pieces of A4 paper into boats and the men went off to their own syndicate room.

At the outset our team, the female team, agreed that one person would read the printed instructions aloud while the others folded. But, it soon became clear that two of the team were better 'folders' and one a better 'finisher' than the others so a production line was initiated with simple folds being performed by some team members and the embryonic paper boats handed on for the next stage in the process. It took several minutes of discussion to fix team roles but by the end of the session, nine boats had been completed and a production line had been established that had the potential to turn out numerous boats very efficiently. Our team returned to the lecture room with our standardised boats piled high and carried proudly by the most junior female.

¹ PA Consulting at Ashridge Management School, May 1997. The consultancy skills exercise was part of a 3-day workshop for a team middle managers in BT Global Marketing.

The men had completed 12 boats. Each sat triumphantly manhandling his own completed boats although some had none at all while others had several and the models came in various shapes and sizes since each man had assembled his own.

The men were declared the winners of the game. The women accepted that decision.

Experience shows us that women and men do not necessarily view success in the same way. Women and men often seek approval through different vehicles and their contributions are almost always valued using different yardsticks. In the workplace women generally receive lower salaries and occupy lower levels in their organisations.

In the consultancy skills exercise, points were not awarded for working as a team, recognition of individuals' skills, planning for the future or for the quality or consistency of the output. Success depended solely upon the number of boats completed within that specified time and the male managers in this exercise quickly understood that fact.

When we discussed what we had learned from the exercise, it was clear that additional matters had influenced the women managers' approach to the exercise.

We had looked for a way to involve every member as a team, to establish a pattern of work that satisfied the participants, one that over time would probably have resulted in higher output and have produced a steady outflow of good quality boats.

But we had failed to recognise how to win the game.

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN MANAGERS: INTRODUCTION

Positioning this study

It is clear to any observer of UK organisations, whether in the public or private sector, that there has long been a disparity in the ratio of female to male managers and that fewer women than men have been in evidence at every level. No single reason for this being the case has been offered as an explanation for all situations. Instead, a range of contributing factors varying with the industry, its regulatory framework, location, recruitment practices, skills base, culture and attitudes have been identified. The health of the macro and micro economy also appears to have an effect on the gender profile of organisations' workforces (Cooper and Davidson eds., 1984; Flanders, 1994). While in some areas of industry the number of female managers is growing faster than in others, progress is slow and most women managers are unlikely to reach middle or senior management positions in the same proportions as their male counterparts. Nor is it obvious why some specific industries are being left behind in the gender rebalancing stakes. Vertical and horizontal segregation by gender is still widespread in management despite women

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

entering industry and commerce in larger numbers and with more qualifications than ever before.

While these disparities have attracted increasing academic, government and media attention over the last two decades, and literature on the subject is growing in volume, there are still gaps in our knowledge and understanding both of the processes involved and the variables between different areas of employment. Until recently, apart from a few notable exceptions (Marshall 1984; Ledwith and Colgan eds., 1996) much of the discussion centred on broadly based analyses of general differences in female – male employment patterns and trajectories rather than exploring sector or organisation-specific issues. The case studies that have been undertaken were predominantly concerned with organisations in the public sector or manufacturing rather than private sector enterprises in the ‘new economy’ (Crompton, 1989, pp141 - 156). It was against this background that this study originated with the over-arching aim of exploring women’s experiences and the possible influences on female/male managerial mobility in one key UK organisation. Only by examining the equal opportunity practices of a large organisation in the UK and by conducting a survey of women managers in a single organisation in the UK, would it be possible to gain a comprehensive appreciation of the barriers that women managers experience in their climb up the management hierarchy.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

It was at that time that I considered BT as it had both unique and generic organisational attributes. It was the first British public utility organisation to exchange its status, protected by the government, for the challenges of becoming a private company responsible to shareholders. Confidence throughout the time of the changeover was high and hundreds of thousands of individuals and employees became shareholders in the organisation that was leading the way towards privatisation for other public utilities. With its workforce of almost a quarter of a million, a significant number of whom were women, it became the largest private employer in Britain. The scope of work undertaken in the organisation was so wide that hardly a profession or discipline was not covered and in this respect the organisation presented a microcosm of the rest of working Britain. Economic factors favoured the rapid growth of telecommunications throughout the 1980's and 1990's¹ and with the change-management programmes² that the organisation was introducing, there appeared to be excellent opportunities for women to share in this success.

¹ BT's turnover in 1999 was over £18bn (BT Annual review and summary financial statement for 1999) and one of the highest for a company in the UK.

² For example Gemini Consulting was engaged by the organisation when a wide-ranging change management programme was initiated in the mid-1990's.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

The successful transformation from utility to private organisation was frequently heralded as both dependent on, and fuelling the need for, new general management and new human resource strategies geared to securing the commitment of its skilled people in the competitive telecommunications environment. In these respects, BT was often presented and used as a benchmark by other companies. This applied particularly to its attempts to broaden its recruitment and management base and diversify its workforce. Indeed by the mid-1990's, BT was gaining the reputation of being an effective equal opportunities employer, boasting of its success in various publications aimed at customers and staff³. This was clearly something very important to the organisation for like most large companies providing a range of products it served a diverse customer base.

To this end, BT had undertaken surveys of the gender, ethnic background and ability/disability of its workforce so that it could use the information to recruit from a broader section of the population. To establish its stance formally, the company had published its first equal opportunities booklet, 'Equal opportunities for everyone – A guide to BT's equal opportunities policies and their application' (1992). The

³ The Annual Report and Accounts for 1998 states 'In March 1998, BT won top prize in the Opportunity 2000 Awards Scheme. These awards recognise UK employers who demonstrate innovative working practices to further women's development at work.' The Annual Report and

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

guide, which covered gender, ethnicity and disability, was circulated to every manager in the company and the messages were reinforced by publicity through the company's internal communications vehicles. Between 1987 and 1995 the company had also introduced a number of other equal opportunity policies that were well publicised within and outside the company. Its reputation as a company eager to provide equal opportunities was further enhanced through its active participation in the Business in the Community spin-off initiative, Opportunity 2000, and related drives to increase women's access to non-traditional and managerial forms of employment. BT's equal opportunities initiatives moreover, were often presented as part of the wider change-management programme necessitated by its conversion in 1984, from a public utility to a fully commercial enterprise competing against new entrants to the field of telecommunications provision.

BT thus provided an opportunity to investigate not only the impact of recent developments in human resource management on women's employment opportunities but also that of privatisation. For its neo-liberal advocates, this was to be the means of transforming rigid, over bureaucratic and complacent state services into profitable, innovative businesses, deploying the flexible management techniques

accounts for 1999 states, 'The application of our equal opportunities policies has seen BT win a

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

of successful private companies such as IBM and Hewlett Packard. This was often represented in terms of radical New Wave Management and promoted by a new set of industry gurus (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Handy 1984) as more egalitarian than the hitherto neo-Taylorist (Taylor, 1911) bureaucratic modes of people-management (Drucker, 1964).

To some, the transformations promised by privatisation seemed to hold more opportunities for women, especially in conjunction with the new management techniques that might be introduced. These offered the possibility that 'employees prospects would be brighter in privatised industries, which would have a superior ability to adapt, diversify and grow' (Johnson, 1988, p18). The future looked bright partly because women's management styles were often held to be more attuned to people-driven organisations (Goffee and Scase, 1985; Helgesen, 1990). But it was also because the removal of both traditional hierarchies and traditional work-groups seemed to offer new 'spaces' for women (Kanter, 1977; Newman, 1996). BT presented a unique opportunity to track through these changes and such a study might cast light on what was happening in other similar industries

number of awards, including the Opportunity 2000 "Framework for Success" award.'

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

At the outset of this study, a decade after privatisation, this promise however appeared remote. Despite its overt commitment to equalising women's opportunities, BT appeared to mimic much of the employment practices of corporate Britain, being characterised by both horizontal and vertical segregation. The break from the constraints of the Civil Service and the opportunities that subsequent privatisation might have brought for the female workforce, namely the abandonment of traditional methods of recruitment and assessment and the promotion of a meritocracy had not been realised. Sixteen years after privatisation, at the turn of the new Millennium, there were still no women executive directors on the board of British Telecommunications plc.

Despite changes to the company's recruitment and employment policies, the number of women managers in the organisation had hardly changed. Women managers were not moving up the ranks of the organisation in the numbers that might have been expected given the company's espousal of Equal Opportunities policies. Apart from a few functional divisional positions, all heads of divisions were men and in the gender balance, women remained under-represented at all management grades. Nor had the presence of women been increased significantly in key areas in the business or in 'non-traditional' forms of employment. On the contrary, the period since privatisation had seen a decrease in the number of women working in the engineering and technical grades, traditionally the area from which the majority of

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

senior managers came. Equally disturbing, many women occupying non-management roles, who might have progressed into management, appeared to be disappearing from female dominated areas of the business as the nature of the business changed⁴.

From the time I had joined BT in 1987 I was aware of the gender imbalance in the workplace. There were a number of women in senior positions and they were very well known throughout the company, being conspicuous partly because of the rarity of their gender in those positions. However, they were also made highly visible because of the internal communications coverage they received in their jobs. If the speed at which they had moved through the management ranks was a determinant of their effectiveness, they were apparently very good managers. This was particularly true of Patricia Vaz who won the title of 'Businesswoman of the Year' in 1996 for her work as head of the BT Payphones division. Simultaneously, apparently mediocre male managers, whose achievements were not visible, were also present at these elevated positions. Speculating about her own employer, Jennifer Felgate of Ove Arup stated that when Ove Arup got an incompetent woman on the board and nobody noticed, women would have arrived (McCWire, 1992). The paucity in

⁴ These areas included operator services, secretarial and typing services, and drawing office services.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

numbers of women in senior positions in BT could not be attributed to a single identifiable cause yet the evidence of numbers was that a barrier or barriers did exist.

With around 25% of female representation at junior management levels the figure was not being carried through to middle or senior management levels.

Aims and Approach

Given these trends, this study aimed to explore the barriers to change experienced by women in BT and more particularly, to seek explanations for there being fewer women than men in management at every management grade in BT and very few women at senior level or divisional director level. In the process it was hoped to add to the understanding of the conditions surrounding women in the telecommunications industry by seeking women's own views, written in their own words under the assurance that their voices would be heard without censure. Not only their responses but their descriptions of being in the management pipeline and the conditions surrounding these positions were paramount to this study.

There is an assumption in the literature on women in management that the 'glass ceiling'⁵ is just below director level. On the contrary, the promotions ceiling for women can exist just above the first stage of management, half-way up the hierarchical structure of the organisation or even below management level altogether. It matters little whether women attempting to move up in organisations are restricted in their progress by fundamental barriers such as the expectation in many industries that women will be submissive and occupy inferior roles while men will be dominant

⁵ This has been described as a concrete ceiling for ethnic minority women (Davidson, 1997).

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

and occupy superior ones (Symons, 1992), or experience the more subtle barriers of ridicule and exclusion (Jamieson, 1997). The outcomes are the same. There is lack of progress or virtual regression and downward mobility as peer groups travel onward and upward leaving women behind. Though it cannot be assumed that the findings of this study could be scaled to apply to women in other industries, the value of the study would be in identifying patterns and linkages to theoretical models (Bryman, 1989).

In exploring how this could be achieved a number of alternative sources were considered as vehicles for collecting this information including the organisations of which I am a member, the Chartered Institute of Marketing⁶, the Society of Telecoms Executives⁷, the BT Women's Network⁸ and the Global Women's Telecommunications Executive⁹. However, no matter how cooperative they might

⁶ As well as being a member 1990, I was one of the first members to gain Chartered status in 1998.

⁷ The STE, which changed its name to Connect shortly before the Millennium, was very supportive when approached about this research and several exploratory discussions took place with Denise McGuire, the President of the STE, before the research was initiated.

⁸ As a member of the organising team of what was until 1997, a management network, it would have been relatively simple to research this group of women. However, at that time only around 1000, or one-fifth, of the total female management quotient of BT were members of the Network.

⁹ Membership of this group of female telecoms executives is open to women managers from any registered telecommunications organisation world-wide. They are eager to provide support to women in telecoms management and produce a very detailed directory of members who can be called upon for mutual support.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

be, each of these organisations could have provided only limited access to the female management population of BT.

I therefore approached British Telecommunications plc, my employer at the time, to ask for their cooperation in conducting a study of their women managers. If the organisation agreed the study would have the potential to provide a unique insight into the workings of one of the largest employers of women managers in the world. Success in gaining sponsorship for studies in BT depends on encouragement from and the agreement of a number of people. The first to agree that this would be a worthwhile study was my line manager who referred me to head of Personnel for the division in which I worked. His agreement was essential for initial sponsorship and for supporting my application for access to contact details for the female management workforce. Group Personnel (GP) also had to be involved as the contents of any internal posting to its workforce would have to be agreed by them. Furthermore GP were the only source for data on the additional information needed on the gender constitution of the organisation. All parties agreed and this single act is to the great credit of these senior managers for such a study can be double-edged, providing much needed information on which to base new ideas but also providing a spotlight for potential criticism.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

However, although BT supported the research, the organisation provided only limited access to information which included general information on the total number, gender and rank of all managers in BT in 1996. This information provided by Group Personnel enabled the selection of participants for the survey for the distribution of the questionnaire. In subsequent years, BT did not make the gender breakdown of its managers available for comparison and the study therefore had to draw on information that was generally available and in the public domain.

A twofold strategy was developed for undertaking the research. The first approach was to examine a number of valuable studies that had already been undertaken on women in business and draw upon these to guide my own studies. Macro theories, referred to in Chapters 2 and 10, provided direction for framing appropriate questions since much was already known about the concerns to women. The second approach was to look more closely at the circumstances surrounding BT, its history, traditions, hierarchies and organisational culture and to look more intensely at the ways in which it was ordered. A number of studies, albeit very limited, that had already been commissioned by the organisation were made available and these could be drawn upon for information. Furthermore, as the objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of why there were fewer women than men in the management pipeline and why most women were unlikely to progress to middle or senior management in the same proportions as their male counterparts the answer to

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

this appeared to be with the women themselves. Finding out from these women what was holding them back in the organisation was essential.

Women managers in BT were therefore invited to comment on their status and progress in the organisation, their ambition, skills and education and their perceptions of aspects of the organisation that may have contributed to the gender imbalance in management. They were asked about aspects of the culture and the characteristics of the organisation that have nurtured these imbalances. The study also explored women managers' perceptions of the preferred management styles of the organisation, those that appeared to enhance career progress. The survey therefore comprised not only a questionnaire of over sixty questions but a section that offered the opportunity to women to add their own observations and expand on any concerns.

By using British Telecommunications plc as the case study for this research it has been possible to examine the positions of women across a number of disciplines and the management levels that only a very large organisation could offer. BT provided access to women from the lowest level of management to senior management grades working in a large number of functional disciplines in divisions with spheres of activity as diverse as engineering and marketing, computing and sales. Furthermore, it allowed soundings to be taken from every geographical area in Great Britain and

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

Northern Ireland in which BT had a significant female management presence. Women from as far afield as Aberdeen and Exeter, Glasgow and Birmingham and Edinburgh and Bristol completed questionnaires and provided valuable additional information to the survey. They did so candidly and unequivocally and all but a handful welcomed the study with many offering their contact details for further investigations.

As already stated, BT had undertaken some in-house studies on women and men in management in the organisation and the results of these were made available for the study¹⁰. Connections, which was until 1 January 2000 known as the Society of Telecom Executives, the union for telecommunications managers, proved a useful source of additional information both for one-off surveys of its membership and for the information produced in its yearly management survey. These ad-hoc studies, however, were small scale and consisted mainly of face-to-face interviews with female and male senior managers. Moreover, they concentrated on the attributes needed to gain and retain senior posts in BT. Very little was done to illustrate the attributes needed to progress through the intervening grades before achieving senior status. These two sets of skills are not necessarily the same. Even more critically,

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

the views of the mass of women managers on their perceptions of possible barriers to progress were not sought out by the company in a consistent form.

The key aim of the study was therefore to give women a 'voice' for without this essential element the study would be a mere narrative of results instead of a testimony of 'live' thoughts. The need for and value of this approach, endorsed by many, particularly feminist, researchers (Coleman, 1991), stemmed directly from my own experiences and was in many ways, confirmed by the response rate of the survey elicited. There were five thousand and one women managers employed by BT at the time of the survey. A stratified sample of eight hundred and eighty-nine women at all levels of management was taken from the five largest divisions of the organisation. The broad geographical spread covered in the survey sample proved significant as it provided information on the strength and depth of the organisation's culture that could not have been acquired in any other way. There was also value in the inclusion of women from all ranks in the organisation and not just those at the junior levels as their responses to the survey questionnaire and their additional information provided an insight into the common experiences of women managers.

¹⁰ For example in 1998 a BT Human Resources Manager, produced her survey findings on interviews with 29 senior women managers and a similarly senior group of men managers in BT on their experiences of achieving hierarchical status.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

They raised issues that were not touched upon in the contents of the questionnaire and provided their thoughts on the impact that home, family and caring responsibilities had on their careers. This was an especially gratifying response.

Prior to this study, there had been no comprehensive research that spanned all ranks of women managers in an organisation. A credible study of the circumstances that took account of the thoughts and experiences of women managers in different areas of BT appeared to be the most robust approach. It was therefore my aim that this research should be 'A form of planned collection of data for the purpose of description or prediction' (Spooner, 1989, p19). As a manager who had moved through the ranks and observed the successes and failures of other women in their careers, I was motivated to conduct this study in order to make sense of what I had observed. By the same token, a comparative study of male managers in BT may have been valuable and this was seriously considered. However, male attitudes could be elicited from a number of sources including a number of internal newsletters and journals, industry magazines and trade journals, some of which rarely even mentioned a female manager. Work practices, especially in those areas of the business where women were hardly found, had inevitably grown around male

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

values and the culture of the organisation reflected militaristic parlance¹¹. Their voices could literally and metaphorically be heard over those of women's in the organisation. Including men in this study would therefore have demanded virtually halving the sample size of the number of women to be surveyed but would have added much less over and above what was already known. Time and resource would be dedicated to finding out as much as possible about women managers and that would remain the focus of this study.

With more than 200 competitors in the telecommunications market, BT had strong competition for the university and college graduates it needed to recruit for the future management of the company. Traditionally, a major source of recruitment for potential managers has been the male university population. But as the number of women graduating increases, BT will inevitably be recruiting from a smaller population if it continues to follow its past trend in recruitment. Moreover, the company had not been attracting female job applicants for management positions in the same proportion as male applicants. It appeared therefore that if BT did not address the basic issue of opportunities for both genders, it could enter into the 21st Century with a diminishing resource pool from which to select its senior managers

¹¹ For example it was common to refer to a person's status as their 'rank', their functions as their 'duties' and managers as 'superiors'.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

and company officers. There was the added jeopardy that graduates might not wish to join BT preferring to join companies that were patently more gender balanced and culturally diverse and without substantive change BT's internal labour market processes would continue to reinforce gender divisions.

From the time that this study began to address these issues to the present time, there has been a great increase in interest on the gendered nature of employment generally and in management in particular. This has been reflected in the proliferation of books and research studies and the increasing range of ideas that are being generated on women's place in the workforce. More studies have been conducted into the effects of the 'Glass Ceiling' over the heads of women managers and subjects that had little currency in the UK in 1995, when this research was initiated, are increasingly being explored. For example, more interest is being generated in 'Family-Friendly' practices¹² that include both women's and men's flexible work requirements and on the so-called 'e-revolution'¹³ that could potentially change the workplace for almost every knowledge worker.

¹² 'The Independent' newspaper of 1 March 2000, p5, reported the details of a breakfast meeting hosted by Prime Minister Tony Blair on the launch of a campaign to encourage British business to drop the traditional long-hours culture in favour of flexible and part-time working.

¹³ e-Business and e-Commerce developments primarily using Internetworking Protocol (Internet) could enable almost every office-based worker to work from a number of locations, including home. The 'e' stands for electronic.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

The growth in interest has also been stimulated by media coverage of the occasional court-case, brought by the Equal Opportunities Commission, on specific industry rules and regulations¹⁴ that discriminate against women. Institutionalised gender discrimination in the armed forces and police service has come under public scrutiny and individuals¹⁵ have emerged who are prepared to risk career progression by initiating sex discrimination cases via the Equal Opportunities Commission. There have also been a number of high-profile cases where highly qualified and well-paid women¹⁶ have suffered the effects of gender discrimination with potentially devastating effects on their careers.

¹⁴ The case brought against the Professional Golfers Association by Judy Owen was particularly well covered in the media. It centred around her being told to change into a skirt or dress while on duty. The employment tribunal finding of 20 January 2000, that she was the victim of sexual discrimination still met with the assertion of the PGA chief executive, Sandy Jones, that '.....as a fair employer it is disappointing. We have actively practised an equal opportunities policy since 1979 but have become a target because of who we are and fallen victim for not having a written policy', as reported in Metro newspaper, 21 January 2000.

¹⁵ Chef Angela Sirdar claimed in 1997 that she had been sexually discriminated against by the Ministry of Defence, when they refused her transfer to the Royal Marines, being forced into redundancy instead. Special constable Christine Fraser was sexually harassed by a colleague during the summer of 1997 and won an out of court settlement for £5,000 and a letter of apology from the Chief Constable.

¹⁶ Aisling Sykes, a lawyer, brought a successful prosecution against her employer under the Sex Discrimination Act when she was sacked from her job with JP Morgan in the City following the birth of her fourth child. (The Guardian, 24 January 2000, page 3 of 'The Office Hours' supplement). Sykes worked a fourteen-hour day but was sacked because her boss wanted her to complete the work in the office. She was granted considerable compensation when she won the case.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

Whereas twenty years ago, arguments surrounding sex discrimination in the labour market were concerned with the horizontal segregation of jobs in the workplace (Chiplin and Sloane, 1976; Coyle and Skinner eds., 1988) the debate has moved on. Few today would deny that both horizontal and vertical segregation still exist and are nurtured by a set of attitudes and practices that aid in their maintenance (Collinson et al, 1990; Walby, 1997). Even in the last ten years, the subject of women in business has gained increased legitimacy by the government's establishment of a Women's Unit. The Women's Unit has a commitment to improve the lot of women throughout Britain and is achieving this by the systematic gathering of data in order to measure movements in the gendered labour market.

By looking closely at one highly significant employing organisation, this study thus aims to add further insight to the complex inter-links between broad socio-economic change, organisational restructuring and the gendered division of managerial labour identified by other researchers. The next three chapters set the scene by reviewing first the prevalent theoretical explanations for women's inferior employment opportunities and then the literature on women's employment showing the slow rates of change over the last six decades. For analytical convenience, complex inter-related processes are dealt with separately. Chapter two therefore focuses on the extent to which management positions have been dominated by men through the

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

horizontal segregation of women while chapter three deals with their vertical segregation into inferior jobs and assesses the effects of the 'glass ceiling'. Chapter four reviews the literature on organisational cultures and attitudes that have perpetuated the supremacy of male dominated management, the 'old boy's culture' and the maintenance of systems of management hostile to change and the admission of women into decision-making roles. It shows that despite two decades of change-management programmes in organisations, little has impacted upon organisational attitudes and despite so-called enlightened shifts in organisational policies, little change has taken place in the practices of incumbent managers, developers and recruiters.

In the light of these findings, chapter five focuses on the history of BT. Its background as a utility organisation laid the foundations for its organisational structure, staff policies and gendered vertical and horizontal job families. The organisation's attempts to metamorphose from a bureaucratic professional public service to a commercial business through privatisation have not produced the desired results either from a business or personnel perspective and this was looked at from the perspective of its female employees and managers. The dissertation moves on to examine these developments more closely and women managers' perceptions of their own opportunities.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

First however, chapters six and seven consider the methods used to gather and analyse the data. They focus particularly on the unexpected volume of additional information provided by the survey respondents proved challenging to analyse and added to the quantitative and qualitative data collected via the postal questionnaire which served as the primary instrument. This broadened the scope of the study and the respondents who provided it were very candid in recounting their perceptions of conditions in the organisation. The profiles of these women managers' BT careers are considered in chapter eight as it analyses the range of jobs they were undertaking at the time of the study and the areas of the business they occupied. Chapter nine focuses on their perceptions of their opportunities for advancement in BT and the impediments that some were experiencing to their progression up the managerial ladder. These were partly extrinsic, reflecting broader social constraints such as women's mobility consequent on their caring responsibilities. However, for the most part for women in BT the key constraints appeared to be intrinsic and entrenched in an organisational culture formed in the pre and early post-World War II period. This seems not only to have survived privatisation but also in many ways was reinforced by it. It also appears to have generated a variety of accommodating techniques among female managers, most notably, a lowering of their promotional aspirations.

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

The information on N&S which appears in chapter ten was separated out from that on the other divisions. It illustrates the increased difficulties that highly educated women in a technically dominated environment experienced when trying to establish careers. Their responses were altogether more negative than those of colleagues in the more feminised parts of the organisation and it shows that the investment these women made in their tertiary and post-graduate education had not positioned them to gain rewards. Perversely, it was probably because of these higher educational standards that they found themselves placed in that division and therefore susceptible to additional discriminatory practices. Comparing their contributions with those from the other three large divisions shows that macho management styles, unsupportive organisational cultures and the activities of old boys' networks had a profound detrimental effect on individuals. Though often alluded to in other studies (Kanter, 1977; Marshall, 1984; Cockburn, 1991) the tactics of macho management and the actions that some male managers took in order to discourage women from participating to their full potential are explained here. Women on the receiving end of these discriminatory behaviours found them disturbing and disabling. However, 'few companies operate solely within the purview of a single culture' (Cameron and Quinn, 2000, p1) and the divisions in BT had distinct cultures which extended to the offering of different opportunities to their female personnel. Some generalisations have had to be made in this study but it should be borne in mind that where some

WOMEN MANAGERS: Introduction

areas of the business aggressively defended their masculine orientation, small pockets of enlightened management co-existed.

Chapter eleven considers the implications of the findings on the aspirations of women workers and women in the management pipeline and looks at the implications for organisations emphasising the need for changes to attitudes and management styles. Finally, chapter twelve offers some reflections of the study and the way that it was conducted and examines the contribution it makes to our knowledge of women in management in general.

CHAPTER 2

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: THE EVOLUTION OF SEGREGATED WORKPLACES

This chapter is concerned with the literature on the working patterns of women and the areas of the workplace where women are most likely to be found. However, as the lack of progress that women have made into traditionally masculine areas of organisations is a reflection of their place in society the underlying aspects also have to be considered. As feminist-inspired studies in particular have extrinsically documented, women's place in society has been controlled through limiting their access to the power fora in politics that would enable women's voices to be heard. Their home lives have been controlled through limiting their access to the financial products that might offer security and the accumulation of property and women's mobility has been controlled through the imposition of caring responsibilities (Waring, 1989). Their progress in the workplace has been further impeded by the limited access to training allowed by the senior incumbents in the workplace, who are usually men and their achievements tempered by widespread perceptions of women as less career minded than men (McCWire, 1992). It is therefore clear that

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

women's lack of progress in organisations involves not only the organisational cultures that determine where and how women are able to work but complex social and cultural value systems that support men's claims to employment dominance.

In accounting for these phenomena, a number of theories have been developed that disaggregate the working patterns of women and provide insights into the circumstances surrounding both their vertical and horizontal segregation in the work force and how these have restricted women's access to large areas of the workplace. Not surprisingly theoretical understanding of these processes has been most extensively developed by Feminist writers. Feminism however, is far from a unitary perspective. Rather it is an umbrella term for a variety of different streams of thinking ranging from Radical through Marxist and Neo-liberal approaches (Ramzanoglu, 1992). All however are concerned to explain the ways in which men maintain dominance and control over women's status and opportunities.

Theoretical explanations of women's employment patterns

This chapter therefore looks first at the main theoretical frameworks developed by feminist analysts and their utilisation of the notion of Patriarchy. It then reviews in a rough chronology, the ways these have led into analyses of women's employment

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

patterns and the various factors that appear to have sustained women's subordination in the workplace. The chapter shows how women's segregation in the workplace has been controlled through their caring responsibilities and the needs of men for support in their homes. This was reinforced by legislation that restricted their horizontal mobility in employment and confined them to the home through monetary dependency. Man made laws controlled the time that they were allowed to earn money in the workplace through barring them from whole areas of employment and allowing organisations to rid themselves of women as soon as they married or had children. Even when these were revoked, organisations continued to exclude women by denying their admission to apprenticeships and training that offered the potential for higher office. Trades unions remained hostile to the progress of women and institutional prejudice which started with schooling deterred women from applying for jobs in previously masculine areas of commerce. The commissions, government departments and not-for-profit organisations established ostensibly to help women to enter business in numbers proved derisory. Having adapted to each of the obstacles put in their way and made progress in managing to synthesise the requirements of home and work even today women find their way up the organisational hierarchies barred. Hostile attitudes to ambitious women coupled with offensive management styles are proving nebulous but effective deterrents to progress. As outlined in the

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

previous page however, the chapter looks first at the main theoretical frameworks and interpretations of Patriarchy.

Patriarchy has been described as the 'system that perpetuates the dominance of senior men over women and junior men' (Bilton et al, 1996, p227) but whereas junior men can become senior men, women remain the subjects of dominance¹. Male dominance over women takes many forms from control over their fertility to the images of female sexuality that are formed around male notions of desire. Patriarchy is maintained in many ways and for radical feminists it can be 'who does the housework, or who interrupts whom in conversation' (Walby 1990, p3) as men limiting the physical space that women occupy. Male violence or the threat of violence is often sufficient to deter women from entering situations (Brownmiller, 1976) and even where it is no physical threat, women who are uncomfortable at the prospect of being lambasted will limit themselves (Daly, 1978). These behaviours do not attract the governmental or social disapproval merited and, while male

¹ Walby (1997, p5) identifies the six structures of patriarchy as household production, patriarchal relations in work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

homosexuality is gaining broader acceptance, women remain subject to 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980).

For radical feminists the dominant belief systems in the world that place men in authoritative positions serve to reinforce women's subservience in the home where the pressures to reproduce² are exerted in order to keep them dependent upon men (Firestone, 1974). Radical feminists therefore argue that there are two classes of society based on sex and to this extent their theories overlap with Marxist feminists though others disagree. 'This system of domination, called patriarchy does not derive from any other system of social inequality; for instance, it is not a by-product of capitalism' (Walby, 1990, p3).

Marxist³ feminists perceive the individual behaviours of women and men as being governed by the expectations of society which have been formed over centuries and are dominated by the class system. Irrespective of the needs and desires of individuals, the needs of society are likely to prevail so as labour was moved from

² Some radical feminists challenge the view that having a family suppresses women (Rich, 1977) and see regeneration as a joyful experience blighted by the impositions of patriarchy.

³ Marx (1956) did not make distinctions between the genders. His call for a 'family wage' implies that there is no need for women to work where a fair wage is paid to the breadwinner in the family. He noted the valuable contribution of women in bringing up families.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

around the home to the workplaces provided by employers, someone was needed in the home to rear the next generation of workers. Capitalism and industrialisation brought more definition to job segregation by gender, the deliberate occupational constructs that help to subjugate women by segregating them into jobs that offer less rewards and compensations. With capitalism, the problem for men became one of maintaining their control over the labour power of women (Hartmann, 1987) as men needed the support that only women who remained in the home and free to look after them and their children, could offer (Seccombe, 1978). Furthermore, control was maintained through society's expectations that upon marriage women would forfeit power to become the inferior partner and their influence was further eroded as time and energy was devoted to household tasks at the expense of a career.

The enforced domesticity of pregnancy and nursing was extended to women's lifetimes and they subsequently developed skills that were not necessarily valued by employers (Braverman, 1974). Meanwhile men also suffered de-skilling under the new working conditions of industrialism and capitalism. Complex tasks for many crafts were systematically de-constructed into simpler jobs that demanded only a semi-skilled or unskilled labour force whose wages and productivity were more easily controlled by employers (Rees, 1992). Nonetheless, women provided an

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

intelligent but unskilled reserve of workers who could be drawn upon under capitalism, to fill posts when there was a dearth of other applicants (Braverman, 1974; Dex, 1985).

This Reserve Army of labour, of men and women, was perceived by Marx as a mechanism for suppressing workers' demands for improved wages and conditions in times of increased demand for labour (Marx and Engels, 1976), a 'device to suppress wages through the availability of a surplus pool of workers' (Rees, 1992, p26). In Britain, married women in particular have constituted a flexible reserve army which was initiated when labour was in short supply and redundant at times of low demand (Beechey, 1987). Women's employment contribution in times of war is covered later in this chapter and serves to reinforce this particular aspect of Marxist theory along with the values placed on 'skills'. However, the apportionment of different measures to value 'skills' has undoubtedly been used to suppress women's status and wages and presented another opportunity for the differential in wages between the genders. Promotions and salaries are premised on the concept of rewarding skills and this has left women at the lower end of the promotions and pay scales, in vertically and horizontally segregated areas of employment (Dex, 1985, p188) where they undertake jobs perceived as demanding low or no skills.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Capitalism in alliance with patriarchy ensured that men were hired for paid work in the new industrialised Britain while women, because of the likelihood of interrupted employment and careers were excluded (Cockburn, 1983). Simultaneously however, industrialisation was automating the production of goods such as clothing that had previously been made by women in the home and therefore releasing them to compete with men for jobs (Braverman, 1974). Nevertheless as patriarchal ideas provide for men reaping the benefits of women's labour in the home, and to promulgate ideas of women's place in the home, men's control of the media, cultural institutions and education ensure the perpetuation of a set of values and concepts that has men predominating.

Liberal feminists argue that patriarchal relations in employment such as those developed by the guilds and trades unions and which provide the platform for 'the systematic exclusion of women from more advantageous positions within paid work' (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990, p31) are the basis of patriarchal power. When men move on from a discipline or allow an area to become feminised, it is because they choose to forfeit those areas of work, regrouping elsewhere for more advantage. Men will also enter previously feminised areas of work in order to take over the more advantageous, higher status jobs (Kanter, 1977).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

To feminists however, education and training offer a catalyst for changing women's positions in society and they have therefore called for women themselves to devote more time to their education and job training. 'An individual can make an investment in his or herself by devoting time to studying, gaining additional educational qualifications or by acquiring skills and work experience' (Dex, 1985, p118). This human capital theory concept of personal investment bringing rewards is also common to the dual-systems theory (Hartmann, 1976) whereby the economics of the household as a whole are improved by investment in the person with the most earnings potential⁴. However as it is usually perceived to be the man in a household who has the most earnings potential over a lifetime they are more likely to take education and training opportunities. Men are the main breadwinners in most families and women collude to educate and train them by voluntarily remaining in the home and performing menial tasks so that the household as a whole will benefit. The results however are the same with women in subordinate roles earning less in wages.

⁴ Becker (1982) argues that women and men receive different intrinsic rewards from different types of work. Women find work in the home more rewarding and are therefore more likely to want to give up other activities to perform it while men are more stimulated by work outside of the home.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Feminists from different standpoints thus highlight the operation of a dual labour market comprising two main categories. The primary segment occupied mainly by men is characterised by clear career prospects, employment stability, high wages, security, and good working conditions and is underpinned by skills requirements. The secondary segment occupied mainly by women, youth and members of various minority groups is almost the opposite. It offers little stability, lower wages, poor conditions, few career opportunities and is characterised by part-time, temporary and casual employment (Rees, 1992, p30; Amsden, 1980, p232; Dex 1985, pp131 - 132). Women are secondary in every employment aspect since given the choice of recruiting either a male or a female at the same wage for a job, other things being equal, the male will be preferred (Chiplin and Sloane, 1976). However, as indicated earlier, feminists differ in the extent to which they ascribe these outcomes wholly to male dominance. For liberal feminists in particular women are responsible for placing themselves in the secondary market for they are less interested in acquiring skills and training, are reluctant to take actions to better their positions and because of their own as well as employers' perceptions, are more likely to be placed in dead-end jobs (Hakim, 2000).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Neo-classical economists argue that it is because of their personal investment that men are more likely to have qualifications, more skills and be more experienced (Mincer, 1994). However, this argument may well be discredited in the future as women's secondary and post-compulsory educational achievements increasingly match those of men (HESA, 1999). If women's investments do not reap the same rewards in terms of career benefits and status, questions will be raised anew about the unequal advantages that education and training offers the genders especially when women are still disadvantaged by the career breaks they take for childbirth and caring. Men are at an advantage for they are likely to spend more time in paid employment where they can 'accrue more experience in the workplace and develop a competitive edge' (Rees, 1992, p23). When women re-enter the labour market after a break for family reasons, they take jobs that pay less than their former job and the longer the absence the greater the drop is likely to be (Mincer, 1994). Meantime, women are selecting the employment that suits their lesser skills and does not penalise interrupted working patterns (Walby, 1988) as, poised to take the caring breaks afforded by their secondary earner status, they defer to the needs of the primary earner.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Modernity takes this argument further and assumes that 'all human beings - potentially *all* human beings - can be in command of their own future and free to shape it for the better (Bilton et al, 1997, p580). Under this philosophy, all human beings can educate or train themselves irrespective of their home or financial circumstances as all are masters of their own destiny. Reason and experience however, inform us otherwise for all human beings are part of communities and are therefore under pressure to conform to norms of behaviour in those communities (Durkheim, 1974). A cursory examination of the history of paid work shows that women were especially vulnerable to the economic environment as well as the whims of employers eager to maintain their male workforces. They may have wished to educate themselves and undertake specialist training but to what end if employment opportunities did not exist.

A historical overview of women's employment

These aspirations notwithstanding until recently it was assumed that workers in most societies in the past were differentiated by gender along horizontally and vertically segregated lines (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981) for there was seemingly little evidence to contradict the premise. Women's biology and limited strength were

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

perceived to place them in secondary roles, gathering and harvesting while men performed the more highly skilled, riskier tasks of hunting.

More recently however, these assumptions have been challenged by the re-examination of evidence which shows that many of the everyday tasks and responsibilities for living were shared by both women and men in prehistoric communities (Mies, 1986). Groups of families sought efficiencies through the division of labour according to physical strength and while the result may have been the genderising of tasks there is no reason to believe that this was the primary aim⁵. Anthropologists have found that the main or staple diet of these primitive family units was crops, accounting for as much as 70% to 80% of the collective's consumption (Dahlberg, 1981). The family was therefore sustained by the planting and gathering of crops that were the responsibility of women undertaking long hours of work over extended seasonal periods doing repetitive tasks to an ordered plan so that a successful harvest might be guaranteed.

¹ In traditions extending far into the history of American Indian communities for example, work was allocated on criteria other than gender (Buffalohead, 1983; Warren and Buffalohead, 1984). Young members of the community undertook the same work regardless of gender and were likely to share that work with elders who also had limited strength or stamina.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Meantime, the stronger members of the community, mainly male, were to hunt and carry and undertake those activities that required bursts of high energy combined with strength, activities that over time assumed predominance. Supported by the emergence of cultural systems that gave authority and value to their roles (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1976), men thus gained status over their more passive female co-workers. History is replete with examples of men holding high office, being in the public domain and concentrating on matters external to the home but relatively few examples exist of women undertaking similar high-profile community or business tasks, with the same public recognition. Instead, women have remained closer to the home, primarily developing familial bonds and systems of care for their communities (Beddoe, 1983), taking waged employment outside the home only as a secondary consideration to supplement the extended family income or eke out a single existence.

It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that society changed rapidly. Until then, the mass of the working population in Britain was land based and worked according to their inherent or handed-down skill abilities (Humphries, 1987, pp929 - 950). Working women and men shared in the domestic chores and life for both sexes was

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

geared towards the production of food and services for family consumption with residues being sold-off for household profits (Clark, 1982). Most work was carried out in or near people's homes with wives and daughters able to learn the skills and crafts of their fathers and husbands because they were co-located (Liddington and Norris, 1978). Working class families needed each member of the family to contribute to the general welfare of the family unit and income was to remain a combined effort until the concept of personal earnings took hold (Snell, 1985 and 1986). This is not to imply that all divisions in labour by gender were absent but rather that they became increasingly pronounced as the effects of industrialisation began to bite.

It was not until industrialisation and the introduction of the mechanisation of previously hand-made goods, that gender became a delta in women and men's employment (Hakim, 1996, pp435 - 454). While industrialisation may simply have reinforced the differences in labour and responsibility that were already in existence when combined with the effects of capitalism, a deep chasm was forged. The changes were soon to be seen as natural divisions of labour and responsibility (Middleton, 1981) as the place of production moved from the home to factories and mills and, buttressed by the introduction of personal wages for timed work in a

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

separate shed or building, this revolution in working styles was complete (Coontz and Henderson, 1986). For large numbers of the population, industrialisation changed almost every aspect of their gender co-existence (Feminist Review ed., 1986). Over the following century, coupled with capitalism, it introduced new forms of social and cultural behaviours that closed off women's options and excluded them from the sources of serious money making (Zaretsky, 1976)⁶.

A consequence of deepening industrialisation, symbolised by machine production and the factory system, was that males in the workforce became more valuable to employers in large part because of their availability and their capacity for continuous attendance. By stages men increased their economic power by earning more in personal income. By stages women lost their authority and economic power as they were relegated to the home or to jobs that men saw as inferior and did not therefore wish to undertake (Horrell and Humphries, 1995, pp89 - 117). At a time of great engineering and technical innovation it is clear that while men grasped the

⁶ In analysing gender relationships in terms of the separation of women from direct means of production, Zaretsky (1976) argues that this separation of economy from family under capitalism coupled with industrialisation formed the basis of women's suppression that has lasted until present times.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

opportunities for learning new skills and extending their influence, women were marginalised into an increasingly narrow band of occupations (Pinchbeck, 1981) with domestic service as the single largest occupation open to them. If women were not working in their own homes, they were working in other people's homes.

The evolution of industrialised jobs as male preserves started early in the 19th Century although single women and children were employed in the mills and factories of industrialised Britain at the lower skill levels and repetitive task segments of factory work. Despite struggling to retain their place in industry women were barred from the high-skill, high earning jobs not only by employers who preferred males but by the old guild system of apprenticeships updated to fit the new economy and new trades unions established after the repeal of the Combinations Acts of 1824 - 5 (Walby, 1986, pp91 - 92). Repeal of the acts restored rights to workers to form associations but women, who contributed significantly to production in the shoe, china clay, cotton, food, drink and tobacco mass production industries that emerged during the following century were excluded. Employers and male employees, via trades unions, colluded to exclude women from access to high-skill areas of work and this exclusion was enforced by legislation such as the Mines Act of 1842. This literally and metaphorically served to exclude women from the sources of power

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

generation to the mills and factories of industrial Britain. Subsequent factories and mines acts⁷ ensured that certain types of jobs were developed as male-only strongholds. Women were banned from employment and training in high-skill areas and were finally set aside from engineering opportunities by the refusal of powerful unions to admit them (Drake, 1984). It was only under duress that the Amalgamated Society of Engineers finally agreed to admit women into its ranks in 1943.

Even in the traditionally egalitarian sphere of farming, just as in factories, women were excluded from the new processes introduced by mechanisation. In a segregation of work that is even today reflected in the majority of farming communities in developed and developing economies around the world (Mies and Kumari, 1986), work that had been performed by females solely or females and males together, became almost exclusively the domain of males as new farm machinery was introduced. Females were relegated to keeping animals (Murdock, 1981), remaining in close proximity to the home.

⁷ Factory Acts, seemingly 'protective legislation' against poor working conditions for exploited groups, were passed in quick succession, 1844, 1847, 1864, 1867, 1874, 1878, 1891, 1901. Although several of them refer to women and men equally, the Acts effectively barred women from whole areas of employment.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Hence the oppression of women, 'although not a functional pre-requisite of capitalism, has acquired a material basis in the relations of production and reproduction of capitalism today' (Barrett, 1980, p249). The exclusion of women from decision-making positions where they might potentially earn large rewards is perpetuated because they are pulled into unskilled and low paid jobs in the course of capitalist accumulation (Braverman, 1979). This cycle that has pertained for centuries is self-perpetuating and therefore extremely difficult to break. In the two centuries following the industrial revolution women have consistently been denied opportunities, including until recently the opportunities for apprenticeships, membership of craft guilds and involvement in the main trades unions. The perpetuation of exclusionist practices and segregated jobs is a testament to the depth of culture-change brought about by the industrial revolution to the extent that even today when women and men are achieving similar educational standards, the concept of gendered employment persists (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990).

This legacy of gender divisions has been interrupted on only two significant occasions in modern times. During both the Great War of 1914 –1918 and the Second World War of 1940 – 1945, women were called upon to step into 'male' jobs

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

on the land, in factories and in transport to replace the male labour that had disappeared (Braybon and Summerfield, 1987; Milkman, 1987). Conscription meant that men were in short supply while the demand for materials and mechanically produced goods was higher than ever. Single and childless women therefore abandoned their normal support roles in caring, secretarial and cleaning jobs (Gregson and Lowe, 1994) to replace men in skilled and semi-skilled jobs (Braybon, 1981; Brown and Scase, 1991). Even married women were called upon to work in an era that was to change the lot of women significantly and enduringly. The Second World War represented a watershed in female participation in the labour force in more than one way. Removal of restrictions on employment of married women in a range of occupations, provision of child-care facilities and location of factories in areas with untapped resources from mothers with children were aimed at mobilising labour for a war-time economy (Joseph, 1983, p21).

For the first time, married women in great numbers had access to paid employment and their sojourn into a long list of jobs traditionally reserved for males established them in industries, including technical and engineering, as cheap and plentiful labour (Summerfield, 1984, p29). Women were experiencing the relative autonomy of the armed forces and war service and the independence to spend earned wages (Wise and

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Wise, 1994). Their displacement to other towns to do a range of new work took them to the factory floor, the shipwright's drawing-office, the bus driver's wheel and the accountant's bureau, providing experience of 'masculine' jobs and the value placed on them. The shortage of staff in the telecommunications industry in 1942 for example, was such that public appeals were made by the Post Office for the telephonists who had been forced to resign because of marriage, to return as temporary workers⁸.

Armistice however, heralded a call for their return to their homes or gendered occupations, urged on by unions such as the Amalgamated Engineering Union that sought to secure re-employment for all their male members as a priority. During the times of full employment, the barriers that women had traditionally experienced were weakened and after the war, when women were called upon to forfeit their 'masculine' jobs to the men returning from the armed forces, there was significant

⁸ Source: Post Office Archives, Women's Work: Female Employment in Telecommunications to 1981.

⁵ Women who wished to remain independent and single were subjected to criticism in some popular literature of the time which implied that their condition was unnatural and unhealthy (Smith, 1951).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

resistance⁹. In support of women and in a departure from the fast regendering of occupations that followed the First World War, the period after the Second World War saw the government of the day delay implementation of the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act until 1948. The delay allowed women's access to paid employment to continue, albeit in many cases on a part-time basis. Many women remained in their jobs and the delay encouraged employers to retain their new-found talent for the rebuilding work that had to be performed in post-war Britain (Seldon, 1978, p155). In the meantime, several major changes had taken place.

First, the female psyche had changed forever. Women who wanted to retain the status, wages and satisfaction of working, remained in the paid-employment market in a number of segregated jobs (Seldon, 1978) and in different guises¹⁰. Despite enforced interludes for childbearing and caring, women returned to the workplace in increasing numbers and gradually the time taken out of the workforce for confinement or caring decreased as it has continued to decrease for women in each

⁹ Women who wished to remain single and independent were subjected to criticism in popular literature of the time which implied that their solitary condition was unnatural and unhealthy (Smith, 1951).

¹⁰ Here the measurements for women's employment are clearly subjective as 'official' statistics inherently contain a value loading about what 'counts' as a job (Rees, 1992, p13)

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

decade since the 1950's (Martin and Roberts, 1984). Accompanied by an upturn in the British economy, women found their labour increasingly in demand.

Second, employers' attitudes to women and work had also changed (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990). Combined with shortages in some areas of the labour market, women found themselves being wooed into certain sections of commerce such as catering, transport and telecommunications where they were needed to build the growing economy (Sharpe, 1995, pp353 - 369). In 1946 the Civil Service abolished its marriage bar (Civil Service Clerical Association, 1952, p91) in order to allow the married women who had responded to the call to return to work to remain in employment on a permanent basis, initially at the lowest levels. For the first time married women and women with children, whom many regarded as forming part of that 'reserve army of labour' (Beechey, 1983), were not only retained but also recruited into employment in the Post Office. Even into the 1950's and 1960's labour to rebuild British industry and commerce was in short supply and with almost

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

full employment¹¹, women in post-war Britain enjoyed a developing employment market hitherto unknown.

Finally, the topography of British industry was changing. The traditionally male-employing heavy engineering, smokestack industries of shipbuilding, steel and coal were diminishing and giving way to the new industries of electronics, computing and pharmaceuticals. These opportunities reflected the changing social and economic background of Britain (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Initially there was significant opposition to the employment of women with some men refusing to introduce women to skilled work or to train them in the necessary skills (Summerfield, 1984, pp154 -155). These women were in an impossible situation. The men responsible for their training on the one hand disliked the idea of women earning rates they thought were too high (Lewenhak, 1977, p237; Seldon, 1978, p152). But on the other hand they feared that these 'female dilutees' (Summerfield, 1984, p155) would bring down the rates of pay in industry. It was in this atmosphere that women again entered industry, commerce and business in supporting roles but under different terms than before.

¹¹ Married women were ineligible to register as unemployed except in very exceptional circumstances.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

However, women were no longer substitutes for men or employed because of male skill shortages. Rather it was a requirement for their manual dexterity, their attitudes to work, and the new economic advantages they provided that brought women into demand (Barker and Allen, 1976). They worked for less money and showed a willingness to adapt to the conditions that much of the new types of work demanded. Moreover, the experience of entrants into the labour market between 1947 - 1970 was different according to their sex and marital status. The occupational status increased over time for men, childless women and full-time employed mothers but it decreased for part-time employed mothers (Jacobs, 1999). At the same time women were learning to juggle families and homes and rising to the challenges of dual-career, dual-earning households (Dex, 1988).

Not everyone was happy with the growing female workforce however, and their presence in the employment market caused alarm in some industries. In general the trades unions remained hostile to changes in the workforce and at times campaigned for differentiation (Frow and Frow, 1982, p155), believing with good cause that when women enter a traditionally male area of work the wages go down and the conditions do not improve at the same rate as before (Cockburn, 1991; Wilkinson

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

and Muligan, 1995). Illustrating that in many instances the basis of differentiation was often gender not work related as was the case of women clerks in the Civil Service in the first part of the 20th century. Women clerks performed the same jobs as male clerks until they began to enter the Service in large numbers. Panicked by the influx of women into clerking positions, the all-male union insisted on a differentiation in the title, wages and terms and conditions between men clerks and women clerks. To pacify the union and its members, women were given the title of 'Writing Assistant' from which position they were unlikely ever to be promoted (Humphreys, 1958). The new lower status was accompanied by lower wages than their male counterparts and these women had to work under terms and conditions, such as the marriage bar, that would not have been accepted by their male colleagues.

Men believed that 'any shift to female preponderance in a job would lead to its status and pay being downgraded' (Wilkinson and Muligan, 1995, p41) and that employers were more likely to be able to manipulate the workforce as the number of men in that particular field decreased. But, at least now women were in the career pipeline with some even doing supervisory jobs and positioning themselves ready for

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

management opportunities. They were gaining the experience and qualifications for moving on and up.

In education, the depletion of an educated male class due to the effects of two world wars meant that universities were more willing to accept people from the working classes and females. The introduction of educational grants by the coalition government in 1944¹² was designed principally to help men returning from war service back into education and subsequently into higher quality jobs, but the grants also affected women. Women grasped the opportunity for an education albeit taking a narrower band of courses and over the next 50 years increased in numbers until in the late 1990's when women reached parity in numbers with men graduates from UK universities (EOC, 1999c). The first wave of new universities such as Dundee, Strathclyde and Stirling in the 1960's also provided new opportunities for women and the range of subjects that could be read was gradually extended.

¹² William H. Beveridge, economist and MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, produced the Beveridge Report, which formed the basis for the Butler Act and the 'welfare state'. It influenced the Education Act of 1944 which included the notion of free secondary education for all and the introduction of educational grants for tertiary education. The grants were aimed at, but not exclusively for, men returning from the armed forces whose studies had been interrupted by war service and who were by now too mature to rely on parental aid or were unable to gain support elsewhere.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

There was however, still no concept of educating women to become leaders in industry, business or commerce as it was not until the 1960's that women were admitted onto the business degree courses that would help to equip them for direct entry to decision-making positions in industry. It would also take some time for women to build a presence in industry to make leadership within it feasible. Women had neither been in the industry pipeline long enough nor at the intervening management positions to have the experience to command resources or manage large workforces that often shared common militaristic backgrounds with their male managers. National service for men was still being served until the early 1960's and was ultimately responsible for underpinning the masculine rules of management, exemplified by command-and-control structures, with order giving and order taking in place of consensus and discussion. It has only been since the early 1970's that women have started to climb the organisational ladders (Ledwith and Colgan eds., 1996) and only since the 1980's and 1990's that they have been allowed to influence management styles by their presence in the management hierarchy.

Horizontal segregation

From an historical context it can be seen that the clustering of women in low status jobs is the outcome of a variety of conditions and circumstances foisted on women

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

or accepted by them. From an employment perspective the mix consists of the jobs in which women are employed, the conditions under which women are employed and the ways in which women are perceived.

Horizontal segregation, which can roughly be described as 'job segregation by sex within occupational groups across or within firms' (MacEwen Scott, 1994, p159), is evident in many large-scale operations such as the National Health Service, banking and garment manufacture. This is especially so where the employment of married women in part-time work is involved. In these industries, women are clustered at the low status, low wage and poor terms and conditions end of the spectrum, often vulnerable to fluctuations in the local or national economy (Beechey, 1983). In a study of cleaners in the National Health Service in the early 1980's for example, it was found that more than 75% of the NHS's several hundred thousand cleaners were women. As well as being amongst the lowest paid employees in the organisation these women were also the most vulnerable to redundancy in times of cutbacks (Coyle, 1984).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Since entering employment in large numbers, women have been clustered in so-called low-skill¹³, low-pay areas of employment and in jobs that men are reluctant to perform or find uneconomical to accept. In the same industries men are also clustered in defined work groups but whereas women, especially if they are part-time workers, find mobility either up the hierarchy or to parallel occupations difficult, men in similar low status jobs are often poised to improve their status (Vinnicombe and Colwill, 1995). Of course, the lack of male uptake of employment in low-skill areas could simply be that there is less demand for low-skilled¹⁴ male labour in general (Commission of the European Communities, 1993) as the jobs previously performed by them have become mechanised or obsolete. Whatever the cause, the result is the creation of a depreciatory environment for low-skilled women.

Two major concerns surround this issue. Firstly, when males vacate job categories in large numbers, changes to the structure of an industry occur which have the attendant effects of poor pay and conditions for the employees, mainly women, who

¹³ Skill is defined here as the ability to undertake work to a predefined standard, within a predefined timescale with the ability to repeat the process *ad infinitum* with the same outcomes.

¹⁴ The Delors White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment segregated low-skill men's jobs from the general category of low-skill jobs.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

fill the vacated jobs. Further feminisation ensures that employers can benefit from the increased competition for low-skill jobs created by the larger pool of female labour now available (Rubery et al, 1998, p291). In only a few industries such as nursing and personal services have men attempted to re-enter vacated sectors. Secondly, this shifting of male labour comes about because of the push-and-pull effects of the jobs environment in which males eschew job families because of the low salaries and poor conditions and are pulled into higher-skill jobs by the vacuum created by a vigorous jobs market.

Meanwhile as advances in technology are bringing about changes to the structure of many industries there are signs that some structural changes are deliberately introduced in a modified, down-grade manner by those with vested interests. This occurs when a threat to their traditional territory is perceived¹⁵. And, while taking advantage of the dynamic nature of the employment market to incorporate innovations that occur from decade to decade, whether in technology or in the labour

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

force in good business practice, certain interest groups have formed defensive 'strategies' to serve the incumbent, mainly patriarchal, forces (Knights and Willmott, 1986, p17). These strategies ensure that men remain in predominant positions in the labour market. Evidence of this can be seen in the gendered, horizontally segregated occupations of secretary, clerk, telephone operator and local government administrator, which were at one time the preserve of males. By a combination of strategies that have been identified as pre-emptive closure, pre-emptive incorporation and pre-emptive de-skilling (Knights and Willmott, 1986b), jobs in these industries have been stripped of their power, importance and gravitas as they have become more feminised.

¹⁵ Call Centres have been introduced into many organisations to replace the traditional salesman's visit. While delivering increased sales and revenues, these Call Centres have nevertheless been introduced as a secondary sales function where the agent receives neither the status nor salary and bonus enjoyed by her (for employees in Call Centres are mainly women) direct sales colleagues. Reinforcing the low esteem in which Call Centre jobs are held, they are built in low-cost locations with access to low-cost labour and the construction of cheap warehouse-type operations', says Melanie Howard, co-founder of the Future Foundation (Report by the Yankee Group, April, 2001).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

The secretarial and clerical jobs that were previously performed by men were pre-emptively closed when they fell in status and responsibility as women moved to similar type positions and replaced the men. The 1911 census recognised only one category of clerk being that of males whose 'beautiful hand' (Routh, 1980, p24) wrote correspondence as a precursor to the introduction of the skills of the 'female typewriters'¹⁶. An audit of clerical workers shows that as the number of women in this employment rose by 1370% between 1911 and 1971 (Routh, 1980) it was accompanied by a corresponding gradual lowering of the status of 'clerk' as men fled to other occupations. In subsequent census the category was subdivided as the numbers of women clerks grew and the relative status and earnings fell¹⁷. The pre-emptive de-skilling of the job category was taking place. Feminisation of that part of the workforce was pulling more women into employment and men were vacating these jobs for the more prestigious positions of manager and administrator into which they pre-emptively incorporated the higher value clerking work.

¹⁶ Women have often been the first to adopt new technologies and master new skills and therefore benefit from new mechanical and electrical inventions for the home such as washing machines, sewing machines, vacuum cleaners and cookers,

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

To illustrate the effects of de-skilling at an individual level, there is the not uncommon example of one John J. Carty who started working in the early twentieth century as a boy telephone operator and rose, to become vice president of AT&T the giant US telephone monopoly (Young, 1991). It is inconceivable that this should happen today or in the 80 or so years since the feminisation of operator services. Although the employment area that Carty entered was no different to that entered subsequently by hundreds of thousands of female telephonists the experiences were entirely different. Carty, along with his cohort of male telephonists, was offered access to other positions in the horizontal axis that provided valuable experiences and a springboard for higher office. This provided him with the stepping stones to become one of the most powerful men in global telecommunications in the mid-twentieth century. No woman telephone operator has achieved the same career success from the same starting block because as the position of telephonist was rapidly feminised, the structure of the industry was also changed, effectively barring

¹⁷ In the inquiry as to wages one of the outstanding facts elicited was, that whenever women had replaced men the former always received a much lower wage, and this wage was not proportionate to the skill or intelligence required by the work but approximated to a certain fixed level - about 10s. to 12s. per week. The wage that the man previously received gave no criterion as to what the woman would get, though as a general statement approximately correct, we say that a woman would get from one-third to one-half the wages of a man' (Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, 1906, p119).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

telephonists from the opportunities of upward mobility that the masculinised position had enjoyed.

So, although many jobs in technology¹⁸ and management¹⁹ have traditionally been perceived as male preserves many of the disciplines contained within these categories have been performed at one time by women. But, while it was men's choice whether to participate, women were effectively barred from taking up careers in large families of skilled jobs. And, while the overall number of jobs available was increasing, women became congregated in a relatively small number of disciplines that had generally become 'feminised' over time.

In applying the term 'skill' here there is a strong argument to suggest that the definition is 'saturated with sexual bias' (Phillips and Taylor, 1986, p55). It is too often used as a differentiator, not of work, but of gender, for the work that women do is habitually deemed inferior simply because it is women who do it (Waring, 1989). So in many circumstances, the term 'skill' is used to shore up horizontal gender

¹⁸ Women rapidly adopted the new technologies of typewriters, office machines and photocopiers (Routh, 1965, p24) and computers (Kanter, 1977)

¹⁹ Women formed 20% of all managers in 1911, a figure that was to fall in all subsequent censuses and has never been achieved since (Routh, 1965).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

barriers that include not only job segregation but part-time work, temporary work and casual, seasonal employment²⁰.

Despite barriers however, the number of women in the workforce has increased. Since the 1950's, women in employment in the UK have continued to increase in number every year (Henley Centre, 1996). In 1997 there were 11.4 million working women constituting 44% of the total workforce and of these women, 39% had dependent children (HMG: Women's Unit, July 1998, pp2-3). Anticipating even greater involvement of women in the workplace, it has been estimated that by the year 2011 women will make up 46% of the labour force, a rise of 2% in only 12 years (HMG: Office of National Statistics, 1998). This shift towards women being in employment for most or all of their working lives mirrors the experience of men. However, whereas men in the main, are in full-time employment throughout their working lives, a high number of women are marginalised in part-time occupations

²⁰ As argued earlier in this chapter, women have provided an industrial reserve army to the labour force at times when the labour of men was unavailable or had become more expensive for employers Bruegel (1985). For example, the influx of over 2 million women into the labour market between 1951 and 1971 while benefiting women, also benefited employers as the expansion also meant that wages were suppressed.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

for long periods deprived of the benefits of full-time employment²¹. Nonetheless, the rise in female employment points to the fact that women increasingly want the same as men, which means having the means to support themselves and live independent lives (Wilkinson, 1994)²².

The Government as well as employers must take some responsibility for the lack of initiative in breaking horizontal segregation barriers. Lack of joined-up government has seen the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission undermined by the Careers Service, which has a key role to play in influencing decisions made by school and university leavers (EOC, 1999b). The full range of occupations available and the opportunities for training in traditionally 'masculine' jobs have not been consistently pointed out as a matter of course to all young women asking the Careers Service for help despite evidence that, when given the opportunity, women are likely

²¹ It is only recently that the lack of benefits associated with part-time working, have begun to be addressed. Benefits such as sick pay, holiday pay, redundancy payments, maternity pay, maternity leave, compassionate leave, family leave, pension rights, employment tenure, employment contracts and the myriad other benefits that full-time employees enjoy have hitherto been mainly at employers discretion.

²² In the same study, Wilkinson found that women wanted to be 'less afraid'. This is perhaps more significant as a statement from women than it first appears.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

to apply²³. The counselling service has failed to provide the necessary encouragement and support to young women making career choices and has given scant attention to promoting gender equality.

For young women who do not attend university the encouragement to take up careers in less feminised areas has been largely unsupported. Despite the closing academic gap between boys' and girls' education, traditional stereotypical views still shape young people's choices and women show little inclination to take positions in for example, Modern Apprenticeship schemes. In a recent audit it was found that 67% of Information Technology and 96% of engineering places were taken up by young men (EOC, 1999b). Without encouragement and incentives from the government and its agencies, employers are unlikely to take action that brings women out of their horizontally constructed job ghettos into the full spectrum of job opportunities. Without the setting of targets and naming and shaming of organisations as 'violators

²³ A job advert for applications for trainee London Tube Train Drivers placed in the March edition of Cosmopolitan magazine attracted applications from several thousand women graduates as opposed to the few normally received when similar advertisements are placed in newspapers (reported in Metro Newspaper, 22 February 2001).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

or laggards', (Daimantopoulou, 2000), the government is unlikely to make these issues a priority.

Employers similarly cannot absolve themselves of responsibility for ensuring equality of opportunity amongst their existing staff. The past policies of organisations that have evolved from the privatised utilities, including the energy, aeronautical and telecommunications industries have resulted in enclaves of women at low grades receiving low wages. The segregation of women into the so-called 'soft areas'²⁴ of employment in the former utility companies is furthermore, in great part a result of the nature of the technical and engineering apprenticeship schemes that the Careers Service seems loath to promote to women. As opposed to direct discrimination, the exclusion of women often reflects the assumed undesirability of these jobs to young women in the minds of the recruiters. Serving apprenticeships in these large organisations can include enduring physically hard and strenuous work, long working hours and time spent in conditions that are uncomfortable and isolated with the added inconvenience of shift work. However, the rewards can be limitless in terms of career progression and benefits. Employers continue to shy away from

²⁴ E.g. telesales, customer service and call centre operations.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

taking the initiatives that would mean 'breaking down the barriers that prevent horizontal movement by women into non-traditional jobs' (Cockburn, 1991, p46) and large sections of the labour market therefore remain largely closed to women.

Women's desire for part-time working following breaks for full-time housework has shown that women are likely to take low-status, low-skill, poorly paid jobs in 'feminised' areas of employment (Martin and Roberts, 1984; Dex, 1988). Employers unsurprisingly exploit these circumstances since part-time work is largely demand-driven and encouraged by employers because of their need for employees to work peak periods and anti-social hours (Rubery and Tarling, 1983). It is then more difficult for these women to re-enter mainstream employment from which to re-launch their careers. Though they may have required some formal training and the passing of examinations, nevertheless they are considered to exist in a 'secondary worker'²⁵ category characterised by lack of promotion prospects, insecurity and low pay (Beechey, 1983). The women who are in the best positions to counter the effects of career breaks are those from top professional backgrounds whose

²⁵ The dual labour market theory contends that white men are in the primary labour market being preferred for the positive advantages that accrue to employers when they are hired. By contrast women are categorised as 'secondary worker' status, failing to bring their employers the same benefits as their male colleagues.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

employers provide for maternity leave (MacEwen Scott, 1994, p153). Part-time jobs in these organisations can be less disadvantageous and re-entry to full-time work can be facilitated by continuous training schemes.

Progression in careers is linked in most women's minds to full-time employment and it is a common anxiety of part-time women that, should they attempt to better their positions through promotion, they will be forced to revert to full-time work. Despite the competencies of women who occupy part-time jobs they are likely to be perceived by their employers and colleagues as less dedicated. The result is that they 'may not have access to the more important projects and tasks given to those who are available through the entire work day' (Kelly, 1991, p84). As a result they miss out on training and educational opportunities without which they will find it difficult to progress if they are given the opportunity once again to move into full-time positions. In any event, it is the opportunity that is likely to be missing should women wish to leave part-time work as the structure and recruitment practices of their employers are likely to exclude opportunities for their return to full-time employment (Game and Pringle, 1984). Part-time employment may have virtually de-skilled them for full-time work.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

The impact of part-time employment has therefore had a long-term and far-reaching effect on the careers of women although the example of a recent break-through in the working conditions for nurses and health visitors in the National Health Service may have to be followed by other employers. In a declaration to its staff, the new NHS promises to 'enable them to balance their personal and family commitments outside with those of their careers' (Making a Difference, 1999, p76). The implication, although not explicit, is that women should not lose out when they have to alter their working hours to accommodate their other commitments.

Job status and earning power in segregated jobs means that woman are often doubly jeopardised. There is less status even in the supervisory and management roles in 'feminised' job families such as clothing manufacture, cleaning and the food industry than for example in the automotive, publishing or oil industries and this is mirrored in the disparity in rewards. The opportunities to climb the salary ladder in feminised job families are also restricted since the structure of these job families is generally flatter and therefore offers fewer opportunities for advancement. The suggestion therefore that women and men can have sex equality in societies while at the same time maintaining job divisions on the basis of gender, is erroneous (Crompton and Mann, 1986; Wilkinson ed., 1981; Coote, 1979). It is not credible if

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

only for the reason that the rewards for working outside the home have been given greater currency and power, affording the waged person more control (Hakim, 1978). At a time when the average weekly wage for men is £427.10, women earn only £309.60 or 72.5% (EOC: New Earnings Survey, 1999)²⁶, women still have a long way to go before equality can be achieved. Were it not for the intervention of the government and the Act of Parliament of 1997 that introduced the National Minimum Wage, women are unlikely even to have had this average wage. However, although the Act of 1997 forced employers to increase the wages of many women who were on piecework rates or just simply underpaid, like the Equal Pay Act of 1970 and the Equal Opportunities Act of 1975, it has been ineffective in dealing with the core problems that stem from gendered employment.

Nevertheless women, facilitated by their achievements in education, are moving towards breaking through areas of horizontal segregation. New women graduates are taking up positions in the service areas and for example constitute 52% of new solicitors, 34% of new health professionals and 27% of new buyers, brokers and sales representatives (Henley Centre, 1996). However, only 32% of women leaving

²⁶ Accessible on www.eoc.org.uk/publications

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

education are becoming managers and business administrators, showing that industry is still not their first choice.

At one time it was assumed that by sheer dint of the large numbers of women being available for work, employers would be forced to change their attitudes to women. Market forces would surely prevail with the inevitable outcome that opportunities for women to break through the 'glass ceilings' and undertake a broader spectrum of work would emerge. Conversely however, there appears to be no relationship between the two (Sekeran and Leong, 1992). The market has been slow to change and the advantages that women bring by way of flexibility and adaptability are still confined to relatively few job families (EOC: Women and Men in Britain, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: PROPPING UP THE GLASS CEILING

Together with two other significant constraints to women's progress, the glass ceiling and organisational cultures, the horizontal segregation of women in the employment market has formed barriers to women's progress up the corporate ladders (Bradley, 1989). The aim of this chapter is to show that women in the management pipeline are handicapped by factors over which they have little control and that despite their increasing numbers at the lower levels of management they are more likely than their male counterparts to be detained in the management pipeline at the lowest levels.

Vertical segregation

The vertical segregation of jobs in British organisations has resulted in fewer women than men in management jobs at almost every level. Even at the combined upper levels of senior and middle management, women constitute around 4% only and it is still proving difficult for women to reach these positions (Holton, 1995; Davidson and Cooper, 1992). The increase in employment of women in lower level jobs is

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

therefore simply not translating into significant change in opportunities for women at senior levels even given their raised levels of educational achievement.

The simple description of vertical segregation as the assignment of more men than women to promoted posts (MacEwen Scott, 1994, p159) does not convey the levels of prejudice that support this segregation nor the lack of transparency that constitutes the pillars of gender prejudice. However, as difficult as it is to identify the layers of discrimination which confine women to the lower ranks few would deny that they nonetheless exist. Organisations can be sufficiently habituated to the practice of placing individuals and groups of employees into higher-ranking jobs and responsibility categories using gender as the main criteria, that the practice goes almost unnoticed. The reasons provided for this gender discrimination can range from differences in educational background, lack of experience and expertise or the self-fulfilling vicious circle of lack of line-management skills. The outcomes are evident in the absence of women in positions of authority in UK organisations.

Presently women are clustered in the lower responsibility categories in most organisations (Holton, Rabbetts and Stone, 1997). These positions are characterised by lack of authority, low status and powerlessness. Even in areas of the workforce

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

where the experience and knowledge of women is clearly comprehensive, such as the National Health Service¹, they are detained at the lowest, gendered levels where positions of power and influence remain beyond their grasp (Lane, 1998, pp184 - 191).

The statistics showing that women are almost absent from the boards of British companies (Institute of Directors, 1998) do not reveal the extent to which women are also absent from the intermediate management levels that are the crucial stepping stones towards organisations' boards. The missing statistics for these intermediate levels might offer some guidance on the barriers faced by women on their way up organisations' hierarchies, at which intermediate stages they are detained and whether there is a correlation between stage and reason. That so few women reach the top suggests that the barriers become increasingly fortified in parallel to the status of the job, albeit that this can only be surmised from the information available on these 'pipeline' women². Whereas conditions surrounding the 'glass ceiling' have

¹ Examination of numbers of directly employed staff by sex at 30 September 1999 shows that although women occupied 88.5% of the qualified staff in nursing, midwifery and health visiting (11.5% were men), the management and support staff consisted of only 57.8% of women (42.3% were men). Source: www.doh.gov.uk/HPSSS/TBL_D3.HTM

² The dearth of information on intermediate grades was one of the key reasons for my decision to study women in every management rank in BT instead of confining the study to top levels.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

been explored in depth, gaps in knowledge still exist on the reasons for the numbers of women in management decreasing rapidly at each intermediate stage in the management hierarchy. If women are not evident in significant numbers at these stages there is little opportunity even to reach the Glass Ceiling at director level except perhaps in a non-executive capacity.

There is an assumption in the literature on this subject that the 'glass ceiling'³ is just below director level. On the contrary, the promotions ceiling for women can exist just above the first stage of management, half-way up the hierarchical structure of the organisation or even below management level altogether. It matters little whether women attempting to move up in organisations are restricted in their progress by fundamental barriers such as the expectation in many industries that women will be submissive and occupy inferior roles while men will be dominant and occupy superior ones (Symons, 1992), or experience the more subtle barriers of ridicule and exclusion (Jamieson, 1997). The outcomes are the same. There is lack of progress

³ This has been described as a concrete ceiling for ethnic minority women (Davidson, 1997).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

or virtual regression and downward mobility as peer groups travel onward and upward leaving women behind.

Barriers to vertical movement in organisations could be identified as falling into several main groups. The first group of barriers are those erected by organisations or individuals within them, where women work in secondary and support roles have no real encouragement to climb the management hierarchies. Women may find themselves barred from progress by formal pre-conditions for management posts or lack of support from informal sources. The second group of barriers surrounds women's attitudes to their careers and the various other life-roles that are accepted by women or imposed by society's expectations of them as rearers and carers. A final set of barriers has only recently been explored in greater depth and shows that that women may deliberately close down their options and limit their careers (Dowling, 1994; Hakim, 2000) not because of lack of ability but because they do not wish to pursue career success.

From an early age, women are conditioned to temper their behaviours so that they might remain acceptable and attractive to their elders. The relentless conditioning of their behaviours and the constant reminders that they are expected to be a 'good girl'

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

teach women from infancy to seek endorsement of their actions, and make women crave acceptance and approval (Friday, 1977). In the absence of other role models, women in the past have prepared themselves for the same type of life as their mothers. The gendered behaviours that women apparently instinctively know (Oakley, 2000) or have learned from previous generations (Roberts, 1998), position them in supportive roles in secondary positions instead of in leading roles taking the initiative (Bandura, 1985). This social conditioning which takes place primarily in the home and is later reinforced in schools (Arnot and Weiner, 1987) is designed to prepare women for life as a wife and mother but often leaves them feeling unfit for the rough and tumble of the business world (Schwarz Cowan, 1979). If work and management are viewed as a natural progression to education, play and games, then women are at an early disadvantage. Boys can transfer their team participation and leadership learning to the management situation while girls have few such learned skills to offer (Rosener, 1995).

Where women have had a challenging home environment or the benefit of a 'strong role model' (Golombok, 1994, p50) they are more likely to strive for high-level management positions and climb the corporate ladders. They are less likely to be constrained by the traditional gender roles that depict men as aggressive, ambitious,

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

action oriented and naturally holding authority and women as supportive, co-operative, passive and nurturing (Nicolson, 1996). Where the giving of orders is not a natural progression from girls' early play, receiving criticism however constructive, can come as a shock that provokes distaste and induces feelings of powerlessness (Blauner, 1964). Consequently the discomfort that these conditions evoke may lead women to work at levels far below their level of competence and inhibit their attempts for promotion into jobs where they may face antagonistic behaviours.

Women are still not thought of as the stuff of leaders or managers and those who do succeed in holding down management jobs constantly struggle to reaffirm their credentials even to the extent that they will adopt attitudes and postures to manage like a man (Wajcman, 1998). These women counter attitudes that place them as tame, people centred, non-aggressive and not progressive while their male colleagues are perceived as articulate, forceful, ambitious, objective, self-confident and progressive even by the females in organisations (Davidson and Burke, eds., 1994). Stereotypical characteristics seen as immutable, associate male management characteristics with power, control, technical adeptness and focusing on tasks, being analytical, hierarchical and placing high importance on achievement. At the same time feminine management characteristics are perceived as weaker and about being

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

people centred, emotional and focusing on teams which were not the attributes that the typical large organisation would place first in order of importance (Sargent, 1981).

Without at least some 'masculine' features, women's attributes and skills therefore have presented the antithesis of those required by most conventional organisations in their management but for the women whose upbringing has not nurtured in them a need to reflect 'feminine' behaviours⁴, this barrier at least does not exist. This latter group of women are likely to find themselves as the minority managers in the type of organisations that have relatively few women in positions of power and where the attitudes and values⁵ typically associated with women are considered less valuable than those of males (Sargent, 1981). Some women managers are naturally more robust than their peers and adept at command-and-control order giving while others may feel compelled by ambition or organisational cultures to adopt a more assertive

⁴ An Institute of Manpower (IMS) report (EOC, October 1992, pxi) showed that 'assertiveness may be considered appropriate behaviour for men but not for women for whom tact may be seen as an appropriate behaviour. Thus stereotypical views about the nature of male and female attributes are likely to have an impact on the performance ratings...'

⁵ The same IMS report (EOC, October 1992, pxi) explained the attributes that women and men valued as different and 'intelligence, dynamism, energy and assertiveness were rated as important among male subordinates whereas thoroughness, organisation, dependability and honesty were valued highly for female subordinates'.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

stance and mimic men in order to progress in management (Powell, 1993). 'Some women defend them, others say women in authority are 'incredibly pushy', strident and aggressive' (Cockburn, 1991, p69). For either of these sets of women the prospect of aiding colleagues of the same gender towards higher office could not be assumed (Shaw and Perrons, 1995, p30)⁶ since they would be aware of the ridicule and exclusion that could accompany their open support (Maddock, 1999).

Even in the late 1990's when women were gaining university qualifications at the same rate as men they could not expect to step into 'direct entrance' positions in organisations in the same numbers as their male colleagues. Industry⁷, where most high-flying management jobs are to be found, is still the first choice for many male graduates whose applications to industry for management positions outnumber women's by an estimated 4 to 1⁸. However, it is not the first choice for many women and they often come to management through routes other than direct

⁶ These authors note 'the failure of 'successful' women to support other women, or their propensity to betray them' (Shaw and Perrons, 1995, p30).

⁷ Industry in this case covers all areas outwith the not-for-profit sector.

⁸ This estimate was provided by a break-out discussion group at the Opportunity 2000 summer event, hosted by Texaco in Docklands, London in 1998. Taking part in the discussion were members of the Metropolitan Police Force, Northern Ireland Electricity, BT, the Ministry of Defence, Lloyds/TSB bank and a number of other large organisations.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

entrance. Most women leave university with non-engineering undergraduate degrees⁹ (HESA, 1999) while preference in most of the for-profit sector is given to direct entrant candidates with engineering, technical or computing degrees. Women still constitute only 15% of graduates from engineering courses (Kirby, 1996) despite the campaigning of institutions such as Women into Science and Engineering in the mid-1980's. Engineering is seen by both sexes as tough, heavy, dirty and largely as men's work which is unsuitable for women (Evetts, 1998, p4).

The type of degree obtained however, has far-reaching effects on careers as it is likely to influence the area of the business into which the graduate enters, the salary scale embarked upon and the directness or indirectness of the line to the upper echelons of the organisation. Moreover, once inside a blocked or gendered area women more than men find it difficult to gain the horizontal move to another function that would reposition them on a vertical path. If movement within organisations is indeed governed by the degree of personal comfort or discomfort and

⁹ Women undergraduates occupy over 70% of the places on Education, Languages and subjects allied to Medicine while male undergraduates occupy over 80% of the places in Engineering, Technology and Computing degrees (HESA, 1999). Women undergraduates are therefore taking degrees that will fit them more for jobs in the not-for-profit sectors of employment rather than those in industry although figures for 1998/99 show that increasing numbers of women are taking business and administration subjects with numbers reaching almost parity between the sexes.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

the organisational fit felt by individuals (Cassell and Walsh, 1994), women trying to break out of their traditional areas into positions with prospects can expect to leave behind their comfort zone. This in part accounts for the disparity in numbers of senior women managers in occupations where women outnumber men. Women feel less able to espouse the bureaucratic culture, embedded conflict and personal time constraints (Cameron and Quinn, 2000) that still have to be worked through at the upper echelons of most large organisations. Women for example make up 52% of employees in the banking, finance and insurance sectors but their average earnings, amounting to only 55% of their male counterparts earnings (EOC: New Earnings Survey, 1999) reflect their lowly status in these organisations.

While women occupy most of the nursing jobs and perform the vast majority of essential, core tasks of care in the National Health Service, only 28% of chief executive or general manager posts are held by women (Finlayson and Nazroo, 1998, p3). Similarly, even in Call Centres, Telesales and Telemarketing operations where women perform the majority of what is considered low-skill work, women experience more difficulty than men in attaining higher-grade jobs despite the newness of the industry. While this may be accounted for partially by the initial motivations of many of these women who take advantage of the part-time work and flexible hours in

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

these high-turnover operations, this cannot be the whole reason. Women are hampered by the legacy of the point at which they entered these 'sweatshops of the information age' (Yankee Group, 2000)¹⁰ and find their opportunities for advancement more restricted than those of male counterparts. Where women have entered at a clerical or secretarial grade for example they are unlikely to be offered the same training or apprenticeship opportunities that men entering organisations at a correspondingly low grade are offered. Thus, they find movement from their gendered and sex typed roles almost impossible (Pringle, 1989).

The model of management for the majority of people remains male (Schein and Davidson, 1993) and, while on one hand the feminist revolution has made a difference in terms of the number of women in the workforce, on the other hand, stubborn patterns of gender inequality and discrimination still remain (Halford and Leonard, 2001, p2) and they are retained at the lower levels. That women lack shared experiences with men not only offers the organisation an excuse for rejecting their attempts to further their careers but impacts on women's working relationships

¹⁰ One senior manager, Paul Makin, who had risen through the ranks at service centres, (which are very similar in profile to call centres) commented that 'It is always good to be where the growth in consumer demand is'. He became head of European call centre development for a unit of General Electric Capital Services Inc. (BusinessWeek, January 1999).

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

with male colleagues who have had the opportunity to form bonds, mentoring relationships and alliances with colleagues and more senior men in the management line (Kanter, 1977). The 'line' process and continuous, linear progression which identifies the typical male model of employment (Richardson, 1996) still retains disproportionate importance in large organisations. There, perceptions of employees who cannot for example work deep into own-time and attend extended training courses are that they are less committed to careers (Opportunity Now, April 2002). This is likely to affect women who aspire to management jobs for they are deterred by commonly held perceptions of them as inadequate for jobs running businesses because they are less able to take stress, are less committed than men and lack team-building abilities (Baack, Carr-Ruffino, Pelletier, 1993).

It is not always a benefit to their hopes for advancement that women are perceived as being egalitarian, placing high importance on job satisfaction and colleague contentment. In a study of women in university positions, these attributes were associated with the female members of staff. The features attributed to male members of staff however differed in the approach to their work, their thinking and reactions, their motivations and perceptions, their concerns and experiences. However, despite what may be seen as a highly favourable comparison, experience of

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

the past showed that it was unlikely that the female members of staff would gain promotion at the same pace as their male colleagues (Coleman, 1991)¹¹. So, while these descriptions of women as friends and colleagues may be highly desirable, in a management context they are perceived as weak. Management operates within an organisational context where it is expected to reflect the value systems of the majority of the people in the organisation and in most organisations, the majority of full-time employees are male.

Non-traditional organisations may place equal value on the 'hard' technical skills that fulfil a technical solution as well as the 'soft' people-related skills that provide the ability to cope with the cultural aspects of continuous change (Ragsdell, 2000, pp104 - 120). However, few traditional organisations, even if they seek to be diverse and multi-cultural, pursue a system that places equal value on women and men (Collinson and Hearn eds., 1996). Instead, women continue to be discriminated against because of the perception, promulgated by popular media (O'Sullivan and

¹¹ The research methodology was unconventional in that the author conducted the research in her own workplace, with people she was in contact with regularly. Furthermore, she added her own experiences and observations to the research in a methodology previously employed by John Reason in 1981.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

Sheridan, 1999) that management is not a job that women do well (Adkins, 1995) despite the lack of supporting evidence.

The choice to retain the status quo is seen as a safe option, especially in cultures where fear stifles initiative and open communications (Ryan and Oestreich, 1998). In that environment, promoting a woman manager would be seen as a risk, a perception that perpetuates the failing environment. Many women are reluctant to be seen as openly assertive or ambitious and instead of asking for promotion, wish to be invited into it which reinforces the stereotypical model of women as subservient and the assumption that women are unfit to manage.

For progress to be made it is necessary for women themselves to take risks and to push for promotion into non-conventional areas of businesses. They need to pursue this even if they risk being perceived as 'masculine' for this is often the psychological consequence of the gender imbalance for women who aspire to high ranking positions (Nicolson, 1996). Ambitious women often have to play the two aspects of their lives, home and work, in distinctly different characters especially if their work involves developing the 'male' side of their psyche. For 'unless women are able to reject the traditional female sex-role, they are likely to see a career in management as

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

transgressing sex-role appropriate behaviour (White and Cox, 1991, p17). Where women have managed to break through the organisational barriers and into senior management they are often better equipped to deal with the range of work than men and more able to adapt to the new ways of working that are beginning to come into practice (Woodd, 1999, pp21 - 28).

When he joined the Yorkshire Bank as the new Chief Executive Officer in 1994, Tom Gallacher was 'shocked by the bank's poor record of promoting women' and stated that he 'would accept no excuses for the barriers that had been erected against women' (Financial Times, 1997, p27). Quick to realise the benefits of encouraging women, especially as the bank was introducing new working practices, he established new selection and promotion practices¹². But Gallagher's attitude was the exception rather than the rule in an industry that has been revolutionised by the introduction of call-centre operations peopled mainly by part-time women. Even when women are able to reach senior management positions they are not secure.

¹² Gallagher appointed the Yorkshire Bank's first gender champion, Pam Pepper, and launched a scheme to encourage women who had been in branches for a long time, to seek promotion. This increased the number of women moving into the first level of management by 29% over 1996-97.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

In many of the old organisations, including the finance industry and telecommunications, women have been particularly vulnerable in senior management positions to the effects of de-layering and restructuring of their companies. Redundancies, which were a feature of the 1990's, may be 'why the proportion of women managers is actually falling' (Shaw and Perrons eds. 1995, p30). Furthermore, just when they are reaching the top, women have a propensity to back off and moderate their ambitions if they perceive opposition thereby capping their careers prematurely by resigning themselves to going no further. These women may be suffering the effects of so called 'pseudo-competency' (Clarkson, 1994) which undermines their confidence and prevents them from applying for more challenging jobs. However, this fear of failure may also mask an even more dreadful fear of appearing successful as this may put at risk the personal relationships held dearest. Many women have been conditioned to feel guilty if they attempt to surpass the men in their lives, be that brother or spouse, by gaining higher status jobs (Harvey and Katz, 1985).

Where they succeed into senior management positions, women managers come under additional stresses because of their isolation in high ranks. They are observable in a way that men are not and may feel more vulnerable because of it. As a minority

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

group subjected to male-dominated policy-making, female managers experience a greater number of work-related pressures compared to male executives (Cooper and Davidson, 1984, p33). Women in senior positions, by their unusualness appear to threaten the status quo for they represent a discontinuity in organisations whose perception is that 'continuity is comfort' (Handy, 1990) and does not demand the learning of new skills or games.

For organisations that develop women the rewards can be the introduction of new ideas and ways of doing things. However, attempts to relate the development of women into management as a bottom line issue associated with future corporate success (Schwartz, ed. 1988) have until now been no more successful than attempts to bring gender equity to the fore as a universal business issue (Haas, Hwang and Russell eds., 2001). Women have shown their aptitudes to and abilities for adopting new ways of working and despite pernicious perceptions that women are not technically minded, they have been particularly receptive to new technological innovations in the workplace. The first computer programmers employed by the US government in groundbreaking work between 1944 and 1946, were 100 women graduates (Kanter, 1977). On that project, men showed no interest in performing programming tasks preferring to concentrate on the traditional engineering role of

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

building the hardware. However, when men realised that the programming work was essential to the new business of computing, the situation was reversed and they quickly moved to occupy the key roles. At the point that the nature of the enterprise changed, the business opportunities were reassessed and the 'essentialness' to profitability brought an upgrading of the status and rewards which were likewise reassessed. The women were eased out of their key positions relinquishing them to men who, even in the absence of an established career path, instinctively recognised the potential to make career progress.

Nevertheless, the introduction of the new gender-unaware technologies (Bilton et al, 1996b) that allow remote access to databases, emails from office-remote geographical locations and the management of business information from home are likely to be the facilitators of a new generation of women in management. They offer the possibility of combining family responsibilities and the maintenance of a responsible career position in a way that has hitherto been impossible. But they still empower women in only one aspect, albeit a vital one, of the complex management role. While the majority of managers prefer to interact with each other in a face-to-face medium, the new technologies will do little to progress women facing conflicting demands. For many analysts male management styles remain the tallest

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

barriers for women to leap and the myth of the feminisation of work and the illusion that women are making inroads into the upper echelons of industries (Bradley, Stephenson et al, 2000) remains just that. It is contradicted by the persistent tenure of men in large numbers in high-skill areas and throughout all levels of management. Instead of making inroads, women find their way barred by an invisible obstacle that prevents them from further development.

Frustrated by the sight of their male peers being promoted while they remain at levels where they could only see the jobs, working women in this position have only three options. They can leave their present organisations to seek satisfaction elsewhere (Marshall, 1995), leave in order to start up their own businesses (Colgan and Tomlinson, 1996, p73; Hymounts, 1986) or remain in the knowledge that promotion will not be forthcoming. Many more women than before are choosing independence and their own businesses.

Countering the Glass Ceiling

The phenomenon of the glass ceiling, whereby women with appropriate levels of qualifications and experience find themselves trying to no avail for promotion to the most senior management or board level positions, has not diminished in the last

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

three decades. Authors continue to span the decades writing about the limitations placed on women in management (Marshall, 1984 and 1995; Cooper ed., 1982; Cooper and Lewis, 1998; Kanter 1977 & 1989) and the reasons for women's lack of progress onto the boards of British organisations. But attempts at diminishing the effects of the glass ceiling have included several initiatives. However, even after the forming of the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Women's Unit in the Government and the development of the Business in the Community sub-group, Opportunity 2000¹³ to counter gender prejudice, little has changed for top women. These organisations have encouraged women to aspire to top roles and to litigate where reason fails to ensure equal chances but gender equality at the upper echelons of organisations is only slowly changing and the 'glass ceiling' remains a reality. And while the number of women executive and non-executive directors in the Times Top 200 British Companies has almost doubled since 1993, of more than 2000 directorship appointments in 1997, women still held less than 5% (Fortune, October 1998). When examined more closely the credibility of this number falls further. Opportunity 2000, for whom the survey was conducted, found that of one hundred and nine board appointments that were held by ninety-seven women directors in the

¹³ Renamed 'Opportunity Now' in 1999.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

group of companies, the majority of these directorship appointments were non-executive as opposed to the more influential and powerful executive directorships. Organisations were bestowing the title while withholding the power as many of these women had no control over the day-to-day operations of the organisations they served. In the management pyramid leading to the upper echelons and board level positions in organisations, it would be reasonable to assume that women might be represented in roughly the same proportions as they appear at the lower levels but this is not the case. The effects of vertical segregation however, mean that before reaching board level, women wanting a career are likely to stop somewhere short of the top and the higher the rank, prestige or influence, the smaller is the proportion of women (Hansard Society Commission, 1990).

Attempts to accelerate the introduction of women into more areas of the workforce and into more positions of responsibility included the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)¹⁴ in 1976 by the then Labour government. Its formation as a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (Quango) was

¹⁴ The EOC includes amongst its commissioners, members from organisations and interest groups including the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Trades Union Congress (TUC). A list of Equal Opportunities commissioners is available on www.eoc.org.uk/html/annual_report.html

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

driven by the need to monitor the workings of the earlier Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act of 1970. The EOC's remit was 'to eliminate discrimination; promote equality of opportunity between men and women; help individuals seek redress under the law'¹⁵. However, headquartered at arms-length in Manchester away from the centre of commerce and industry in Britain¹⁶ and with a modest budget that only just exceeds £6m per annum¹⁷ it was both geographically remote from the London hub of decision-making and cash-strapped. The Equal Opportunities Commission had the experience of the United States of America's attempts at reform, which had already been established by the American Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Law of 1963¹⁸, which sought to outlaw discriminatory policies. Subsequent U.S. legislation in 1994, among other things, assured women that any company with more than 15 employees could not discriminate against them though companies with fewer employees could still exercise discriminatory practices. However the

¹⁵ EOC mandate 1976, page 4.

¹⁶ Proximity to the seat of government in London may have facilitated closer working relationships with influencers. The geographical remoteness and the low budget allowed by the government has probably had a significant effect on the EOC's lobbying activities with major institutions such as the Institute of Directors (IoD), Industrial Society and the London Chamber of Commerce and City and Guilds organisation. All of these are based in London and all have the ability to influence the recruitment and employment policies of their members.

¹⁷ Government grant to EOC for 1998/9 was £6,042,150, www.eoc.org.uk/html/annual_report.html.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

introduction of UK equal opportunity legislation differed in one major area. Unlike legislation in the USA where laws dealing with sexism, disability and racism were bundled together to simplify, strengthen and speed the progress of new laws, the UK legislation dealt only with sexism. Disabled and ethnic minority groups had to press for their own causes separately. Equality laws were therefore initiated separately from the other types of discrimination meaning that the commissions on race, disability and sex could all be competing for parliamentary resources and time. Critics of the EOC and the legislation that was subsequently introduced pointed to the USA's Affirmative Action programme, which enjoyed early successes in managing minority groups into hitherto unattainable positions.

In setting up the Commission, the government hoped that the UK model and supporting legislation for women would work towards re-balancing the numbers of women and men at all levels in the workforce and importantly, redress the pay inequalities. Legislation was introduced that discouraged discriminatory employment practices and for the first time employers could be prosecuted for

¹⁸ The U.S. EO legislation also impacted on universities and colleges. In 1963 Harvard Business School, for the first time, accepted applications for student places from women.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

continually ignoring the rights of their female or male workforces. To boast this, the now familiar Equal Opportunities 'kite-mark' can be seen extensively in job advertisements and on organisations' notepaper. Despite this however, it is evident that the EOC has failed to substantially change the mindsets of most of industry and other employers. Many large organisations while supporting the post of an Equal Opportunity Adviser or Manager within their Human Resources departments nevertheless fail to offer practices that would ensure the fair and equal treatment of all their employees. Illustrating the absence of significant change are the statistics for women in management provided by Opportunity 2000¹⁹ which was established in 1991 and led initially by a number of women who had worked on the EOC. Early signatories of the Opportunity 2000 charter agreed to endeavour to redress the imbalances in their own workplaces and Opportunity 2000 too developed a 'kite-mark' to be used by participating employers.

However, only five years after the establishment of Opportunity 2000, concerns were being raised about the ability of Opportunity 2000 to effect any real change. In a

¹⁹ Opportunity 2000 was started by Business in the Community, a not-for-profit organisation which is supported by subscriptions from a consortium of around 350 companies, including BT, ICI, M&S, Texaco, Midland Bank, Lloyds/TSB and Prudential. BitC aims to forge strong links between businesses and communities. A list of member organisations can be found at www.bitc.org.uk.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

candid interview, Shelagh Diplock the Director of the Fawcett Society told Maureen Freely of her concern about the 'excessive timidity' of Opportunity 2000 (Guardian Newspaper, 2 December 1996). Diplock observed that Opportunity 2000 was worried about creating a campaign atmosphere but so low was the activity profile of Opportunity 2000 that a lot of women did not even know that they were in Opportunity 2000 companies. Diplock wondered if perhaps Opportunity 2000 was afraid of offending its sponsors – who were of course, also the companies it was monitoring. Included in that group of around 350 companies was BT and its involvement was publicised inside the organisation and externally where it gained accolades for its 'enlightened' equal opportunities policies.

In 1998, Opportunity 2000 invited its member organisations to provide statistics on their numbers of women in management positions. However, only 152 member companies responded and although the number of women directors had improved, the results clearly showed that the total number of women at middle and senior management positions had actually fallen between 1996 (54%) and 1997 (51%)

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

(Management Today, July, 1998). At the same time the study²⁰ showed that the number of women in junior management and clerical grades continued to grow. If these companies submitted their measurements because they thought they had made advances in introducing more women overall to management positions they clearly lacked an understanding of the basic issues of women in management. Of even more concern however, is that almost 200 member companies did not respond, ignoring the call for audit numbers and subsequent reminders. It is a matter for speculation as to why they did not wish to reveal their statistics on the subject. With the Millennium rapidly approaching the organisers of Opportunity 2000 decided to rename the organisation 'Opportunity Now' from the end of 1999 but the reality remains that it had failed in its mission to significantly change the gender balance of member organisations by the year 2000²¹.

The Women's Unit was formed within the Department for Education and Employment in the final years of the Conservative period in government in the mid-

²⁰ The calculation for the number of women directors registered by these Opportunity 2000 companies was changed in 1997.

²¹ Opportunity Now (previously Opportunity 2000) has a membership of 341 organisations from the public, private and not-for-profit communities at 12 April 2000. Source www.opportunitynow.org.uk.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

1990's. The reasons for its formation, especially as it followed the establishment of the EOC twenty years before, are not entirely clear. Taking it over in 1997, the New Labour government provided it with the authority and the staff to collect and analyse never before produced statistics on women's welfare, education and work and this may be seen in the future as one of its major achievements. But, if it was meant to nurture women and encourage their participation and introduction into industry, it has not succeeded.

Even in the U.S., which initiated work on Equal Opportunities before the UK, this nurturing environment has not yet come into view despite the rise of new industries and disciplines. Lynn Martin, former U.S. Secretary of Labour and first Chair of the Glass Ceiling Commission noted that sole women are still the norm in leadership positions in most U.S. organisations. She stated that, 'aggregate statistics showing women in increasing numbers in leadership positions mask the reality that not all progress is distributed evenly throughout a company or throughout the country as countless women are still the only professionals in the office' (O'Brien, 1998, pxiii). While the number of women succeeding to senior management positions may not have changed significantly in the U.S. at least 'now there are many more women waiting to be chosen' (O'Brien, 1998, p10). Meantime, in the hi-tech state of

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

California, the Affirmative Action programme supported by the Civil Rights Act of 1991 has met with such opposition from these institutions in Silicon Valley that in 1997 the California State Legislature introduced Proposition 209 in a first step towards abandoning Affirmative Action. The 1991 Act had been established to counteract prejudices and was aimed at getting more women and ethnic minorities into positions in organisations, including senior management positions. By comparison, in the UK the Equal Opportunities Commission has not even won the support achieved by the EEOC in the U.S.²² and successive EOC Commissioners²³ have been unable to effect strategies to significantly change the practices of laggard companies from continuing in their discriminatory practices.

²² Whereas the U.S. EEOC has been supported by the creation of a succession of organisations such as the Glass Ceiling Commission and by research groups such as the non-for-profit organisation Catalyst, which regularly monitors and produces statistical information on women's progress in corporations, the EOC has little direct support. At times the Women's Unit even appears to be in competition with the EOC. The other major organisation that may have supported the EOC, Opportunity Now (Opportunity 2000 as was) which sits within Business in the Community, has shown itself to be not only impotent in challenging organisations on their gender composition but unable to maintain consistent, measurable, records

²³ The 11 Commissioners currently holding office are mainly from a variety of educational establishments, not-for-profit organisations, retirees and trades unions. While they may also undertake independent consultancy work, only one person was registered as working full-time for a commercial organisation on 12 April 2000 www.eoc.org.uk.

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

The significance of this is that conditions in the UK usually follow, albeit with an interval of several years, the conditions in the U.S. The gap in intent to change therefore and the achievement of change however is in this case likely to be a long one. External attempts to remove this almost impervious barrier, that have included equality legislation and the opening up of institutions to women along with the establishment of Quangos to monitor progress, have largely failed. Despite this, a shift in employer attitudes is nevertheless perceptible perhaps due more to technical advancements and economic imperatives than to a desire to promote women *per se*. New developments in engineering, computing, customer service and telecommunications are progressively changing the organisational structures of businesses and subsequently, the profiles of management. It is thought that new organisations, characterised by their flatter structures and 360-degree communications will dispense with traditional hierarchies and the trappings of rank in favour of a collegiate system (Kantor, 1989) but there is scant evidence.

Perceptions of women are gradually changing and it is women themselves who are challenging others' pre-conceived ideas of their career orientations. They are challenging the sceptics that doubt their commitment to having a family and a career punctuated by promotions. They are contesting the indictment of not taking their

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

careers seriously in the knowledge that such accusations can undermine women's confidence and chances of taking on new work that they are well qualified to do (Knights and Willmott, 1986, p155).

The literature outlined in these two chapters on the theoretical frameworks and horizontal and vertical segregation of women served as the basis for this research. Studies on these areas provided reference points and examples of the impact of discriminatory practices. The following chapter now addresses the circumstances in which these discriminatory practices thrive for they must be nurtured and maintained to survive at all. Although less well studied, the culture of the former public utilities was both unique and strong and shared a common base. The concept of organisational culture, though well understood, has complex elements that must also be disaggregated for to do otherwise would render this text indecipherable. The next chapter will therefore separate out the main elements of organisational culture. It will show that, though many discriminatory practices were repugnant, they were carried out in absolute transparency and were therefore easier to deal with than their latter day insidious counterparts. The history of the utilities is a relatively short and unique part of the British employment scene but this legacy remains in organisations

WOMENS EMPLOYMENT: The evolution of segregated workplaces

such as BT where it is now according to the findings of this research, the covert dealings that are harming women's interests.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: PERPETUATING INEQUITIES

While it is evident that there are as many different organisational cultures as there are organisations it is also evident that large organisations share common features associated with their size, background, history, industrial segment or employee profiles, which allow us to understand them as a genre. This chapter explores some of the behaviours in large organisational that have been found to consistently alienate women and outlines the initiatives that several organisations have introduced in order to help women to overcome present barriers and provide them with improved opportunities for advancement. Several studies have shown that it is specifically the activities of the 'old boy's network', including informal networking and mentoring for progress that succeed in excluding women. Further studies have shown the effects of macho management on women's careers and finally the issues that women face surrounding mobility are discussed.

The culture of the engineer-manager

Its starting point however is the under-researched but crucial notion that the former public utility industries in particular share a common history. They had an especially strong and pervasive culture that featured mutual characteristics surrounding the processes of management¹ and embedded in that shared culture was the hierarchy of activities undertaken only by male engineers (Pollard, 1965; Alford, 1988; Wilson, 1995)². Men who performed these tasks had the title of 'engineer' enjoyed a certain status. 'The term 'engineer' was often synonymous with 'manager' in some industries, most notably in the other network utilities emerging at that time, continuing a tradition started by the civil engineers in the eighteenth century which survived well into the twentieth'³ (Wilson, 1995, p41). These engineers were not only responsible for designing, building and managing their projects but also for the recruitment of skilled workers, the co-ordination and supply of raw materials and for

¹ NT Taylor, the father of Scientific Management, had trained as a mining engineer.

² In describing the cultures and activities of the managers in the industries that were to become known as 'utilities', Pollard (1965) Alford (1988) and Wilson (1995) refer consistently to 'men' and intersperse 'manager' with 'men' in a mode that suggests there were no women performing managerial tasks in these industries. Although not explicitly stated, this is likely to be the case since there is no evidence to suggest that any of the gas engineers/managers (Alford, 1988; Wilson, 1991) or civil engineers/managers (Pollard, 1965) referred to were other than men.

³ The author was referring to the growing rail industry and the newly emerging energy industries of the mid-19th Century.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

the accounting and reporting functions. In effect, the engineers took responsibility for every aspect of the day-to-day running of these organisations while the board of directors, who were more likely to be local businessmen than technicians, formulated strategy.

Although this profile provides us with a different picture of the duties of engineers to that of the limited set of functions that they now perform, it gives an insight into why male engineers may feel they have tenure on the term 'manager' even into the twenty-first century. Common practices were so tightly knotted into their engineering cultures that it was inevitable they would persist decades after privatisation. Women cannot share that professional history for the simple reason that they were not there, and insufficient time has elapsed with women in managerial positions for them to be perceived by many of the men and women in these former utilities as equal to the job.

When asked about the barriers to progress for women in corporate America, a large number of the 325 heads of industry in the U.S. surveyed, thought women had not made it to the top because they had not been in the pipeline long enough. The majority of respondents thought that the lack of general management or line-management experience formed the strongest barrier (Wellington, 1996) to success

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

in the corporate world. Since gaining this experience is outwith the grasp of most women, because of the vertical lines and disciplines that they pursue in reaching for the top, they are therefore doubly jeopardised. When attempting to win top corporate jobs they have had neither tenure on line jobs nor the cultural backgrounds of their male colleagues.

For male managers from the old established industries, changes in organisational policy and practice, especially where the introduction of women who had previously been in subordinate locations within industrial sectors was involved, represented a threat (Hakim, 1996). Furthermore, as the most common forms of change experienced across these industry sectors involved cost reduction, redundancy, culture change and performance improvement (Worrall and Cooper, 1997), incumbents have felt increasingly insecure. Their reaction has been to seek the maintenance of closed systems of occupational opportunity as barriers to entry and the effective closure of managerial opportunities at middle and upper levels for the few women already admitted in various occupations (Romanienko, 2000). These tactics inevitably influenced decisions made by senior management who carry the responsibility of maintaining business-as-usual and minimal impact upon their organisations' operation and functioning. As it is impossible to bring about radical

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

change while at the same time expecting other aspects of the same organisation to remain unchanged (Senior, 1997) progress within these large organisations aimed at introducing women into new areas has been consistently hindered.

Men form the majority management population in large organisations and it is the human resource policies and attitudes that hired them and retained them that are an expression of their organisations' aspirations. Human resource strategies inevitably underpin business targets in an iterative process so that decisions on long-run goals and the scope of activities constitute primary strategy which leads to human resource decisions on the way the enterprise is structured to achieve its goals (Salaman 1981). If there is a fundamental and inextricable link between the way that organisations pursue their vision of the future and the way that they recruit and retain their people, then it must be assumed that the paucity of women in organisations has not been accidental. Furthermore, as organisations reflect the philosophy, attitudes and actions of top managers (Mullins, ed., 1999), organisations have only the scope and intellect of that section of people to act within. Understanding these interdependencies assists comprehension of organisations' behaviours, policies and practices in areas such as female recruitment, equal opportunities and diversity and places organisational attitudes within an overall context. In such traditional

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

organisations, attempts to change the processes surrounding the engineer-manager position by making it accessible to women can disrupt the balance of power⁴ with the result that men may consciously or sub-consciously attempt to retain power in informal ways⁵. Discrimination through various means such as apprenticeship schemes, union membership and professional bodies has been sustained.

Until relatively recently the largest organisations in the country could openly discriminate against women. The Civil Service and the major utilities and emergency services were able to discriminate⁶ by excluding women from a large

⁴ There are a number of examples where attempts have been made to improve work cultures or processes that have had the opposite effect to that planned. For example, when changes to work processes were introduced in the nationalised coal industry, the outcomes were not the higher efficiency that had been hoped for. Instead, the introduction of new work methods and technologies challenged established relationships and worker hierarchies with the result that the efficiencies hoped for were not gained because acceptance of the changes was low (Trist, et al, 1963).

⁵ The Hawthorne experiments at the Western Electric Company in America in 1924 - 32 involved changes to work practices, routines and conditions in specific work areas of the company. During the sophisticated and protracted experiments, production in the Relay Assembly Room, where all of the workers were young unmarried women, increased overall. Meanwhile, production in the Bank Wiring Room where all of the workers were males of various ages decreased overall. It was concluded that the women, conscious of the male hierarchy, were possibly reluctant to complain and more willing to comply (Stead, 1978, p190) with the changes. However the men, who possibly perceived the changes as a threat, were anxious to retain control of their work environment and were therefore less willing to accommodate or support changes.

⁶ The Institution of Professional and Civil Servants Handbook illustrates that even until 1970 the Civil Service and its associated utility organisations were allowed to approach women intending to marry in order to offer them incentives to leave their organisations or accept a downgrade in rank in return for a bounty payment.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

number of job families, citing the type of work, the physical strength necessary to perform tasks or women's biology as reasons⁷. This attitude towards women cannot be worked out of organisations in a short time or without major changes to leadership attitudes and actions. Some individual directors are now in favour of women holding senior management positions but 'the extent to which authoritative decision makers in organisations will pursue goals is determined by a number of factors such as their prior experience, reference group identifications, executive expectations and the relation between decisions made by the responsible executive and the final 'decision' implemented by the organisation' (March and Cyert, 1992, p21). Even individual board members and senior managers wishing to make changes therefore need the endorsement of their organisations before they can confidently execute the changes. Nor can it be assumed that because advancing women might be good for business that organisations will automatically change their gendered policies as management does not always view change rationally, intelligently or with reason and insight. Senior managers' decision-making often

⁷ Women were refused access to jobs in the Diplomatic Service because it was considered that women were not able to cope with some hardship posts in the developing countries. In the utilities, women were excluded from applying for most apprenticeships because of exclusivity. It was claimed that as the conditions of work included manual labour, women were unsuitable.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

features 'vacillation, the pursuit of factional interests and even randomness' (Knights, Willmott and Collinson eds., 1985, p108) and in most large organisations, subordinates will have 'observed the irrationality of much of the decision making' (Storey, 1985, p195). Even when the lack of diversity in an organisation appears to effect business performance, management attitudes have remained resistant to change.

So-called equal opportunities organisations are able to hide behind the vague and inexplicit nature of Equal Opportunities legislation. Such organisations do not offer even a basic level of support for career women such as the provision of information, training while on maternity leave, update on-site visits or even proactively maintaining the woman within the career 'queue' for promotion, yet they are still allowed to declare their adherence to equal opportunities. Often where women are offered inducements by an organisation to return to work after maternity leave, they have to negotiate special arrangements for their return which may be agreed at the local Personnel level, unendorsed by company policy and constructed in a covert atmosphere of secrecy. Some women are even asked by their Personnel units not to divulge the arrangements (MccGwire, 1992). Yet they declare themselves as equal opportunity organisations without explaining what they mean by it. 'To speak

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

therefore of equality of opportunity without making explicit what kind of opportunity is involved and how that opportunity enhances prospects of achievement is to confuse the issue' (Walton, 1988, p124) and organisations do little to clarify the issues.

These companies offer a form of selective opportunity that is certainly not equal. Notable exceptions are however, several large banks that, because of the cost of recruiting and training new staff, offer unambiguous opportunities to women including regular updates, re-entry training and mentoring support for those on maternity leave until mothers return to work. Lloyds/TSB and HSBC have placed Equal Opportunities at the centre of staff retention policies and both have high profile EO managers with direct access to their boards⁸. The women in these innovative organisations are encouraged to take career risks. After all, experience of the nursing, teaching and human resources areas has illustrated that being present in large numbers alone does not of itself develop women. The executive level management in all three of these professions is heavily weighted towards males and

⁸ Fiona Cannon, Equal Opportunity Manager at Lloyds/TSB and Ann Watts, Equal Opportunity Director at Midland Bank in September 1998 confirmed in discussion their respective banks favourable attitudes to women returnees.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

shows that the premise that women will achieve representation at all levels of management merely by being on the pay roll in increasing numbers is not the case. For, as the findings of this study show, women are likely to remain at the bottom of the management pipeline in organisations or be siphoned off to segregated areas before reaching senior positions.

Old Boys' Club

Some studies suggest that men start with a superior understanding of the dynamics of organisations, nurtured from an early age in the way they are taught to view power (Carr-Ruffino, 1993) and relationships (Friday, 1977). They are usually better prepared for corporate attitudes through the values they have acquired while growing up, the learned responses in social interactions, their understanding of team games and by observing role models. By realising early on the principles that drive their organisations, men are receptive to the competitive atmosphere where the single-mindedly ambitious, aggressive and overtly social male can thrive. They will have realised the value of the ability to create the right impression in the eyes of others through the style of their performance (Chell, 1987). That style will often include presenteeism, socialising, taking responsibility, order giving and macho management.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

For women to succeed in the same corporate environment some researchers suggest that they have to collude with established male power structures and support hostile environments for subordinate women. In doing so it is very often easier to behave in the way expected of most men and to join in the politics with 'all the game playing, snide, 'them and us', aggressive, sabotaging, negative, blaming 'win-lose', with-holding, non co-operative behaviour that goes on in hundreds of interactions everyday' (Stone, 1997, p1). Some researchers point to successful women who have developed coping strategies that see them mimicking male macho displays of extremely aggressive behaviours, swearing to provoke a sense of urgency, deliberately stepping into controversy and gesturing as males⁹. With strong personalities, these women are likely to stamp their own personality on every aspect of the company that they manage (Deal and Kennedy, 1988). Yet, macho management styles, equal to those found in most corporate environments, do not come naturally to most women¹⁰ for these cultures express themselves in terms of

⁹ For example when confronted with a crisis at the start of her reign as the new Chief Executive Officer of Pearson Publishing, Marjorie Scardino was said to have done her reputation for purple language no harm with a stream of expletives (Management Today, May 1997, pp50 - 56)

¹⁰ Evidence gathered over the last 20 years shows that professional women tend on average to have higher testosterone levels than those who stay at home. What is not clear is whether these levels are a cause or a result of choosing to participate in the competitive workplace (Fortune, August 1999).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

reward and punishment while women prefer consensus and agreement. However, adopting masculine management techniques and a pragmatic approach is often only because they are the token woman manager in their organisation (Marshall, 1995).

Analysts argue that the culture and organisational behaviours¹¹ in most large organisations is that of men expressed as the value-sets held within the organisation and not simply the outcomes of only top management preferences, the recruitment practices or the working processes but the very stuff of which the organisation is made. These core values place women in any number of roles but rarely as equals in decision-making and rarely as potential bosses. Like the glass ceiling, which is 'invisible but women experience it as a very real barrier when they vie for promotion to top jobs' (Davidson and Cooper, 1992, p15), the old boys' club forms an invisible guard. It shields its members from the vagaries of innovative management, maintains the status quo and punts its acolytes up the ladders of success. The old boys' club manages the perpetuation of its culture through the recruitment, promotion and development of men who share its beliefs and values. This has effectively barred women from whole areas of business where their presence threatens the practices,

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

feelings and relationships through which men 'have constructed a culture of solidarity within their organisations' (Brenner, 1998, p9).

Women may be perceived by these men as earth-mothers, counsellor figures, pets that brighten the place, seductresses, sex objects, iron maidens or man-haters (Cooper and Davidson, 1982) but almost never as peers. However, categorising women in this fashion allows men to dismiss them as inadequate for management and drives the old boys' further towards 'homosociability'¹² (Kanter, 1977) and the recruiting of clones. Even where the case for diversity can be successfully argued and top managers are aware that 'the benefits are likely to be that many critical business issues which do not surface in the 'clubby' atmosphere fostered by white, male managers will be addressed' (Dodds, 1995, p41), organisations remain resistant to change. This is because directors and senior managers themselves will almost certainly have been promoted by adhering to the old boys' club culture and are loath to curb its discriminatory activities. The omnipotence of this culture has permeated

¹¹ Organisational behaviour refers to the large number of interrelated influences on, and patterns of, behaviour of people within organisations (Porter, Lawler and Hackman, 1975).

¹² The propensity of males to recruit and work with males, women to work with women and minority people to work with other minority people.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

even the new high-tech industries with their lack of historical context. Men in positions of power apparently believe that women are neither competent nor credible when dealing with decisions based on large volumes of quantitative information (InternetWeek, November 1997) and are therefore unsuitable for senior positions.

In this macho atmosphere, women in low status jobs are likely to regard their current jobs not as an interim step before applying for more senior positions but with the negative values set by their colleagues. This leads to women forfeiting their advantage to their more ambitious and robust male colleagues even where they have made significant contributions, for they are ever aware of their vulnerability and lack of informal support in the workplace. Organisations appear to do little to support such women. Potential senior women managers are not encouraged to abandon their perceptions of the onerous nature of senior management or its status as a masculine domain (Walby, 1988). Instead, macho exclusionist practices are allowed to squeeze out women and discourage them from taking up or holding more responsible jobs (Cockburn, 1991).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

Male rules and strategies also serve to limit the few lone women who do succeed into higher echelons of management and ensure that they are excluded from the informal relations, important networks and channels of communication that can help to cement their careers (Cooper and Davidson, 1982). Power relationships built during the early years in an organisation contribute to the success of individuals and women who have failed to build these nurturing relationships are likely to moderate their aspirations and languish at lower levels (Bradley, 1998). Despite threats to eliminate the effects of the old boys' club, discrimination is still openly practised in many large organisations where opportunities for advancement depend upon the building of strong networks and the ability to fit in. For example, when a now senior woman manager¹³ in Nokia first visited the organisation's German operations she was aware of attempts to demean her when she was asked why the secretary had come and not the boss (Fortune, October 1998).

Her experience was typical of many women in operational management, the jobs that are essential for career success in large organisations. The culture of management as disciplining, reprimanding, invoking the rules and commanding subordinates in a

¹³ Sari Baldauf subsequently became a board member of Nokia.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

directive manner with occasional words of praise as described in model management texts (Planchard et al, 1987) is an indicator, some think of an old boys' mentality that has its roots in outmoded management philosophies (Goleman, 1997 & 1998; Hammer and Champy, 1993). These management styles share the characteristics of intolerance and an inability to brook opposition in organisations where manager positions are likened 'to dictatorships with highly visible senior men exerting power like managers and despots' (Sampson, 1995, p65).

The ways men can learn the dynamics of an organisation as they move up, tutored by the mentoring activities of the 'old boys' club' has been well documented. In such an atmosphere, members can exchange confidences and share disclosures which aid understanding of the organisation's needs, its politics and hierarchy, which can then be used to help potential candidates achieve goals, personal or otherwise. Thus cloistered, managers are able to show themselves competent in the garnering of a network of supporters and helpers and can provide evidence of connections with influential people (Steel and Thornton, 1988), another essential element of successful senior management. Finding this aspect of ambition and management distasteful, women almost collude with their detractors in limiting their opportunities for they are reluctant to become involved in office politics which they view with cynicism, perceiving these activities as boys' games. In addition women in top jobs

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

without the support of a network may find the pressure of being under 'constant scrutiny and strain, needing to dress and behave in very particular ways in order to be accepted (Shaw and Perrons, 1995, p30), unacceptable. Their business decisions are more likely to be questioned and their motives analysed.

Pejoratively, women are accused of measuring their success around feminine style soft issues of job satisfaction, coaching, teamwork and knowledge transfer (Coleman, 1991) with the hard essential business drivers of time to completion, cost of completion and quantity (Peters, 1987; Hicks, 1991) taking second place. But, while women and men may have a tendency to assess situations differently and view relationships in and out of the workplace from two fundamentally different standpoints, moderated by their needs and aspirations as sexual beings (Gray, 1992), there is growing evidence that consensus management is fast becoming the preferred style.

Organisational barriers persist

A consequence of the change programmes in businesses in the last two decades ought to be working conditions that make full-time employment with considerable responsibility and status equally conducive to women and men. But, for women the

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

downside of the new approach has been the emergence of new criteria for management. Whereas recruitment and promotion criteria in bureaucratic organisations were driven by the measurable¹⁴ new standards have emerged which mean that 'it is no longer enough merely to look at prospective employees' education, training and skills; their character becomes an issue as well' (Hammer and Champy, 1993, p71).

So that just when it appeared that women were gathering the credentials for management, their currency has been devalued as other much more nebulous criteria have been added to the equation as prejudice in some organisations develops more subtle expressions. Apparently innocuous comments which suggest women just would not be a good fit with the clientele or they have family responsibilities that would interfere with the demands of the job (Smith and Still 1996, p12) are

¹⁴ Promotion in the Civil Service, which was a prime example of a bureaucratic institution, was managed by a central body that laid down the criteria for qualifications and outlined the experience required for each rank. The examinations were 'blind' and the results were published countrywide. Although often criticised for its 'dead men's shoes' approach to the allocation of posts the Civil Service was rarely criticised for inequity since promotions were transparent, though not necessarily fair. There was however an anomaly even in the Civil Service for candidates deemed to offer special qualities could enter on a fast track basis. In doing so they could skip ranks or spend less time in ranks on their mentored and coached path to the top.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

becoming more commonly used to deflect accusations of the discrimination which they clearly sustain.

In litigation that can only have harmed their public images, Price Waterhouse in 1991 and Texaco in 1992 were forced by the Supreme Court in the United States to promote women managers who had been assessed as promotable but refused advancement. The Supreme Court found that the women had been in the pipeline for a sufficiently long time and had gained the required experience (Reskin and Padavic, 1994, p81). Their advancement was somehow seen as threatening to the status quo in each organisation. The outcomes differed significantly to that gained by Ms Nwoke in the UK when on 6 December 1996, the London South Industrial Tribunal found against the Government Legal Services (GLS) and in favour of Ms Chinema Nwoke. The Tribunal found that Ms Nwoke had been discriminated against in the GLS selection process when the chairman of the GLS Appointments Board admitted that an element in selection was whether the candidate would 'fit in'. The male dominated GLS appointments panel had decided that despite her impeccable credentials, Ms Nwoke would not fit in. On examining the GLS methods of selection and results, the Industrial Tribunal found blatant discrimination and showed that despite receiving higher marks, women were less likely to be recommended for a

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

post. Furthermore, even if appointed, women were paid less (The Independent, 7 December 1996). Ms Nwoke received damages but the Industrial Tribunal was impotent to instate her in the more senior position. An example surely of the impotence of the system purportedly designed to help women achieve fairness of treatment.

For a time it appeared that new organisations characterised by 'high participation – high involvement' of employees would necessarily create more opportunities for women (Kanter, 1989, p293). It was speculated that women would break into senior positions because these organisations favoured consensus, diversity and flexibility in contrast to bureaucratic structures where women had less access to opportunity. 'Such organisations set out to secure very high levels of employee involvement by giving individuals high degrees of self-management designed to achieve very demanding business objectives' (Paton et al, 1996, p93). In contrast however, recent data from Silicon Valley in California shows the paucity of women in significant positions even in some of the most entrepreneurial companies in the United States (Hartmann, 1987)¹⁵.

¹⁵ In the chapter 'Computer Chips and Paper Clips' women are shown to be lagging behind men in their status and power despite the newness of the industry and the apparent equality of opportunity.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

If it were only a case of new companies, new workforces and new disciplines to provide equal opportunities for women, then not only would there be equal numbers of women managers in Information Technology, Electronic Engineering, Software Engineering, Bio-technology and Marketing but equal numbers of board level women too. The success of these types of new companies, without benefit of senior women in numbers, contradicts assertions that cutting edge companies in the U.S. will spontaneously develop women and minority groups as leaders. For that to happen, women must also be provided with access to leadership positions. A decade ago the need for new organisational structures where 'men and women alike hold leadership roles in a world requiring creativity and co-operation' was being promoted (Kanter, 1989, p297). It was thought that the New World of business would demand a coherent set of new values and beliefs where for the new hi-tech organisations and dot.com companies 'gender, like race and age, is irrelevant' (McRea, 22 December 1999).

This has not occurred and there are still disproportionate numbers of women in lower grade jobs earning 'women's rate' wages (West, 1982, p21). Thirty years after the Equal Pay Act, organisations are still benefiting from the low wages that women earn

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

at only 80% of the wages that men earn (EOC, February 2001). These statistics are merely manifestations of the underlying apathy and reluctance of employers to risk changes to the status quo. Women's lifelong incomes show the impact of low salaries, which over time become exaggerated as they forecast a poorer old age. Where women with the same skill levels as men can expect to earn only 80% of men's salaries during their lifetimes, the deficit is carried over to retirement pensions (HMG: Cabinet Office Briefing, 2000) impoverishing career women even in old age. The disparity in wages for women, apart from being the effect of gendered work is compounded by the family gap whereby women take career breaks in order to have and rear families. Furthermore, it is a consequence of wage structures in organisations modelled on jobs-for-life that offer slow but steady pay progress over a number of years towards a maximum salary that could take over 30 years to achieve¹⁶. Traditionally, company salaries have been based on length of service, qualifications, age, experience and type of work with the typical salary structure built around a notional career path with annual increments and without any breaks in service. Being unable to return to work immediately following the birth of a child

¹⁶ Until recent changes to the terms and conditions of technical and engineering staff in BT the salary structure for the grade of Technical Assistant could in theory at least take up to 32 years of incremental payments for maximum salary to be reached.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

means that women are penalised for their absence by the withdrawal of wage increments until their return. While their peer group moves on and up, women are retained at lower levels and miss out on possible opportunities for promotion that may have occurred while they were on maternity or caring leave. Their appraisal history upon which promotion assessments depend will also have been broken. The growing gap is unlikely ever to narrow while the woman remains with the original organisation.

Studies on organisations such as the NHS have shown that pay alone is not the main issue for many women, or even the primary motivating factor. Some organisations are realising that this provides an opportunity to save on remuneration if they are able to provide substitute motivators. Where skills shortages exist there is more incentive for organisations to provide woman-friendly practices and where employers need to retain women to recoup their investment or to avoid further investment, they are increasingly approaching the subject with innovative solutions, recognising that pay is only part of the solution. The National Health Service study aimed at attracting some of the estimated 140,000 registered nurses back into the NHS (Department of Health, 1999) found that women could be attracted back by a package of benefits that include higher wages but are not predicated on them. Grade restructuring, flexible

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

working and the organisation of work hours according to the individual needs of nurses, instead of the rigid system of shift-work is therefore being introduced.

As large organisations globalise the requirements for female managers to travel both within country and internationally in order to gain the credibility for advancement to board positions is increasing. Yet the number of female managers pursuing international management careers remains considerably lower than that in domestic management. An assessment of international personnel in the early-1990's estimated that only 3% of expatriate managers were women (Adler, 1993) and while this figure was later revised to around 11% (Florkowski and Fogel, 1995) the number remains very low. In large part this is because of organisational bias that fails to consider women for expatriate positions, assuming that they do not wish to travel because of family or caring responsibilities (Adler, 1984). More than merely failing to consider women however, organisations frequently perceive expatriate jobs as being men's jobs and this also influences their initial recruitment policies and the amount of investment they are willing to extend to women.

This 'glass border' (Mandelken, 1994) restrains women when assumptions that women will not wish to travel because of their spouse's job or family commitments

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

are not challenged. Women who wish to pursue careers that mean significant international travel are often regarded with suspicion and deflected from their pursuit by manufactured obstacles such as the myth that women are not acceptable to the people they are to deal with in the host country (Westwood and Leung, 1994). Although these assumptions have been equally discredited they are perpetuated within organisations to the clear advantage of male employees who then compete for work within a less crowded environment. To compound the disadvantage the lack of female role models leads women managers to decline the opportunity to go for travelling assignments. In doing so they fail to realise that these jobs are often considered the essential stepping stones for promotion into certain senior jobs for which international assignments are considered the acid test for suitability and commitment.

While it is no longer permissible to overtly discriminate on the grounds of sex, the UK government has thus far opted out of the stronger legislation proposed by the European Union in the Social Chapter so that the messages the government is giving organisations are, at best, mixed. These attitudes influence common perceptions of women's value and perpetuate the belief that in general women are somehow less valuable than men. This inevitably affects the way that women in management are

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

perceived and rewarded in organisations. The theory of value is concerned with the factors determining the prices of particular products or productive services (Penrose, 1972, p11) and women's lower wages and lower status in organisations affects their public persona. Albeit that the essential work in most societies is undertaken by women¹⁷, the contribution of women towards the economy¹⁸ and wellbeing of their communities is almost unrecognised by society¹⁹. This perception is reinforced by the range of unpaid work carried out by women's groups and individual women as the perception of the value of work is generally directly related to the recognition and rewards received. The risk that this 'free' work encourages the general perception that women's work is of no or low value (Marshall, 1984) is reinforced by organisational perceptions of time. Different values are attributed to time depending upon who is using it and in general women's time has been deemed to be less

¹⁷ In developing countries the value placed on women's economic contributions is not only undervalued but almost completely overlooked (Waring, 1982) even though they are the planters and harvesters, the managers of the family and the maintainers of social standards.

¹⁸ World-wide the vocabulary of economics is expressed in terms of male production, possession and influence and each new method of measurement introduced has served to reinforce the concept that men produce and women do not; men work and women do not

¹⁹ For investment and decision making there is universal observance of the set of economic principles laid down by several organisations: the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations System of National Accounts.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

valuable than men's (Hewitt, 1993) acknowledged by the business vocabulary of man-hours, man-days and man-years to illustrate the cost of work in organisations.

In addition, changes in the structure of work means that many jobs that women now undertake, for which a wage may previously have been paid, are being 'continually squeezed out of the market economy into the state economy and now into the informal economy' (Handy, 1984, p19). All of these actions and attitudes contribute to the complicated value system that places women in a separate category from men and adds to the struggle of working women in gaining recognition for their value. However, recent studies have shown that changes to the way organisations are doing business are likely benefit women as the inefficiencies of old ways are exposed.

New ways to work

Innovative management recognises the need for employees to nurture both the professional and the personal sides of their lives. For employees in the new organisational set-ups, where 'empowerment is one of the unavoidable consequences of reengineered processes' (Hammer and Champy, 1993, p71), opportunities exist to exercise self-discipline and self-management of the workload. Encouraging new

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

ideas and innovative approaches to work, advisers to companies and government such as New Ways to Work (New Ways to Work, 1996) and Parents at Work (PaW) have emerged along with a new genre of literature designed to help women and employers to accommodate childcare and careers (Daniels and Shooter, 1991). They have been pioneering a range of options for companies to consider which are not aimed exclusively at women but would disproportionately help women. Voluntary reduced work time, sabbaticals, employment/career breaks, flexitime, working from home, part-time work, job share, monthly hours, quarterly hours, annualised hours and crèche facilities are a number of options that have been adopted by several local authorities and companies such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

A few organisations, estimated to be 1 in 10 (Mori Poll, 1998), have been quick to provide childcare facilities, especially where the gender balance of the workforce has made it economically advantageous. However, these organisations are still few in number, illustrated by the total annual expenditure by employers on childcare in 1998 which remained low at about £60m, compared with £2.6 billion spent by parents (Women's Unit, November 1998). To aid women's return to work the government issued the Green Paper, 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge' (DfEE, 1998) accompanied by the White Paper 'Fairness at Work' (DfEE, 1998) which aimed to

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

provide guidelines for returnees and employers²⁰. However in none of these missives did the government suggest that it would offer tax breaks for organisations willing to provide crèche facilities for their workforces in order to retain their services. Instead the government has extended the voucher scheme that subsidised the cost of private childcare. But for many women returnees the issue of childcare does not constitute the primary factor in their decision to return to management positions since women in management, even at the low end, are generally well placed to afford better-than-basic childcare.

For these women, three major factors appear to impact upon their decisions to return to work. The first is the availability of part-time and flexible employment such as that offered by Esso which gives employees, women and men, the opportunity of taking up to 5 years off work for family commitments. Esso guarantees that on return employees will be offered work at the same or at a more senior level (Abdala, 1991). The second factor is length of time that employees have been working with their employer prior to the pregnancy. Ove Arup for example, recognises the value of

²⁰ Between 1984 and 1998 more women were steadily entering the workforce and women in the labour market increased from 66% to 72%. In contrast, the proportion of men who were economically active declined from 88% to 84% during the same period. (EOC, 'Women and Men in Britain, The Labour Market', April 2000. www.eoc.org.uk/publications).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

experience and skills by providing bounties to encourage their women employees to return to work following childbirth (MccGwire, 1992)²¹. The third is the earnings bracket into which women fall as women are more likely to return to work if they have the benefits of employment laws and come from higher earning households (Wilkinson and Howard, 1997).

Although more women than ever are choosing not to have a family, the majority will follow the bi-modal model that shows women dropping out of the workplace to have children only to re-enter at an older age (Blossfeld and Hakim, 1997). Some organisations are working with their female workforce to find ways of continuing the relationship while the children are young by offering posts into which these women can return but the opportunity for flexible working hours or part-time work which is new in many organisations has pitfalls. For, 'the range of jobs which are organised in this way are highly segregated and confined primarily to feminised sectors of the labour force...the opportunities for career advancement are limited and pay is in general significantly lower' (Shaw and Perrons, eds., 1995, p22). The same

²¹ MccGwire included BT on the list of 'top employers' and recorded that BT had a job share register. The only job share registers involving BT women employees are in fact organised by the Communications Workers Union and the BT Womens Network.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

organisational attitudes that marginalise women are also likely to be responsible for the poor uptake of paternity leave without pay recently introduced for new fathers. Studies in Europe have shown that even where paid leave has been introduced, many fathers do not feel able to exercise their rights. Research carried out over twenty years in Sweden (Haas, Huang and Russell, 2001)²², shows that even when parental leave is statutory and paid, men do not take leave because they feel under pressure from employers, colleagues and their own sense of work ethic, to return to work as soon as possible after their partner's confinement. The research concluded that unless the leave was enforced, men would continue to feel pressured into continuing to work during the first few weeks of their child's life.

It has been estimated that as many as 20% of women born since the 1960's will remain childless (Wilkinson and Muligan, 1995) but even they are likely to have caring responsibilities as the population ages. Several organisations have recognised the increasing pressure on their female employees in caring for parents and elderly relatives. Yet, it was to relieve the pressures on their mainly male employees that

²² US Professor Linda Haas, Indiana University discussed the findings of her 20-year study into Parental Benefits in Sweden at the Parents at Work Seminar hosted by the Department of Trade and Industry in July 1998.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

induced the motor industry in Coventry to establish an eldercare centre for the relatives of employees. The daytime accommodation provides care for up to 25 elderly male and female relatives (IPPR, 1998) in a stimulating environment.

To combat discrimination, approaches such as that taken by Motorola to measure the success of its minority groups into senior management programme are becoming more popular²³. Policies are not practices and recognising this, Motorola has initiated a programme to ensure that the organisation's policies are put into practice. Motorola has added to its high potential list, the gender and race of a person so that employees can see at a glance whether a manager consistently discriminates via the shortlist process. Corporations such as Honeywell, Proctor and Gamble, DEC and Xerox in the U.S. have all produced plans showing similar initiatives (O'Brien, 1998)

²³ Since 1996, Motorola has maintained a database of all employees, identified by gender and ethnic origin. Paul Edwards, a Human Resources consultant in the Bathgate, Scotland establishment explained in an interview with the author in October 1998 that all parts of the organisation contributed to the database of employees by recording the ethnic minority and gender background of employees. This enabled, amongst other things, the monitoring of women and ethnic minority people applying for different grades of management jobs and their resultant success rate. The records included the names of interviewing managers and the ethnic breakdown of their teams. Motorola's aim in maintaining this information was to highlight quickly any potential bias in the selection of staff for management or other roles. This information could be compared on a national and international basis with other Motorola plants.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

for incorporating diversity²⁴ and ensuring that their practices are consistent with their published policies.

One of the organisations that has had most success in monitoring its gender programmes is the BBC. On her appointment to the job of Controller for BBC 2, Jane Root stated, 'I'm not sure the fact I'm a woman is that important' (The Independent, 18 December 1999, p9), signifying her confidence in effects of the 'internal free market' (Carr, 1996, p138) to ensure fairness of treatment. But without a significant number of women in the internal pipeline of that free market, there is less likelihood of women being escalated to the top or accepted in those positions. Ms Root would almost certainly not have had the opportunity of taking the job twenty or even ten years ago before the BBC had realised the importance of its position as a high profile organisation and an example to others. Women are now present at all levels in the BBC occupying just under 30% of senior executive posts, 33% of senior manager posts and 36% of middle manager and senior professional posts (British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report, 1998). In an innovative move, the BBC

²⁴ 'Diversity' in the U.S. covers Gender, Religion, Ethnicity, Disability and increasingly Sexual Orientation.

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

for the first time ever in 1998, allowed two people to share the high profile job of programme editor for 'The World Tonight', a key current affairs programme. This illustrates that an organisation considered not that long ago as a bastion of male domination, can change and change relatively quickly.

Political parties too are realising the need for their leadership in equal treatment of the genders. The Scottish political party, the Highlands and Islands Alliance – Cairdeas, launched in November 1998 in Skye, announced its intention only to field candidates for the Scottish Parliament on a job-share basis (Highlands and Islands Alliance, 1998). This set a significant precedent in British politics and was a first in Europe. In a bid to encourage candidates to live in the highlands and islands instead of moving to Edinburgh, those wishing to stand for the new Scottish Parliament had to be willing to job-share the post of MP with another person.

But these pioneering organisations are still in the minority. The sea change in attitudes, required to significantly impact upon the working practices of the majority of organisations, has not yet arrived. The emergence of the 'knowledge worker' which has gradually been replacing the 'industrial age worker' is bringing changes to the traditional pyramid structure. A manager role gives way to a coach and the

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

hierarchy is a web or network structure nurturing an atmosphere where knowledge transfer takes precedence over task completion (Quintas et al, 1999, p17). Furthermore, moving away from the 'mechanistic' to 'organic' form of organisation that facilitates information flows and cuts the times of communication to efficient levels could also herald the flattening of management hierarchies and inevitably favour a style of management more sympathetic to women²⁵. This model of business is most threatening to employees with a vested interest in maintaining the *status quo* (Earl, 1984, p153) but there are signs that the new information age will inevitably change organisations' management styles if only because of the efficiencies introduced in the process.

Several organisations are realising that, apart from employees, women are gradually forming a larger section of their customer base. Women who leave behind the corporate arena for the entrepreneurial challenge are increasingly starting up their own businesses and women founded almost one-third of all new businesses in 1997

²⁵ Yet a Chief Executive Officer interviewed on the subject of working differences between the genders could find few differences and assessed any differences to be ones of choice and style. Significantly though, he found that in assessment situations women did exactly what he asked, never going outside the outlines given, while men gave themselves the opportunity to come up with innovative ideas and had the confidence to do things differently (White, 1995).

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES: Perpetuating inequities

(Management Today, June 1998, p66)²⁶. In doing so, women entrepreneurs are leaving behind prejudices in the form of inferior salaries and packages, poor promotion prospects and inflexible working conditions. Where women start-up their own businesses they appear to have as good a chance of succeeding as any others started. Their market has spawned a genre of literature aimed at the start-up business in the home, using the telephone as the main instrument of transactions and flexibility as the main motivator (Bond, 1997, pp65-66). To aid these new entrepreneurs, there has been a growth in support services aimed at serving the feminised new-business market. For example, several large banks such as the Co-op are producing special packs for women who want more information on how to start up their own businesses.

More relevant to the future than the strict adherence to task allocation that is the legacy of scientific management (Taylor, 1947) with constant supervision and strong management (Waring, 1991), is the supportive non-aggressive environment that most women wish to both create and work within. 'Although many successful women deny it, the tendency is for women to prefer to manage collaboratively, to prefer the

²⁶ This figure does not include the many micro or 'lifestyle' businesses run by women.

'carrot' to the 'stick' approach in managing staff and to aim for 'hearts and minds' rather than utilising an authoritarian approach. They prefer to persuade rather than tell, to encourage rather than impose' (Ledwith and Colgan, eds., 1996, p139). For many women the key to success is the feeling that their work is valued and that they are respected at work. With this in mind they work even harder (Clutterbuck and Devine, eds., 1987).

Women are thus taking their leadership abilities to small and medium sized enterprises motivated by their desire to organise their own lives and work patterns. These motivations may indeed be a result of their gender and inherent attributes (De Bono, 1986). But to those differences women are adding the ability to make money through the creativity and lateral thinking that for years took second place to the apparently and much vaunted superior analytical abilities of men (De Bono, 1977). This links with the changes that a large organisation such as BT would have to undertake in order to benefit from the contributions of all sections of its workforce. Yet for an organisation like BT with the tendrils of its roots firmly attached to its past, the rate of change has been laggardly and half-hearted.

CHAPTER 5

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

The legacy of the past

‘When privatisation is needed to improve efficiency, then it is not wanted by capital markets because the low earning power of the assets makes them so unattractive. When it is wanted by capital markets it is because there is already a good return on assets, then it is not needed to improve efficiency.’ (Aylen, 1988, p129). Had this yardstick been applied, the privatisation of British Telecommunications plc may not have been seen as quite so urgent for the organisation was already efficient in most aspects of the work undertaken. However, the promise that privatisation held out of freedom from the downsides of bureaucracy and liberation from the constraints of Civil Service type processes was irresistible. It would mean that when the inevitable redundancies had occurred the ‘remaining employees’ prospects will be brighter in privatised industries, which have a superior ability to diversify and grow’ (Beesley and Littlechild, 1988, p18). With this in mind, the organisation espoused privatisation in the hope that the future of its most valued assets, its people, would be better than before. Women and men in the new company would be encouraged

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

to reach their potential and contribute to the expansion of one of the UK's most successful companies.

To understand attitudes towards women in BT at the time the study was initiated, it is necessary to explore the organisation's history and women's place within it. As later chapters will show, women managers' experiences were rooted in a culture that had consistently devalued their potential and a structure that, from the outset, assigned them to inferior roles, with restricted access to the echelons where decisions were made. Despite the privatisation and associated restructuring of the 1980's and 1990's and its publication of equal opportunities policies, employment patterns and practices in BT still reflected both historic divisions between 'technical' and 'other' staff and its civil service roots. Many of the practices in the organisation had their foundation in the company's Civil Service past but whereas selections and promotions were transparent from start to finish and as such, able to be challenged under Civil Service conditions, the new BT adopted different practices.

Whereas terms and conditions, and remuneration and rewards were explicit and the same for both genders, a new system of covert assessment and rewards developed in the new BT. A number of job families had been effectively barred to women just as

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

they were in many organisations at the beginning of the 1970's. However there was everything to suppose that with the tools of transparency and measurement already in place had the organisation that was to become BT remained in the Civil Service, these job families would have been opened up to women in a short time. Privatisation intervened and the vital tools were lost in the transformation. There were no more women in the most senior management positions at the time of this study than there had been at the time of privatisation decades before, for there were none¹.

Until 1969 the British Post Office, which then consisted of the two arms of telephone and mail services was part of the Civil Service. Both 'arms' shared Civil Service structures, systems and values and telephone-related provision operated alongside the postal service under the overall umbrella of the British Post Office, also known as the General Post Office. In 1969 the Post Office became a public corporation and from then the two sides progressively moved apart culminating in the British Telecommunications Act of 1981 when the process was completed. In 1969 staff working in the telephony business were given the choice of remaining

¹ At the time of writing, BT does not have and has never had any woman as the Managing Director of

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

within the Civil Service or transferring to a new public agency, British Telecommunications. The agency retained a monopoly on the provision of telephone services in the UK and most employees with skills-sets in telecommunications, opted for the new contracts. Re-designation however, brought little change to the overall organisation or culture inherited from the GPO and women's position within the new entity remained largely unchanged.

While not unique to the GPO, skill divisions between women and men dating back to the nineteenth century were particularly visible and embedded in a host of practices which differentiated male-dominated 'engineering' from the clerical and switchboard tasks assigned to women (Beddoe, 1983). Women were not expected to apply for apprenticeships into the Engineering and Technical Grades and the few who applied were not recruited². Although some women gained jobs in professional areas such as law and accountancy, the overwhelming majority was recruited directly into the lower clerical or operator grades, experiencing little opportunity for promotion beyond supervisory level, a practice that was mirrored on the postal side.

any of its companies within the group.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

However, the recruitment, selection and assessment processes were transparent along with the rewards and remuneration received by all staff and were published annually in generally available documents and diaries.

In contrast to women, men entering the non-engineering areas, whether in the telephone or postal services tended to start at higher levels, accessing benefits and status akin to that assumed by their engineering counterparts. Of these benefits, the most significant were job security and the opportunities for upward mobility. Engineering apprentices in particular knew that they were entering a job-for-life as the GPO was the only provider of telephone services and controlled the telephony network in Britain. The law forbade customers from attaching their own telephone equipment to the network. More generally, in entering at different ranks, male staff could progress through an extended ladder of levels and grades to high-level administration posts on the executive hierarchy towards Regional General Manager.

² It was not until 1966 that the GPO employed its first woman engineer (Source: Society of Telecom Executives).

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

These patterns reflected not only a particular construction of skills but the equally gendered practices implicit in the civil service structures inherited from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Newman, 1996). Segregation by skills was paralleled by an intricate administrative hierarchy, with distinctive job descriptions and demarcations between different tiers and positions within the ladder, and associated differences in responsibilities, salaries and conditions of employment. Supervision was characterised by a command-and-control style and promotion strictly governed by a sequence of examinations, line management recommendations and boards, with little deviation. The attainment of examinations offered accelerated opportunities, particularly for apprentices and others on the technical side. For most staff much depended on their supervisors' support and wider organisational expectations³.

As in other similar systems, these procedures, whilst aimed at ensuring transparency and fairness, tended to privilege men. Women, moreover, were directly encouraged

³ Candidates passing examinations for promotion in the clerical side, for example, were not assured of an immediate step up as they may have to wait for a vacancy to become available. It was not uncommon for successful candidates to wait several years or never succeed to a post if they were restricted by home circumstances to a certain geographical area. This 'dead men's shoes' syndrome did not apply however to many levels in the engineering side since apprenticeship training was for a determined period and promotion was assured on the passing of their tests.

to view their employment as a short-term 'interlude' between leaving school and marriage. This expectation, again common to most forms of employment up to the 1960's, was reinforced by the operation of the so-called 'dowry system' as described in the publication, 'The Institution of Professional and Civil Servants Handbook' (reprint of 1968, pp330 – 331). Though the 'marriage bar' for women employed in the public sector was abolished in 1949, this adaptation survived in the GPO until 1970. Under this scheme women of all grades who had been employed by the organisation for the requisite number of years were on marriage, invited to accept an endowment in return for observing certain conditions. Depending upon the length of service and the status of the women, this one-off payment could amount to several months' salary. It was offered on the basis that the recipient would accept demotion to a lower level job or remain at the low level for the remainder of her career with the organisation, if she was already at that low position. Any opportunities she may subsequently have for promotion would not be acknowledged.

Unsurprisingly very few women felt able to reject this offer as the pressure to accept included an interview with line management who was then entitled to quiz the woman on her future marriage and her intention to have children. The result of this practice was that, in the main, only unmarried women were found above junior

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

management⁴ in the General Post Office and even they were relatively small in number. Married women were expected to leave the company when they started a family and only a few returned following this event⁵.

Though the dowry system disappeared shortly after the reorganisation of 1969, the assumptions that underpinned it did not. Management practices continued to uphold both horizontal and vertical segregation and discouraged women's participation in non-traditional areas. This stance was implicit in the organisation's recruitment practices which, as in other public utilities and nationalised industries, included a strong familial element. The recruiting of relatives into the company has persisted even to present times. Human Resources management periodically invited BT employees to prompt job applications from offspring and relatives for consideration for apprenticeship schemes and other employment.

⁴ On the clerical side, most women were found at Clerical Assistant, Clerical Officer or Higher Clerical Officer grades although some women entering directly from University or College could be placed at Executive Officer level. The terms junior or middle manager can be misleading because the responsibility levels were, as now, greatly dependent upon geographical location and job function.

⁵ Women who had children outwith wedlock could be asked to leave their Civil Service job.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

Although there was no evidence that these applications receive favoured status over other applications for employment, the practice over the years inevitably contributed to the continuation of the company's strong culture. With equally fundamental significance, the trades unions operating in BT also supported the culture. Though a heavily unionised industry until the 1970's, the main unions in communications, including the predecessors of the now Communications Workers Union and Society of Telecom Executives⁶ coalesced in distinguishing between men's work and that of women⁷. The unions did not put pressure on the company to remove barriers⁸ to the employment of women in engineering and technical jobs and colluded to exclude them.

It was only in the 1970's, prompted by the government's equality legislation that the unions began, albeit in a low key fashion, to address women's needs, only to discover its many limitations when applied to an industry where 'equal work' of 'equal value' was not immediately visible. The Equal Opportunity Commission

⁶ The Society of Telecom Executives changed its name to Connect at the start of the new Millennium.

⁷ Men also undertook clerical and administrative jobs but women did not undertake engineering jobs.

⁸ For example, there were no female toilet facilities in most telephone exchanges during the 1960's, 70's and even 80's unless the exchange also housed a clerical function.

introduced equal opportunities statements and claimed to be developing measures to improve women's prospects and promote recruitment into non-traditional areas. In retrospect however, it is clear that, like many employers in the 1970's, the telecommunications industry's response was minimalist and had little impact on the gendered division of labour within the industry.

The impact of privatisation

While there were ample opportunities to comply with the experts' view that 'in any industry the time to restructure is before privatisation' (Vickers and Yarrow, 1986, p237), BT neither restructured the organisation nor its people at the time of liberalisation and this left in place old, embedded attitudes and practices. The monolithic organisation was expected to take up new, entrepreneurial practices without the support of a fresh infrastructure or even fresh ideas. Its people were entrenched in the old systems that had rewarded their gendered practices but were now somehow expected to design and espouse new practices, the rewards for which were unproven. Despite the advent of equal opportunities legislation, the reconstituted BT therefore seems to have retained not only its civil service structures and ethos but also the traditional divisions of labour and functions between female and male employees. It was criticism of the former rather than concern over the

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

continued disparities between female and male employees however, which prompted a further more radical attempt to reorganise the telecommunications service.

Following extensive neo-liberal criticism of the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of Britain's public utilities, in 1981 the British Telecommunications Act of that year established BT as a separate public agency in its own right. It also 'liberalised' the industry, allowing competitors to enter the telecommunications arena for the first time, in a limited capacity from 1981 and fully from 1984. Increasingly, from 1984, when the first sell-off of shares took place⁹, the company came under pressure from financial institutions in the City¹⁰ to transform its business practices and culture. With the advent of direct competition in 1987 the need for organisational change became more acute and the new company launched a succession of change management programmes aimed at enhancing its efficiency and securing its transition from a public body to a commercial enterprise.

⁹ The government retained 49.8% of the shares at the first sell-off in 1984, disposing of its shareholding in tranches, with the remaining government-owned shares being sold off finally in 1997 prior to the abortive BT-MCI alliance.

¹⁰ With the sell-off of shares and the accounting disciplines that it brought, simple performance and competitive analyses that had not been possible before were now performed. For the first time managers were able to produce statistics for comparison with other industries on a range of measures such as earnings per share, earnings per employee and return on assets employed.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

Driven by pressure from its new shareholders, these programmes were based on a far-reaching examination of the company's main functions in order to secure 'best advantage' and emphasised the need for both cost savings and more efficient utilisation of the company's resources. These in turn necessitated major organisational restructuring, the introduction of new management systems and styles, the re-allocation of responsibilities and a process of re-acclimatisation to acclimatise staff to the new commercial imperatives. Reorganisation also stimulated a series of initiatives that aimed to redress the historical imbalances between men and women and encourage more women to enter both management and the more technical areas of the company. It was also, however, premised on a radical programme of systematic restructuring and downsizing which, as will be seen, served to re-stratify the workforce on gendered lines.

Following privatisation a new main board consisting of 5 executive and 6 non-executive directors was established. Secondly, the company itself was structured round two major activities, serving the domestic market, personal and business customers, and the international market. Under the BT Group umbrella there were

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

around 9 divisions¹¹ performing a range of functions in support of the two main activities. This structure was retained until April 2000¹². BT Group's responsibilities were of a corporate nature and each of the divisions under it had divisional directors who managed a group of senior managers responsible for the day-to-day running of their sections. The divisional directors and senior managers were given a great deal of autonomy in the management of their businesses but were governed by policy and strategy decisions made at main board level¹³. Reorganisation also entailed a progressive shift to a 'flatter' organisational structure which was to move the company from a bureaucratic culture to more entrepreneurial and intra-preneurial modes of management. Denoting this shift, and with it the apparent move towards a new culture, management titles inherited from the Civil Service were changed. Staff were simultaneously encouraged to adopt a new vocabulary and language which, for example, turned 'subscribers' into 'customers', 'posts' into 'jobs' and 'duties' into 'responsibilities'.

¹¹ The number of divisions changed from time to time over the years to reflect the dynamic nature of the organisation and its periodic restructuring.

¹² In April 2000 Sir Peter Bonfield, the Chief Executive Office, announced a major reorganisation within BT that would take several months to complete. The company would be broken into several distinct organisations each with their own terms and conditions, identity and personnel.

¹³ The strategy decisions cover policy on a range of issues such as competition, regulation, human resources, infrastructure investment and finance.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

Re-acculturation on these lines was supported by a host of company-wide initiatives, including Total Quality Management (TQM), Quality Management Systems (QMS), the Leadership Programme and Workstyle 2000, all of which were rolled out in the aftermath of privatisation. It was moreover, underpinned by a new approach to management itself, marked by successive reductions in the number of management levels, the recruitment of individuals with professional skills in finance, business and marketing and the introduction of managers who were not necessarily engineers, to lead multi-discipline teams. Even after the delayering however, BT remained a heavily tiered, hierarchical organisation. Clear universal distinctions between different grades with varying wages and terms and conditions were retained. Job titles, terms and conditions and pay scales continued to apply throughout the divisions and were independent of geographical locations except in London where some grades were eligible for an additional yearly supplement on their salaries¹⁴.

The legacy of its Civil Service base, along with the breadth of activities and work undertaken by BT employees can be seen in the segregation of jobs and

differentiation in job title (see Appendix 7). The list provided refers only to jobs in non-management and the primary manager level for engineers. It does not include the range of other management grades that are listed separately in another part of this chapter or some job titles specific to local or temporary hiring.

As this nomenclature suggests, the restructuring forced by privatisation did little to dent inherited gendered divisions. Indeed it appears to have further concentrated women in traditional forms of employment and narrowed their opportunities for upward progression. Many features of traditional civil service structures and within them the particular configuration of the Engineering and Technical grades (E&TG) remained the same. Significant changes for that group, particularly in working methods, were delayed until the late 1990's¹⁵. This was partly a consequence of the strength of the mainly male engineering representation in the trades unions, the National Communications Union¹⁶ and Communications Workers Union, which

¹⁴ A 'London Weighting' allowance was added to the yearly income of employees working in London but the number of employees eligible for this allowance has been eroded over the years.

¹⁵ The first of a programme of changes, named 'Newgrid', was introduced in 1998. An example of changes to working practices is that engineering staff in the field receive their daily work schedule via email or fax instead of in meetings or by telephone. Their contact with management is less frequent.

¹⁶ The NCU had three arms, Postal, Clerical and Engineering

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

argued strongly against any changes to work practices that could in any way impact negatively on the status or work practices of their membership. It was also because the engineering and technical area was by far the largest and most difficult part of the company to change in terms of process re-engineering.

As already noted, while privatisation and the subsequent programmes brought improvements to most areas of the company¹⁷ and the way that the organisation was managed, in some ways it had a detrimental effect on the overall progress of women managers in the organisation. The number of levels of management decreased from around 11 to around 6 in a major restructuring scheme in 1990 called Sovereign. While on the face of it this could have benefited women, it did not improve their standing since the areas traditionally occupied by women were more open to restructuring. Telephone operators, secretarial and clerical staff for example were vulnerable as 'savings' were made by the introduction of new technologies and desktop computing.

¹⁷ The company concentrated on its core business. It ceased to manufacture equipment and sold off peripheral businesses such as its burglar alarm business and computer manufacturing operation. Divisions were given responsibility for balancing their own profit and loss accounts. As BT profits improved, staff salaries were benchmarked against similar outside jobs. The overall package enjoyed by management also improved with for example, the introduction of company cars and health cover for more ranks.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

Women managers too faced a more constricted choice as traditional supervisory and lower management tiers, customarily accessed by women, were progressively reduced¹⁸, most notably following implementation of the 1990 Sovereign scheme. Other areas previous populated mainly by women, disappeared altogether as outsourcing of non-core activities such as catering and reception/security came into place. Many women employed in these occupations were passed over with the jobs to the outsource organisation or opted for redundancy because they were not offered suitable alternative employment within the company.

The most far-reaching consequence of privatisation and one deemed essential by the financial analysts to restructuring BT on competitive market-based lines was the near halving of the workforce. In 1987 BT employed over 240,000 people¹⁹. By 1995, with the modernisation of the network and the introduction of System X

¹⁸ Personnel who already occupied the echelons that were rationalised were compensated but the result was fewer positions in the managerial hierarchy into which women could be placed in the future.

¹⁹ BT Report and Accounts 1987.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

exchanges²⁰, more flexible working conditions and the availability of desktop computers, by 1995 this number had been reduced to just over 137,000²¹. Downsizing on this scale was achieved through a succession of voluntary redundancy schemes starting in 1990, the most significant being the Managers Early Retirement Scheme (MERS), Sovereign²² and subsequently the 'Release' programmes. Although redundancies were voluntary, some employees were selected and prompted to consider voluntary redundancy by their line management.

Among the first to be approached for voluntary redundancy were employees over the age of 45 years of age who had completed 30 years of service. Most were automatically provided with an estimate of the financial benefits they would receive in the form of 'Release' terms. This was a written estimate that may include their

²⁰ These electronic exchanges, many of which were unmanned, replaced mechanical Strowger Exchanges that required daily maintenance executed by teams of trained engineers. System X Exchanges had reliability of over 99% and when faults did occur little more was demanded than the removal of one circuit card and its replacement by another – a job for an unskilled person.

²¹ BT Report and Accounts 1995.

immediate pension entitlement, cash payment on leaving, salary in lieu of notice and an early-signing bonus²³. Another group of employees to be approached were those who, because of the simultaneous company-wide re-organisation, found themselves without a job. If these managers²⁴ chose to remain with the organisation they were called 'redeployees' and this title carried an inevitable stigma. The intention was to include all of them on an availability register to which other managers with skill shortages could refer but the organisation of the information database for this lagged somewhat behind the initial 'Release' programmes. A third group of employees that were approached for 'Release' emerged whose characteristics were not so clear-cut. This group comprised a mixture of people whose performance was considered inefficient and some who had not been selected for a job because of their sick

²² The principle for Sovereign appears to have been based on a pyramid. The most senior manager being selected to manage the division, and in turn selecting a team of managers to manage the various functions. This exercise was cascaded to the next level with the limit of 6 levels being imposed. At each level the manager was given the figure for the maximum posts and so on until the allocation was used up. Anyone finding himself or herself excluded from the selection would be liable for approach for redundancy. However, overlapping this principle were practical considerations and so others whose experience was not related to this description were approached and asked to take voluntary redundancy.

²³ The package was enhanced by access to additional resources such as re-training opportunities, retirement counselling, financial advice and employment consultancy.

²⁴ The term 'redeployee' was applied not only to managers but to all personnel who found themselves in this position.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

record, pregnancy or some other reason. It also included people who did not fall into any of these other categories.

As the dramatic drop in the numbers employed shows, for many employees the opportunity to take a redundancy package was very welcome as the redundancy terms were initially very attractive. The Release '92 offering for example, was roughly two years salary plus 25% early signing bonus plus 3 – 6 months salary in lieu of notice plus, if eligible, an allowance of several hundred or thousands of pounds towards a re-training programme. For some there was the benefit of additional years added to the company's personal pension scheme to provide them with a full or near full pension available from an earlier-than-normal retirement date. Though their differing occupational statuses and length of service suggest men were likely to gain more from these various packages, it appears that the downsizing process impacted particularly on women. Not only did many clerical and operator posts disappear but proportionately more women than men managers appear to have opted for redundancy.

BT plc's Employees by Gender report for 1995, included at Appendix 4, was produced by Group Personnel and provided by them for the benefit of this research.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

It shows that at 31 March 1995 there were 5001 women managers and 25,135 men managers, at all management ranks²⁵. During the five-year period 1992 – 1997, proportionately more female managers, around 2%, than male managers left the company²⁶.

Restructuring and equal opportunities policies in BT

This seepage and the related decline in the number of female managers occurred despite apparently sincere efforts by some senior managers and main board members²⁷ to promote the interests of women within the business. The position of Gender Champion was initiated and occupied in the first instance by a female functional director and women were encouraged to apply for more senior positions through coaching and mentoring schemes established under the umbrella of the Womens Network. Women's networking events were sponsored and special

²⁵ BT has not provided further information on the numbers of women and men managers in the company

²⁶ This estimate was based on statistics provided by a senior Human Resources manager at a presentation to the BT Womens Network in June 1998. The figures for female managers' uptake of the voluntary redundancy programmes were highlighted in the presentation as more women managers than men managers had left the organisation during the programmes.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

women-only training events were organised. Women were advised to couch their arguments for advancement in terms of the 'business case'. However, at the same time, men in the organisation were not entreated to do the same and attempts at promotion did not necessitate them proving by 'business case' that their advancement would generate profits for the organisation. It was taken for granted that men were already included in the 'business case'.

Although the Equal Opportunities unit in BT, which was installed after privatisation, had provided information and clarification on EO issues through the production of a booklet entitled 'Equal Opportunities - A guide to BT's equal opportunities policies and their application' (1992) the unit had been impotent to act in more assertive ways. Constant restructuring and downsizing also affected the EO unit as the numbers working on the production of EO information and cases decreased. Without information on the gender breakdown of teams and the staff to monitor gender balancing initiatives the EO unit soon came to be regarded as little more than

²⁷ Yve Newbold, a main board non-executive director and advocate of women into more senior management roles, provided practical support and encouragement for BT women. A regular speaker at BT Womens' Network events, Ms Newbold provided leadership and an inspiring role model for aspiring managers.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

a token, overshadowed towards the late 1990's by the more high-profile diversity programmes concerned with the equal treatment of black and coloured employees in BT and employees with disabilities.

Initially, like many other corporations, BT relied on training schemes for the advancement of women, only turning to other initiatives as these proved ineffective. In 1986 BT Group Personnel had commissioned Cranfield Business School to design and deliver a course entitled 'Strategic Skills for Women Managers'. The stated aim of the course was to provide women managers with the necessary political skills to progress in business and to understand the strategic issues that regularly confronted managers in a large company. The twice-yearly course, which was being delivered to these same specifications until 1998, invited applications from women at management Levels 1, 2 or 3²⁸. Those wishing to apply were required to write a

²⁸ The levels of management in BT can generally, though unofficially, be described thus:

- Level 1, First level = Management and Professional Group (MPG) 1 and 2
- Level 2, more senior first level management = MPG 3 and 4
- Level 3, lowest level middle management = Personal Contract Group (PCG) V and U
- Level 4, more senior middle management = PCG T and PCG S
- Level 5, senior management = PCG R/Q
- Level 6, very senior management = PCG P and above, Functional or Divisional Board Members

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

mini business case to explain their desire to undertake the course and the business benefits that might accrue. Only applications from managers who were eligible²⁹ for the course would be considered and all applications had to be endorsed by the woman's line manager and countersigning manager³⁰, which in itself proved challenging to some women.

The bi-annual course took around 40 women per year. After several years a second shorter course was initiated for Senior Women Managers exclusively from the Personal Contractor Grade and this course was restricted to around 30 attendees per annum. In any one-year therefore up to 70 women managers of around 5000 in BT might have access to this type of personal development training. However, an article in a trade magazine, (Personnel Today, 17 September, 1997) tellingly entitled 'BT Women's Course Benefits Too Few', questioned the value of the management development course, alleging only half of the 600 women who had attended in the

²⁹ Eligibility surrounded the woman's substantive employment status, sick record, annual performance marking and suitability for promotion.

³⁰ The countersigning manager is the applicant's direct line manager's manager with responsibility for countersigning the applicant's Annual Performance Review development category and the assessment of eligibility for promotion. If either the direct line manager or countersigning manager did not see a direct benefit from the course or did not regard gender as an issue, the application was unlikely to go ahead.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

previous 10 years had since been promoted³¹. Commenting on this in the same article, David Thomas, then head of Leadership Capability in BT, pointed out that the success rate among the Senior Women Managers who had attended the course was higher with 97% of those who had remained with the organisation, having been promoted. Nevertheless, the courses delivered by Cranfield Management School were suspended in 1998.

At the same time, an innovative and very different experimental short-course was run in-house. This offered women managers or managers from ethnic minorities, who thought that they were being discriminated against by their management or colleagues, the opportunity to volunteer for a course/counselling session along with the perceived discriminator to discuss the issues. Attendance by the invitee (the discriminating person) was not obligatory. However, this experimental course, which could be considered as the nearest to the naming and shaming of discriminating managers that the company came, was not offered for long before it too was withdrawn.

³¹ In a similar article which appeared in the Financial Times (20 March 1998), entitled 'BT course for women managers benefits too few', BT was criticised for the 'low number of women offered the Strategic Skills for Women Managers course each year'. The article was examining the new working practices that some companies were adopting to try to retain female staff.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

For women in non-management grades, including clerical, administrative and secretarial, BT introduced 'Step Forward', an innovative and motivational course to help women plan their move into management. The course was organised in-house by BT Human Resources³² and included advice on the requirements for certain jobs, information on training courses for entering a different discipline, presentations from senior managers on how they had managed to gain promotion and confidence boosting exercises for participants. This was a very popular course, though measurements of its success were not recorded. These remained the only management courses recognising the need for addressing specific gender (or race) issues.

By the late 1980's BT was beginning to broaden its approach to women in management. This was signified in a variety of ways but most notably through its increasing support for women's own initiatives within the organisation and the work of the BT Womens Network. Founded in 1986 by the first group of women managers to attend the Cranfield - BT woman managers' course, this was perhaps

³² BT changed the title of Personnel to Human Resources during one of the reorganisations.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

the most significant outcome of BT's women-only training scheme. The first women managers who attended the course, with encouragement from the course designer and tutor, Susan Vinnicombe³³, decided to meet regularly to discuss their experiences and to share information. Numbers grew when colleagues from within the company were invited to attend the regular monthly meetings and after a year membership had reached 60.

At this juncture the organisers of these meetings asked BT to provide accommodation and administrative help with the growing database of women members. Between 1988 and 1997 the BT Womens Network grew to over 1000 female managers³⁴ at which time, encouraged by BT, the membership was opened up to include non-managers and men³⁵. It was supported by a yearly grant and resources to the approximate value of £40,000. Today, membership stands at over

³³ Now Professor Vinnecombe

³⁴ During that time BT provided resource in the form of administration support, funding for the library of gender related books and reports, the payment of subscription fees to external networks, subsidies for funding for monthly events and subsidies for women-only training and coaching events organised by the women managers in the organising team.

³⁵ The move to include non-managers and men was perceived by some members of the organising team as a way of diluting the strength of the BT Womens Network. Many activities such as mentoring and coaching were curtailed as attendance by non-management at the monthly events grew and that of more senior managers diminished.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

2000 from all levels of management and non-management grades and although the yearly grant has been cut it is probably the largest single-company Women's Network in the UK. Its organising team provides information and support to start-up networks in other industries. It also has corporate membership of the European Women's Management Development Network (EWMD) with the subscriptions being paid by BT. The monthly programme of events and presentations was designed to help women understand the business drivers in the telecommunications industry. The aim was to encourage progress through the management ranks by developing a clear understanding of BT's business imperatives and the role of management in revenue generation.

Since its inception the organisers ran awareness courses for women in sub-management grades who wanted to break into management and for women managers

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

who had recognised barriers to their progress³⁶, whether self-constructed or external and who wished to address these pragmatically. This formal network provided junior management with the kind of access to senior management that most members would not otherwise have experienced and vice versa. Moreover, it established organising teams in Scotland, Wales and England with two of the most enthusiastic and active groups being at BT's research and development establishment, Adastral Park and the software, engineering and programming group at Cardiff. Both of these areas were highly technically orientated where women were outnumbered by their male counterparts.

Over the years a number of other activities had been developed by the Network, which included designing and maintaining a web-site with various screens of information, and the contents of the quarterly newsletter 'Hersay'. These activities also included mentoring and coaching, literary reviews, the Network lending library

³⁶ I have led a number of these courses, which were recognised and supported by BT Human Resources who provided funding and resources on the day. Board members showed their support by giving up their time to present on the day and for many this has been the only opportunity in their tie with BT that the two groups could confer. These courses have a number of advantages over formal courses. They are delivered by women managers in the line, who have given up own-time to be there and are not constrained by the politically-correct company line that inhibits HR trainers. Delegates can ask practical questions on the strategies that course leaders have adopted.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

and maintaining the BT Womens Network Job Share scheme whereby members could register their desire for a job-share partner either confidentially or openly. Even though the Job Share scheme was initiated by the BT Womens Network members, with its contents updated and maintained by members in their own time, it was often assumed that BT was responsible for its inception. Indeed BT benefited from the good publicity that the register generated outside. For example, in including BT as one of 'The Best Companies for Women', MccGwire (1992) cited the Job Share register as a benefit for women that BT provided.

As the Network developed, it successfully lobbied for increased company support such as sponsorship of special awards in recognition of Network members' outstanding work on behalf of the company's female workforce³⁷. For instance, awards were given to those people managers who had taken steps to redress the gender balance of their teams by placing women in positions where they had hitherto been absent. These areas included positions in Field Engineering, Customer Service and Corporate Sales.

³⁷ I was presented with an award by Sir Peter Bonfield, CEO of BT, at the first BT Womens Network Annual Recognition of Achievements event in January 1997 for this research and my work over the years in mentoring and supporting women managers and promoting their equal treatment.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

This was both symbolised and concretised by the creation, in spring 1996, of the post of Gender Champion to which the then Human Resources Director for Networks and Services Division was appointed the first holder³⁸. With almost 25 years service at the time, the Gender Champion was well known within the organisation having reached the grade of functional Director of Human Resources within BT's largest division employing 64,000 people³⁹ (STE Review, June 1996, p13). She was also made responsible for the BT organisational interface with the BT Womens Network thus giving it a clearer intra-corporate voice. Outside the company the Gender Champion was enhancing perceptions of BT as an equal opportunities employer through other activities. The largest 'Take Your Daughters to Work' day ever organised in BT, with 4,500 schoolgirls and employees taking part, gained media coverage (The Financial Times, 20 March, 1998, p16). The day included visiting areas traditionally perceived as closed or unattractive to women and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

³⁸ On her appointment the Gender Champion was quoted in the STE Review of June 1996, page 14, as being keen for it to be known that she was neither an 'ardent feminist' nor a 'political token'.

³⁹ This figure was given by Chris Earnshaw, Managing Director of N&S, in an interview in the STE Review of June 1996, page 13. N&S Division included the BT Engineering and Technical Grade staff who were 98% male and 2% female.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

In that same year BT also received an award from Opportunities 2000, for its initiatives to encourage greater participation of women in management. Other intra-company initiatives during that time included the production and circulation of mentoring guidelines for mentoree and mentor, an N&S peer mentoring guide on how to be a buddy and the publication of names of senior managers who had volunteered to be members on the Equal Opportunities Steering Group. Encouraged by this, there was more openness about discussing EO issues and senior managers were appearing in internal publications, outlining their personal commitment to equal opportunities. The management union, the STE⁴⁰, which co-incidentally had recently appointed Denise McGuire as its first woman President, was eager also to re-state its commitment to EO. Again for the first time, it hosted a number of events, attended by the BT Gender Champion and other senior managers, where issues could be brought into the open and debated.

Under the aegis of the Gender Champion, additional information and clarification was provided for the BT Equal Opportunities policy and access to Equal

⁴⁰ The STE changed its name to Connect at the start of the new Millennium.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

Opportunities information was made easier for managers through the introduction of information on-line⁴¹. Furthermore, Human Resources sponsored a number of gender reports⁴² that included examining the paths of women in management and the types of women who were reaching the most senior positions. Questions on personal perceptions of equal opportunities, company policies and practices were also included in BT's yearly attitudinal survey of its staff, CARE⁴³. Everyone working in the company received a booklet on the company policy for Equal Opportunities and job interviews could include questions on personal attitudes towards working with people with different backgrounds. Measurements were also put in place to monitor the progress of women in BT.

However, such tracking was often confounded both by BT's divisional structure and the number of changes that were taking place under the Release and related

⁴¹ Almost all managers in BT had access to policy information via desktop computers and the BT Intranet.

⁴² For example, internally, a more detailed gender breakdown of the organisation, by division and rank, was first published during this time and several studies on senior women managers were initiated. Externally, several smaller studies were completed as student assignments. Encouragement was given to several students from Cranfield Management College who wished to include BT in their thesis or dissertation studies.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

restructuring programmes⁴⁴. As highlighted before, BT had the attributes of a holding company with a main board consisting of executive and non-executive directors whose duties were to agree major investment decisions and to direct general company strategy and policy. However, beneath the corporate board, the semi-autonomous divisions acted in the same way as profit and loss trading companies. While at the corporate level, strategic decisions on general BT matters took place, including the objective setting for divisions to undertake pan-BT programmes, how these programmes were then implemented, was up to the divisional director and his top team⁴⁵. In these circumstances, it often proved difficult to trace women's progress or monitor the areas where their barriers to progress occurred. Such tracking was, moreover, further impeded by the reshuffling

⁴³ Care was the annual (ex-1998) survey of a sample or all people in BT. It examined attitudes towards the company, its policies and to a lesser extent, practices. Some questions remained substantially the same since its inception while others changed to reflect the changes in circumstances in the organisation.

⁴⁴ Women and men leaving on 'Release' programmes were omitted from some of the BT personnel questionnaires and therefore, from material used to compile some statistics relevant to this study.

⁴⁵ So, for example, during Release '92, the Global Network Services division offered all staff the opportunity to take voluntary redundancy because its director decided that the offer would be unrestricted. This was a local decision, implemented locally.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

of divisions, re-definitions of grades (e.g. new Sales Grades) and the redistribution of personnel across different teams⁴⁶, demanded by BT's continual re-structuring.

Despite these limitations, the data available suggests the position of women in BT did not change substantially. The proliferation of equal opportunities initiatives and policies and the encouragement of extra-curricular activities may have been effective on the periphery, but they did not change core attitudes towards the provision of opportunities for BT's women managers. Though the traditional civil service ethos appeared to have given way to a commercial one, for women BT still embodied a restrictive culture influencing the company's staff, shared values, style, systems, structures, symbols and valued skills sets⁴⁷.

There were still no equality measurements imposed on senior managers and policies that were designed centrally were interpreted and executed locally. There was no transparency in the way that appointments were made or accountability for the

⁴⁶ For this reason, this survey of Women in Management in BT, Barriers to Career Progress, requested of respondents their job function as well as division/section. Throughout re-organisations, the former rarely changed.

⁴⁷ McKinsey, world-leading experts in culture change in organisations identified these elements as being key to change in any organisation. McKinsey stresses that no one element can be changed without impacting upon one or all of the others (Rasiel, 1999).

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

inclusion or rejection of applications. Indeed, there was no obligation for management to provide reasons for rejecting applicants at any stage in the selection process. The gender breakdown of teams was not published and for the initiatives that did exist, the lack of measurements meant that it was difficult to identify the reasons why they had not been successful in working towards a more gender balanced management workforce.

Similarly, throughout the voluntary redundancy programmes there was apparently little awareness of its potentially differential implications for women and men and no systematic attempt to elucidate why so many women managers opted to take redundancy terms⁴⁸. Indeed there was no requirement for exit interviews and therefore no recorded evidence on which to undertake such a study.

The BT experience has thus far failed women managers

Although the number of female recruits as direct entrants from university outnumbered those of men in the latter half of the 1990's, women managers did not

⁴⁸ Several women complained to the BT Womens Network that they had not had the opportunity of explaining their decisions to anyone other than their direct line manager – who may have been involved in the reason for her leaving.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

take their place alongside men in BT in numbers, rank, responsibilities or level of salaries. Neither was the presence of women increased significantly in key areas in the business. On the contrary, the number of women working in the engineering and technical grades declined in the late 1990's though this had traditionally been the area from which the majority of senior managers rose. The break from the constraints of the Civil Service and the opportunities that subsequent privatisation may have brought for the female workforce were not realised. Formerly closed areas to women did not open up to welcome them and a meritocratic culture based on ability to do the job over gender, was not nurtured. Sixteen years after privatisation there were still no women executive directors on the board of British Telecommunications plc and apart from a few divisional positions, all heads of the divisions were men. In the gender balance, women remained under-represented at all management grades.

The legacy of the Civil Service past was compounded by the redundancy programmes that were initiated in 1989. Proportionately more women decided to take up the offer of redundancy and leave the company with the result that at the Millennium there were fewer women managers in the organisation as a percentage of the management population than before. Many women occupying non-management

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

roles, who may have progressed into management, disappeared from female dominated areas of the business. These areas included for example, catering, which was outsourced along with most of the staff⁴⁹. Many telephone operators opted for redundancy as that area of the business shrank with the introduction of new technologies⁵⁰. As previously stated, with the introduction of desktop computing, the number of clerical, secretarial and administrative staff was also radically reduced. This notwithstanding, the views of women on their perceptions of barriers to their progress were not sought by the organisation in a consistent form and it is to redressing this gap and further elucidating women managers' experiences at BT that this dissertation now addresses itself.

The following two chapters outline the rationale and methods employed in what has been the largest study ever conducted in the organisation devoted solely to the

⁴⁹ Whereas BT had run its own catering operations and office restaurants, these were outsourced in the mid-1990's to Compass. Employees working in that area of the business were offered new employment terms by Compass which many accepted.

IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: BT

attitudes of women managers in BT. The research not only concerned women managers' positions and ambitions and their perceived prospects for progression but also set out to provide an opportunity for BT women to voice their concerns and satisfactions and to explain their perceptions of the BT structure and culture and the inhibitors they perceived to their career progression.

⁵⁰ Since the introduction of subscriber trunk dialling (STD) the need for operator intervention had diminished. Along with the automation of such services directory enquiries, the increasing robustness of the telephone network meant that telephone operators were no longer required in the same numbers as previously. The introduction of charging for directory enquiries resulted in a reduction in the number of calls to that service and many services that BT formerly provided access to had been withdrawn, such as the weather service. Even the call-alarm service had been automated. It can be seen then that the need for operators, previously one of the largest and most secure occupations for women in telecommunications had radically changed.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Given its equal opportunities credentials, it is difficult to understand why an organisation of BT's size, with its links to the public sector, had not initiated a large-scale study on its women managers before. The facilities and skills were available and the records maintained in the organisation were sufficiently detailed to have made this a fairly easy exercise. Privatisation and new competition and the challenges of introducing new technologies were undoubtedly occupying the energies of senior management. However, it is nevertheless surprising that the benefits of addressing gender equality issues were not seen by the directors of the organisation. At a time when technologies were not offering competitive advantages, since every telecommunications organisation was more or less working with the same technology, grasping the high ground on diversity issues might have proved a sound investment for the organisation.

While this chapter provides the rationale for the study, the reasons that BT was the subject of the case study and the benefits of the case study approach the following

RESEARCH RATIONALE

chapter continues with an account of the research methods used to collect the data and analyse it. Some of these topics are again addressed in Chapter 10 where the contribution that this study makes to the overall knowledge on women in management and the barriers they face when trying to progress their careers in organisations is assessed. Firstly however, my motivations for undertaking the study need to be explained as the case study organisation was not only my employer at the time but provided the funding and access to its female management workforce. Without this a study of this size and scope would not have been possible.

Rationale for studying women managers

My interest in this area began when, as a manager in BT, I observed that the number of male managers in the organisation outnumbered those of women managers at every management level and in every area of the business with which I had direct contact. The tangible reasons for the high levels of disparity in numbers were not apparent since women and men in the organisation seemed to be educated to similar levels, if in different disciplines, and appeared similarly diligent in their attitudes to work. However, as there were only a few women in positions of real responsibility in the organisation, for example with profit and loss accountability, and none positioned at the head of any division, there was at least some indication that a

RESEARCH RATIONALE

problem existed. The paucity in numbers of senior female managers was especially pronounced in those areas of the organisation that might be considered 'feminised'. For example in Operator Services, which employed thousands of women, there were only two senior women managers and in Personnel where the majority of staff was female, there were very few female senior managers in evidence¹. As I gained promotions to become one of the decreasing numbers of women at each level, the reasons for the deficiency in female peers became no clearer. Like other researchers who study their own organisations, it could be said that 'I wanted to use 'my' problem as 'the' problem to be investigated. I wished to be able to use my reflections on these issues to help me theorise' (Coleman, 1991, p12). Thus, the circumstances surrounding my involvement should be considered by readers and are open to scrutiny (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bryman, 1989).

In defence of this research involvement there are two significant points to be made. The first is 'internal' in that the study is unlikely to have taken place otherwise as there was no indication that the organisation was about to initiate its own enquiry. The second is 'external' in that there were very few examples of studies that had been

¹ Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of management by gender.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

conducted in similar circumstances. There are justifiable concerns about research that is conducted by an insider. Countering that are the claims that in certain circumstances, where respondents are difficult to contact or complicated relationships need to be understood, outsider research is less effective research (Coleman, 1991; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Barlow, Hayes & Nelson, 1983). The question had to be asked of whether a case study on BT women managers would add to the already growing fund of knowledge on women.

Several small-scale case studies on women in technical environments have been undertaken in the last few years. A study of five large private sector organisations (Corcoran-Nantes and Roberts, 1995) had been able to establish that barriers to women's progress existed and were sustained by attitudes to women and a number of organisational factors e.g. training for jobs. In another study of sixteen successful women administrators, the researcher was able to identify that not only did these women have a certain style of management but that their major achievement was to avoid the 'stuck' female roles in institutions that pigeon-hole women into nurturing, caring roles that do not lead to promotion (Neville, 1988). Several studies had focused on forms of macho-management that stress hierarchy, structured roles and functions, and motivation through competition and individualism (Ellis and Wheeler,

RESEARCH RATIONALE

1991; Harragan, 1977). Meanwhile the differing management styles of the genders (Shakeshaft, 1989; Marshall, 1984) and what might be considered gender-mixed management styles (Sonnenfeld, 1991; Epstein, 1991; Sargent, 1981) were the subjects of others. Organisational culture was shown to have a large influence on women's motivations (Harlow and Hear, 1995; Morrison and Glinow, 1990; Wheeler, 1983). And, the subject of motivation too had been studied to render several models including 'Expectancy theory' (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) which illustrated that intention is the most accurate predictor of behaviour and people are motivated to behave in ways that will accrue tangible rewards (Vroom, 1964).

A case to answer

None of these studies however had examined a large number of women² in a former utility and none of the circumstances, though similar, seemed to fit those in which BT women managers found themselves. There seemed to be good reason therefore to initiate this study even though researcher involvement and case study imposed some the constraints on the research process as will be outlined in the sections that follow.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

BT was not only used as the case study for the obvious reasons of proximity and access but also because it was apparently trying to encourage women managers to progress. Since 1986 BT had sponsored a development programme for women managers designed specifically to encourage them into more senior positions in the organisation. The organisation was also supportive of the ensuing women's management network that had emerged from the first cohort on the course and was growing in numbers each year. Yet, despite these activities the percentages of women in middle and senior management positions showed no significant change. Women who could potentially become middle or senior managers by dint of education, training and initiative instead appeared to be trapped in the management pipeline and not moving. Many senior managers in Personnel expressed concern about the gender imbalance in numbers of managers and two small-scale studies had been undertaken.

However, these studies only covered the attitudes of the top few senior women managers and a sample of the senior men managers but the great majority of women

² Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes and Ken Roberts (1995) had interviewed 269 people for their study in 5 organisations, of which 82 were women.

in BT were not included and therefore had not way of expressing their satisfactions or dissatisfactions with the status quo. There were ways in which individual women could record their views on the gender imbalance in management, for example by raising the issue with line management, but there was little evidence that this was being done³. At BT Womens Network meetings addressed by directors and senior managers the subject of how a more equitable balance could be achieved was frequently raised but with no evidence on women's attitudes and aspirations, the discussions were weak and lop sided. In similar vein to the findings in other research, women at BT Womens Network meetings 'were expressing the ways in which they experience themselves as women being 'different' in their organisations from the pervasive male norm' (Coleman, 1991, p47) but there was no formal way of collecting or analysing these expressions. In any case, as the meetings were confined to central London at that time, these sentiments may not have been representative of the female management population at large in BT.

In answer to the question,

³ Very few women respondents volunteered the comment that they had previously discussed the issue with line management.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

'why do researchers decide to collect such data in the first place? They might be representing interests who are funding the research, or are personally interested in this area and have access to resources to test ideas which they have on the relationship...' (May, 1997, p31)

my intense interest in women's career progress, not only BT women's career progress, is my reference. The challenge was to find a way of taking soundings from a representative number of BT women managers on their assessment of the reasons for women's lack of progression through the ranks by making the study as wide-spread as possible geographically. As well as adding to general awareness of women's aspirations the findings might add weight to those Womens Network discussions. The academic approach would be that 'instead of descending upon the social world armed with a body of theoretical propositions about how and why social relations exist and work as they do, we should first observe these relations, collect data on them, and then proceed to generate our theoretical propositions' (May 1997, p29). Thus I was encouraged by earlier researchers such as Stake (1995) and Yin (1984) who 'suggest that it is the purpose of the case study to permit the generation of theory, not to be considered a sample of one' (Bryman, 1989, p178).

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Fortunately prior successful examples of case studies that included researcher participation existed (Coleman, 1991; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Jackson, 1968), and this was encouraging. I therefore asked my line manager⁴ and the head of Personnel for the division in which I worked⁵ for support and funding to study women managers' lack of progression in BT. The response was very positive with the caveat that it must not interfere with my 'day job'. With this support secured and with the encouragement of Group Personnel⁶ I was able to proceed with the study and was later provided with the basic information on the gender constitution of management and the contact details of BT Women Managers for inclusion in the study⁷. There were then two audiences for this work, BT which would receive the

⁴ The study was formalised through BT's internal processes and the activity was included on my Annual Personal Development Plan which was reviewed each year from 1995 to 2000 when the commitment to support and funding was renewed by BT.

⁵ I was with Managed Network Services division where there was only a handful of female middle managers and no female senior managers.

⁶ Group Personnel administered and funded the BT Womens Network, of which I was secretary at the time, and were already supportive of the aims of the network, i.e. to encourage women to progress in BT.

⁷ As previously recorded in the footnotes of Chapter 4, in January 1997 I was presented with a special award by Sir Peter Bonfield the Managing Director of BT for my work on behalf of BT women managers which included this study.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

findings for consideration⁸ and an academic audience that would judge the merits of the study on the basis of adding to the existing knowledge on women in management.

The principal research question in the study was 'why are there fewer women managers than men managers and as the ranks rise, proportionately fewer women managers at each management level in BT'. Secondary quantitative data showed that this was the case but did not answer why it was so. The aim of the study therefore was to try to understand why women were not represented in the same numbers as men at each management level and to gain this knowledge by asking women about their thoughts on the reasons. The study was grounded in the experiences of women managers in BT and presented a real situation which was to be illuminated by the research. The research approach that fitted best with the circumstances was therefore case study. In addition to permitting the generation of theory, case studies can serve a number of other purposes.

⁸ When the primary analysis of quantitative information had been completed, the findings were provided to senior Personnel directors and managers in BT along with a preliminary report on the qualitative material. This was followed by presentations to Group Personnel the BT Equal Opportunities manager. Subsequently the final report for the study was handed over to the (new) Equal Opportunities manager in BT Centre, Newgate Street, London, in 2001 and the implications of

RESEARCH RATIONALE

First, they can be employed in a somewhat exploratory manner in order to achieve insights into a previously uncharted area... Second, case studies can be used in order to test theories... Third, case studies can allow the findings from other studies to be confirmed' (Bryman, 1989, pp174 - 175). BT women managers' attitudes and aspirations could be explored and the strength of the theories prevalent in other studies could be confirmed. Furthermore, as case studies use the language and terminology of the case study subject (Stake, 1995) the research instrument would be 'speaking' to women using the words that they used and best suited their specific situations. A case study approach could accommodate the particular circumstances of BT women managers for 'the case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing' (Stake, 1995, p2) and it 'allows, indeed endorses, a focus on just one example...this might be the researcher's place of work, or another institution or organization with which they have a connection' (Baxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001, p71).

Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple

the findings were discussed. At the time he also received a copy of the qualitative material, typed and anonymous.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

sources of evidence (Robson, 1993). Other case studies have shown 'a strong emphasis on context; readers feel that they know what it is like to be in the organisation being studied and this slant provides a frame of reference for both researcher and reader to interpret events' (Bryman, 1989, p173). This study aimed for 'an emphasis on the substantive or practical importance of the research results rather than on merely 'statistically significant' findings and secondly a multi-disciplinary approach which in turn leads to the eclectic and catholic use of any and all research designs which might prove helpful in answering the questions posed' (Hakim, 1987, p172).

Secondary information was available from public domain publications and included the 'BT Report and Accounts' for every year; 'BT Today', the monthly magazine for BT employees; 'The Manager', the magazine for managers in BT; the 'Organisational Guide to BT'; the booklet 'BT 1001 Facts'; the 'Pocket Guide to BT'; 'Connections' the magazine for members of the telecom executives union; the 'BT Equal Opportunities' guide and 'BT Flexible Working: Implementation guide to managers'. Historical information on the organisation was available from a number of sources and included the 'Civil Service Clerical Association Compendium' (1952) and the 'Institution of Professional and Civil Servants Handbook' (1968). BT provided an

RESEARCH RATIONALE

analysis of management numbers by gender (Appendix 4) to which have been added my 'own observations'.

Despite my position and own values, this was not to be a piece of action research in that '*the change of the status quo*'⁹ becomes the starting point for a scientific quest' (Hammersley, ed., 1993, p70). It was not a situation 'in which the action researcher and a client collaborate in the development of a diagnosis of and solution for a problem' (Bryman, 1989, p178). Nor did the organisation participate in the design. Action research implies that there is more or less equal motivation from sponsor and researcher to find solutions and equal input, albeit in different currencies. However, while financial support and access to limited information was provided throughout the study, the momentum was maintained by the researcher.

As previously stated there were two audiences for this study: BT and an academic audience and each would measure the validity of the findings according to their own criteria. BT exemplified the rational-legal description of a bureaucratic organisational form as characterised by hierarchical frameworks of power formally bounded by roles (Weber, 1947). The culture was such that emphasis was placed on

⁹ Hammersley's italics.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

quantitative results as a barometer for success in almost every activity and this had to be recognised when considering how the results of the study were to be presented. To be deemed credible this study would have to adopt research principles that would provide the (implicitly) expected quantitative data. By contrast, to satisfy an academic audience for this subject there had to be awareness that 'no matter how thorough the questions in quantitative research, quantitative data will yield findings which are superficial in nature compared to most qualitative data. Even the most sophisticated quantitative research report cannot impart the same 'in-depth' understanding of respondents as, for example, a thorough case history' (Hammersley, ed., 1993, p117).

Being sensitive to these two requirements meant drawing on the principles of several methodologies to guide the collection and analysis of the data. The study is not therefore located in any specific paradigm or methodology but is guided by positivist, feminist and pragmatist methodologies in the mode that will now be explained.

A mixed methodology

RESEARCH RATIONALE

A series of positivist principles was valuable to this study. The first was that 'Society is a system of social phenomena that are causally linked together' (Bilton et al, 1997, p109). It was already the premise of this study that there was a link between being a woman and holding low managerial status in BT. The second view was that 'hypothesis could be tested through rigorous collection of quantitative data' (Bilton et al, 1997, p109). This case study did not start with hypotheses but with the aim of formulating a theory from the use of a mixed methodology framework and quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. However, in forming the questions that women were to be asked in the survey, attention was paid to the potential to identify cause-and-effect relationships through the responses, after the event¹⁰.

¹⁰ In Section 1 of the survey questionnaire, had hypotheses been stated before the start of the study they would probably have searched for cause-and-effect relationships between education (independent variable) and management status attained (dependent variable) or length of time in the organisation (independent variable) and management level attained (dependent variable) or division in which employed (independent variable) and management level attained (dependent variable). When analysed, the responses might have proven causal links and could have been used for future studies to prove or disprove each individual hypothesis in other organisations or to find if the results are repeatable in BT. Instead however this started with a case study approach designed to see if testable hypothesis would emerge. Nevertheless, these questions could be analysed after the study to show causes-and-effects.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

However, hypotheses were not formulated in positivist manner, as there may be any of a number of reasons or combination of reasons that could account for the gender difference in management numbers. This study could not afford to be narrowed down through the application of hypotheses to test as there would be no second or third chance to revisit the subject if the hypotheses adopted proved false. There was nevertheless benefit in the data collection methods proposed by positivism as it presupposes that 'reality' can be captured through the use of instruments such as experiments and questionnaires (Baxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001) which are perceived as objective. Instruments such as postal surveys could therefore be used to collect quantitative data for analysis and produce the quantitative material required.

Positivism however assumes that facts can be gathered independently of the beliefs and subjective feelings of the researcher but these have been challenged. 'The idea that we might derive our theories on the social world, independent of our preconceptions, is highly problematic' (May, 1997, p32). A problem was that positivism would not have accommodated the use of the qualitative material available and could not therefore have been applied wholeheartedly to case study. The framework for the case study should allow the women being studied an

RESEARCH RATIONALE

opportunity to voice their opinions and feelings and permit a degree of openness, which did not fit with the positivist orthodoxy.

The aim of the study was to find out from women themselves, their perceptions of why women were not moving through the management pipeline at the same rate as their male counterparts. Therefore feminist methodology had to be considered because the researcher was female, the group to be directly studied was female and the issues to be studied surrounded the balance of the genders in management in BT. The implications of the feminist methodology, that perceives reality and truth as being tightly bound with the personal experiences of the researcher and her or his perceptions of self (Holt and Turner, 1970) doubtless applied to my position as the researcher. However, care was being taken as far as possible to ensure that the contents of the enquiry instrument were not personal hobby-horses. Furthermore, accepting that 'the world-view of the researcher can directly influence the execution of the investigative process and thus the plausibility of the outcome' (Gellner, 1974, p171) meant showing that researcher involvement was being minimised¹¹. For

¹¹ The fact that the study was being undertaken by a BT woman manager might have had an influence on the volume of returned questionnaires and additional qualitative material provided. However, is

RESEARCH RATIONALE

example, the researcher established criteria for the sample to be studied but the names were drawn from the database by a BT appointee. The instrument for the collection of primary data was designed for the avoidance of personal contact between researcher and subject and the contents of the enquiry instrument were piloted several times for independent understanding and the elimination of inappropriate connotations or undue inference. Finally, the quantitative analysis was aided by two 'independent' computer programmes, Excel and SPSS. It could be said that one of the benefits of having two audiences was the double-checking for consistency that took place at points during the study.

Nevertheless, using feminist methodology would have legitimised the request for additional qualitative information. If positivism advocates quantitative methods of data collection to provide credibility then feminist methodology is at the other end of the research spectrum. No matter how thorough the questions in quantitative research, quantitative data will yield findings which are superficial in nature, compared to most qualitative data. Even the most complex and sophisticated

unlikely to have influenced the contents of the material as responses were provided from a very broad range of women.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

quantitative research report cannot impart the same 'in-depth' understanding of respondents as, for example, a thorough case history' (Hammersley, ed., 1994, p117). Feminist methodology places the emphasis on qualitative data arguing that the meanings and ideas of those observed should not be reduced to a statistical rendering of attitudinal scales. It maintains that quantitative methodologies are not capable of stimulating the deep understanding of situations that can be achieved through qualitative methods of enquiry and researcher involvement and the inclusion of the researcher's observations, feelings and thoughts (Coleman, 1991).

Since this study began in 1995, feminist thoughts have become less rigid and there is now support for mixed methods of data collection. I began by singing the praises of 'qualitative' research, of in-depth interviewing and observation as ultimately more truthful ways of knowing, and I have ended up advocating the use of 'quantitative' and experimental methods as providing what is often a sounder basis for claiming that we know anything' (Oakley, 2000, p13). Had the feminist methodology of the mid-1990's been applied to this research it would immediately have justified the inclusion of only women.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

Its aim was overtly to seek the views of women and listen to women's voices in BT and not as an extension of those of men in the organisation. The methodology however was an integral part of the negotiations between researcher and the organisation to be studied and had to reflect the aspirations of both for post-study regard for the findings. Adoption of purely feminist methodology, just as adoption of purely positivist methodology would not have satisfied the requirements of the audiences and furthermore may possibly have provided a destructive weapon for those wishing to dismiss any unpalatable findings. The framework had to be broad as 'there is no one truth, no one authority, no one objective method which leads to the production of pure knowledge' (Spender, 1985, p5). The circumstances of this study were sufficiently different to merit a singular approach and the framework for this investigation therefore drew upon principles from several methodologies but adhered to none.

I therefore came to adopt a standpoint which is closest to the pragmatist principle that 'what works' ought to be applied as the 'method is secondary to the research question itself' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p21). Case study commonly involves situations where for the researcher 'very definite practical constraints limit their room for manoeuvre' (Bilton et al, 1997, p12). As in most organisations, there were norms

RESEARCH RATIONALE

of behaviour in BT and shared understandings of complex issues¹². A pragmatic approach allowed progress to be made when considering the survey contents and the resource requirements for undertaking the quantitative research. These are discussed in the next chapter. Legitimising this mixed method approach were the examples of previous studies that had 'incorporated qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis and inference processes in the form of a completely mixed study' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, pp153 - 154).

¹² These tempered the design of the questionnaire by the avoidance of certain issues and inclusion of others.

RESEARCH METHODS

CHAPTER 7

RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter 4 provides an outline of BT's background first as part of the Civil Service and then as the first major utility organisation to be privatised and the changes in the number of personnel employed were covered. However, even after the redundancy programmes that almost halved the workforce, BT continued to be a major employer of women managers in the UK and this facilitated the study on women in management for there are very few organisations that can boast similar numbers. Almost 12% of the six thousand PCG grades were women and at the lowest management levels¹ 18% of the twenty-four thousand managers and professionals were women. There were a further 27,830 women at sub-management grades in the organisation and 74,385 men.

This chapter outlines how the sample of women managers to be surveyed was selected, the primary research instrument, the reasons behind the questions included

¹ This includes the PSG (sales) grade.

RESEARCH METHODS

in the questionnaire and how the data was collected and analysed. It concludes with reflections on the methodological considerations.

The population to be studied

The audit of BT employees on 31 March 1995² had found five thousand and one women managers employed across all divisions of BT (Appendix 4). Shortly after that audit however, there had been a major restructuring of the company resulting in the disappearance of Operator Services and Development and Procurement divisions with the movement of their staff into Personal Communications and the new Networks and Systems division respectively. Furthermore, although Worldwide Networks division continued to exist, almost all of its employees had also been incorporated into other divisions but mainly to the new Networks and Systems division. However, as the next company-wide audit would not take place until 31 March 1996 it was decided to use the existing data from which to select the sample of women to take part in the study.

² Company wide audits of personnel were annually on 31 March and this was the closest audit to the date of the study.

RESEARCH METHODS

Only women managers from the five largest divisions of Personal Communications (PC); National Business Communications (NBC); Global Communications (GC); Group Finance (GF) and the newly created Networks and Systems (N&S) were to be included in the study. The remaining smaller divisions were excluded for the following reasons. Group Personnel division was almost entirely based in London and many of the Personnel managers had been involved in discussions about this study. Concert division contained many managers for whom English was not their first language and there was no intention to translate the questionnaire. Group Other was a collective name for diverse small teams that provided Headquarters functions in London and Overseas. Finally, the few employees of the rump of Worldwide Network were as yet unsettled³. The female population of the five divisions to be surveyed was therefore four thousand, four hundred and sixty-five.

The sample to be surveyed was structured to include women from the three different management grades in the five divisions to be surveyed, as illustrated in the breakdown of 'BT Managers by Gender at 31 march 1995' which appears at

³ To address some of the effects of the recent reorganisation, respondents were asked to identify the division in which they worked, their current management position and their job function.

RESEARCH METHODS

Appendix 4. These three categories of management were Personal Contract Grade (PCG), Professional Sales Grade (PSG) and Management and Professional Grade (MPG). PCG covered a number of echelons which ranged in seniority from PGCV (lowest middle manager grade) through PCGU, PCGT, PCGS, to PCGR (most senior manager below sub-director at the time). No further breakdown of numbers of women between the ranks of PGCV and PCGS was provided. The lowest management grade of MPG covered the four echelons of MPG1, MPG2, MPG3 and MPG4 with most of the staff at the echelons of either MPG2 or MPG4 as MPG1 and MPG3 were mainly engineering echelons.

The final sample of eight hundred and eighty-nine women managers to be included was the result of a process whereby a percentage of women at each level was selected for inclusion. Appendix 5 shows a breakdown of the percentages and numbers. All 12 top senior women, who were known by name, were to be included in the sample of 245 or 40% of all female managers at Personal Contract Grade. At Professional Sales Grade 128 or 29% of all female managers were included in the sample and at the lowest management level of MPG, 516 or 15% of all females were included. The sample therefore comprised 889 women, which was 18% of the female

RESEARCH METHODS

management workforce in BT. Group Personnel⁴ randomly selected the survey on the basis of the numbers provided at Appendix 5 and provided the contact details of the managers on three sets of postage labels⁵.

In designing the study, thought was given to the inclusion of male managers. Their inclusion would have provided the means for comparing personal and career profiles on the basis of gender. However, there were significant reasons for excluding them from the study. Reference to 'Who's Who' could provide the profiles of most of the BT board executive members and a good deal was already known about the progress of director and senior level male managers in BT through the internal newsletters, journals and magazines that continuously profiled them. Men at middle and senior management levels were also frequently profiled in articles in internal publications and the career paths and progress of many other aspiring and dynamic male

⁴ Although everyone in the organisation had access to internal directories covering the BT workforce, because this sample was to be selected on the basis of rank the request had to be fulfilled by Group Personnel.

⁵ Group Personnel did not disclose the method employed to produce the random sample but the measure of its effectiveness came with the responses.

RESEARCH METHODS

managers was well publicised⁶. Furthermore, the voice of the large majority male population was reflected in the yearly CARE survey of employee attitudes, described elsewhere in this document. Externally male managers' views were covered in popular publications such as 'Networks' and 'Management Today' but by comparison, because of their comparatively low numbers in management, women's voices were rarely heard either externally or through wide-circulation internal publications.

The resource implications of including men had also to be taken into account⁷ and it became clear that the same numbers of women and men could not be included without either halving the number of women on the study or significantly increasing the workload surrounding the survey. Yet, reducing the number of females to be included in the study was never seriously considered as the opportunity afforded by BT represented a unique chance to capture the views of a large number of women

⁶ For example, the Institution of BT Engineers which was funded and supported by BT in a similar way to the BT Womens Network, had over 20,000 members but fewer than 10 women members at the time. Its monthly publications rarely pictured a woman in a management position and women's views were never solicited.

⁷ Their inclusion would have added to the burden of photocopying, enveloping, coding envelopes, labelling, recording and dispatching to name but a few of the tasks that had to be performed. When completed questionnaires were returned they were to be recorded with duplicate labels destroyed, reminders sent to non-responders and a record made of the respondents who had requested copies of the interim findings. Then there was the very laborious task of data input for the returned questionnaires and so on.

RESEARCH METHODS

working in the same organisation. Researchers in other studies of women in management and administrative positions had noted the difficulty of locating women for their studies (Corcoran-Nantes, 1995; Marshall, 1995)⁸. Furthermore, BT had agreed to fund the study on the basis that it would explore the attitudes of women managers, and men were not part of that agreement. Men managers were therefore excluded from the study.

Although they might have added more depth to the understanding of the group being studied, questions on marital status, cohabitation and motherhood were purposely omitted. They were not considered suitable questions to ask a female group for they are not legitimate questions for a job interview situation and it is unlikely that men in BT such a survey as this would have been asked about their domestic arrangements. It was therefore deemed inappropriate for inclusion in a study that related directly to women managers' work situations. Inclusion would have changed the tone of the questionnaire and possibly alienated many women who were sensitive to such topics. If women chose to volunteer information on their marital or partnership status or

⁸ Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes and Ken Roberts (1995) pointed out the difficulty of locating enough women, at the various levels and jobs in the five organisations they studied, to provide a gender balance to the study. Judi Marshall had to call for self-selecting volunteers for her study of 'Women Managers Moving On' (1995).

RESEARCH METHODS

childcare concerns, that was another matter. In the event a large number of women included details of aspects of their domestic arrangements and these findings were included in the qualitative analysis.

Primary quantitative data was to be collected via a survey, a postal questionnaire, as it offered several clear advantages such as the potential to include women from BT's geographically distant locations across the UK such as Thurso, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Enniskillen, Leeds, Preston, Birmingham, Bristol, Hemel Hempstead, Exeter, London and Croydon. A postal questionnaire could be distributed over several days to the work addresses of women managers via the organisation's internal mail system. Respondents could also return their completed proforma via the internal mail without the expense of postage. The survey questions, which appear at Appendix 1, could be standardised and the positivist principle of minimising researcher influence adhered to. Respondents would have the convenience of completing the questionnaire quickly or taking time over it (Oppenheim, 1992). If they wished, respondents could also provide additional text. It was important that the right tone should be achieved in the questionnaire so that women would not only enjoy the experience but also left with a 'feeling that they have contributed something worthwhile' (Birn et al, 1990, p18).

RESEARCH METHODS

Apart from the need to produce quantitative data, which has been explained earlier in this chapter, there were two key reasons why face-to-face interviews were avoided. The first is that this too, just like the inclusion of men, would have limited the number of women who could take part in the study. The second reason was that face-to-face interviews would have demanded direct researcher involvement and may have created a false environment in which the interviewer/researcher would have been forced into an uneasy dual role as interviewer and relatively senior manager. 'Some issues on which research reports do not usually comment are: social/personal characteristics of those doing the interviewing... and the quality of the interviewer-interviewee interaction' (Roberts, ed., 1981, p31). In the circumstances⁹ it is unlikely that interviews would have resulted in the same level of candid disclosure as that elicited by the postal survey. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that every researcher feels that the interview is merely an extension of a conversation or two people talking to one another (Goode and Hatt, 1952; Shipman, 1972; Oakley, 1981). It is only recently that the difficulties some women find in conducting face-to-face

⁹ Time constraints imposed by the researcher doing a full-time job as well as this research would probably have meant very few minutes with each respondent in a face to face interview situation. As it was, postal responses allowed respondents to take as much time as they wanted to write their responses and to raise as many issues as they wished in the additional information they provided.

RESEARCH METHODS

interviews have been accepted (Oakley, 2000, p15) although there has always been recognition that 'Interviewing is not easy' (Denzin, 1970, p186).

The analysis of the quantitative responses might expect to be a fairly simple operation (Munn and Drever, 1995). A challenge in designing the questionnaire was that responses would have to be gathered in such a way as to be as relevant in four, five or six years hence as the day they were written. Three research questionnaires were piloted with different groups of women. The first, distributed in November 1995 to nine women members of the Managed Network Services TeleMarketing team¹⁰, exposed the necessity to code all of the titles and job function categories to facilitate later analysis. The syntax of several questions was also changed. The second, distributed in December 1995, was piloted with six members of the Organising Team of the Womens Network and resulted in the deletion of several questions and the redrafting of others to make their meanings clearer. The third and final draft questionnaire was tested with six members of the Managed Network Services Marketing Team and resulted in changes to punctuation and words in some sentences. Despite these three attempts to perfect the questionnaire, as will be

¹⁰ At the time I was managing a Telemarketing team and several Marketing managers with teams.

RESEARCH METHODS

discussed at the end of the chapter, it still contained questions that confused respondents.

Group Personnel provided three identical sets of contact details which were used for (a) the initial mailing, (b) the follow-up mailing (c) the dispatch of the survey report if requested. Each addressee was allocated a unique identification code, which was hand written onto the self-addressed envelope to be used for returning the completed questionnaire. The alpha part of the code identified the Division in BT in which the woman manager was recorded as working. The numeric part of the coding allowed for speedy access to the other two labels generated for the same respondent. As soon as responses were received after the first mailing in January 1996, the corresponding label on the second set of labels was removed and destroyed. Where the manager had not requested the interim survey report the third label was also removed and destroyed, thus ensuring the confidentiality of the respondent. If the respondent requested the interim survey report, and over 400 respondents did, the third label was removed and placed on a new envelope for dispatch.

After three weeks the remaining labels on the second set were used to send reminders to the women in the sample who had not replied. Six hundred and four completed

RESEARCH METHODS

responses had been received within a few days of dispatch of the questionnaires and only nine completed questionnaires were received as a result of the reminder. To be considered valid, questionnaire responses were to be received between the posting date of the first week in January 1996 and the closing date of 29 February 1996. The eight questionnaire responses received after that date were not included in the survey findings. Also, to qualify for inclusion in the analysis, fifty-nine or more of the sixty-six questions had to be answered and eight questionnaires were rejected on these grounds.

Questionnaire design and analysis

The survey questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was designed round single attitudinal questions. Each section addressed different aspects of women managers' employment experience. Section 1 covered a range of factual elements of length of service, management grade on entry and grade occupied at the time of the survey, the division in which employed, highest educational qualifications and job function and also enquired about women's aspirations for promotion. Section 2 asked respondents to tick 'yes' or 'no' boxes to indicate their perceptions of their career opportunities and asked respondents to assess their equal opportunities with men in BT for achieving a number of progress-related activities. Several of these closed

RESEARCH METHODS

questions also invited qualitative responses to further qualify their quantitative responses.

Section 3 explored respondents' satisfaction with BT and their motivations for remaining with the organisation. For 11 of the 24 questions that prompted for 'true' or 'not true' responses respondents were asked about a number of specific aspects of working in the BT culture and the management styles prevalent. At the end of the section, respondents were invited to write additional comments. Section 4 explored respondents' perceptions of gender equity of the 'Release' programmes and invited additional comments. The final questions in that section dealt with working hours and the preferred work location. It offered a multiple choice of travel time to work and the final question offered respondents a multiple choice of where they would like to work if they were no longer working for BT. Section 5 was open-ended so that respondents could write their own comments onto the blank sheet provided. While the quantifiable measures of women's situations were important, it was equally important to have the additional details of women's experiences to help in understanding the reasons for their lack of progression.

RESEARCH METHODS

Important too was the significant response gained for the survey which attracted a response rate of 69%, or 70% if the rejected questionnaires were to be counted, and exceeded all expectations. Over half of the respondents had added comments to one or more of the responses in the spaces provided for additional information on the questionnaire. Over two hundred of the respondents had also written about their experiences on the separate page provided for 'Additional Comments' or in letters enclosed in the response envelope. These written sheets and letters illuminated up to six topics and many of them introduced subjects that had not been included in the survey questionnaire and provided a more comprehensive picture of the attitudes and aspirations of the female respondents. Furthermore, these respondents were recounting the incidents, experiences and situations that were important to them and not the survey. It was not only the number of responses therefore that showed respondents were intensely interested in the subject but the written material they provided.

Each piece of additional information was studied and categorised under headings. The qualitative information was separated by topic area, frequency of repetition and the value indicated by the respondents themselves (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998, p118). This resulted in the forming of sixteen categories to cover the main topics

RESEARCH METHODS

and these are reproduced at Appendix 3¹¹ with an explanation for how they were treated. Unexpected features emerged from the qualitative responses such as the homogeneity of responses from geographically diverse locations, and these may have been impossible to identify in a smaller sample.

Replicability

Over the six years since the questionnaire was dispatched, the case study organisation has been broken into a number of smaller companies, some of the leadership in BT has changed and the telecommunications industry itself has changed beyond what could have been envisaged in 1996. In 2002 the organisation now employs only around 110,000 people, a reduction of 20%. However, it would not have been appropriate to reflect recent changes in the text since the survey was a reflection of women's experiences of the company at that time. There is a tendency to assess the success of research on its suitability to be replicated but these changes show that a study of this type undertaken today would be very different. The inattention to time contrasts sharply with the concern that is often expressed about

¹¹ To facilitate processing, each piece of text covering a discrete topic was extracted from its bearing letter or textual response and typed under the category still carrying its identifying number on the Excel database.

RESEARCH METHODS

the generalizability of findings to populations and settings and which is denoted by worries about external validity' (Bryman, 1989 p241). Nevertheless, 'it should be possible for other researchers to replicate the survey using the same type of sampling, questionnaire etc.' (May, 1997, p85). Therefore, although this study could be replicated, these changes in circumstances would have to be taken into account.

On reflection

In considering BT's motivations for encouraging this study it should be remembered that it took place when the organisation's Equal Opportunities champion was vigorously raising E.O. issues in BT and in fora such as Opportunity 2000 and Business in the Community. The organisation was encouraging a number of E.O. initiatives of which this was only one. An appropriate description for the stage of that the organisation was passing through might be that described here as the third stage in the following description.

The 'first is to ignore gender as if it were not relevant or did not make any difference, or only refer to women in a brief aside or footnote. The second is the stage of critique when the flaws and fallacies which stem from ignoring gender are exposed. The third stage is to add on the study of women as a special case, as compensation

RESEARCH METHODS

for their previous neglect. The fourth is the full theoretical integration of the analysis of gender into the central questions of the discipline itself. These types of approach are, to a great extent, dependent upon the prior ones being carried out in turn (Walby, 1997, p137). As the subsequent fall in the profile of gender issues and apathy towards gender studies in BT in the late 1990's was shortly to show, BT would not be progressing to the fourth stage in that century and would definitely not be supporting similar studies to this. The support given to this study is therefore all the more valuable.

Regarding the questions included in the survey questionnaire, there were several that had piloted without problems but which the survey respondents clearly found confusing because they did not understand that the multiple choices presented were to be considered mutually exclusive. The questions on where respondents would prefer to work and the mode of work (part-time, etc.) were in this category.

This one-off study represented an opportunity, if constrained by circumstances, to capture the concerns, experiences, feelings and motivations of women managers in BT, to give them a voice and make them feel that their views were valuable enough to record. However, the inclusion of men in the study would undoubtedly have

RESEARCH METHODS

quelled some of the criticisms that are bound to see this as too one-sided. Even though the sample of women would have had to be halved for their inclusion, the contributions of men would have shown parallels and dissonances in the approaches that the genders take that were difficult to contrast without men's direct input.

Some reviewers of this research are bound to question why the types of questions asked in the postal questionnaire were not more probing about both the home and caring situations of the respondents and their attitudes to specific issues. Access to this number and range of women managers could only be gained through researcher-organisation co-operation and this included recognising sensitivities surrounding the question areas. However, the respondents themselves spontaneously provided much more information than prompted by the questionnaire and it could be deemed all the more valuable for that. These additional comments form the basis of the analysis in the following chapters and provide insights into the pressures that women exceptionally feel when considering career moves and the rationale behind apparently self-imposed career constraints.

CHAPTER 8

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: SEGREGATED WORK AREAS

The first part of this chapter will examine the numbers of women in management and the background of organisational and gender segregation that already existed in BT. Also included are the numbers of women in management recorded in the various divisions of BT in the period prior to this investigation. The second part of the chapter explores the demographic responses of the women who completed survey questionnaires. This information covers their job functions, the areas of the business they supported and their length of time with the organisation. Further analysis of the survey responses is continued in Chapters 8 and 9 and what emerges is the picture of women managers working in clusters, for the most part, at the lower end of the management hierarchy.

Their frustration with the organisational structures was exceeded only by their condemnation of the stifling management styles that inhibited progress and innovation. The largest group of women to respond to the survey were working in

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

N&S where they were exposed to the most overtly hostile, macho environment in the company. In that division, women were segregated horizontally into only a few disciplines and vertical segregated by invisible barriers that meant the most highly qualified group of women were also the most poorly recognised and rewarded.

That the horizontal and vertical segregation of BT management by gender existed before this study was begun is evident when the data produced on employees by management group and gender at 31 March 1995 (Appendix 4) is examined. The statement of employees, which was part of a yearly audit of personnel, was provided by Group Personnel to facilitate this study and shows that 5001 (17%) of all management in BT were female while the remaining 25,135 (83%) were male. Furthermore most of these women, 4283 (86%), were to be found at the lowest ranks of the Management and Professional Grades with 3834 (77%) and Professional Sales Grade¹ with 449 (9%). Of the remaining 718 (14%) women managers occupying several tiers of the Personal Contract Grades (PCG) ranging from lower middle

¹ The grade of PSG, which carried a company car, was a sales grade perceived as equivalent to MPG although, because of the possibility of earning sales related bonuses, those holding the grade could earn higher incomes than many MPG staff.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

management to senior management, only 12² were in the most senior positions below director level. An explanation of these grades follows.

Gendered organisational structures

In 1995 the divisions of BT were ordered according to their disciplines and perceived nearness to the customer. The order of management grades from lowest to highest could be considered as follows³ and while the differences may appear inconsequential, the size and complexity of the operations that BT performed ought to be borne in mind. Managerial and Professional Grades (MPG) 1 & MPG2, and MPG3 & MPG4 could be considered lowest management; Personal Contract Grade (PCG) V and PCGU could be considered lower-middle management and PCGT and PCGS could be considered upper-middle management. The higher grades of PCGR and PCGQ could be considered senior management. In the intervening period since this study was initiated most of these grades have remained unchanged except for the introduction of the new grade of Corporate Resource which encompassed most

² Group Personnel confirmed that only 12 women in BT were at the Personal Contract Grade (PCG) R in 1995 with no women above that grade.

³ Generalisations of these management ranks is difficult for the amount of responsibility carried by incumbents could vary greatly depending upon such matters as the division, the job function, the number of staff managed or supervised and the position of the line manager.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

of those managers positioned in the PCGQ and PCGP grades, but not all. Corporate Resource became the grade directly below Functional Director level and Divisional Director level.

While the reorganisation that took place in BT shortly after the personnel audit of 31 March 1995 reallocated large sections of the workforce to newly named divisions, the personnel remained almost the same⁴. In general the reorganisations of divisions did not substantially change the ranks of management and the types of work managers performed were similarly basically unchanged. Managers therefore, both female and male continued to use their established skills sets to execute much the same tasks as they had performed in the last division⁵ so with few exceptions the reorganisations had little impact upon the day-to-day performance of most employees. However, an exception in the reorganisation of 1995 was Operator Services (OS) division with its large female population. Developments in

⁴ Almost all of Worldwide Networks personnel and functions were taken into the newly formed Networks and Systems. Development and Procurement disappeared as a division as the work was absorbed into other divisions. Operator Services disappeared completely and many of the functions performed by OS also disappeared.

⁵ Many employees perceived changes to the organisational structure more as a reflection of changing appointments at board or divisional head level than as an attempt to gain efficiencies since reorganisations usually followed the swapping of responsibilities or new appointments at these levels.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

technology that had revolutionised telephony and dispensed with the need for operator intervention in most transactions, culminated in the demise of the Operator Services division shortly before the dispatch of the survey questionnaire. The significance of this for women's career prospects will be considered later.

The lack of real change in style or substance at upper levels of management during this time of reorganisations was remarkable. There were outward physical signs of change in that the names of divisions and directors' titles changed, and some personnel were relocated to other sites, but there was no indication of the responsiveness or commitment to communication associated with deep change in organisations (Quinn, 1999; Ragsdell, 2000). Leadership did not emerge to enable or facilitate growth nor was there a groundswell demanding dynamism. Instead, the situation echoed attitudes observed by Lee Iacocca⁶ that 'from boardrooms to union halls, what anybody with power is most scared of is change' (O'Toole, 1998, p3). Reorganisations or movements in BT could not therefore automatically be equated with progress. The numbers of managers in post were about the same after as

⁶ After being toppled from leadership of the Ford Corporation of which he was President, Lee Iacocca moved to head Chrysler as the CEO. His organisational changes and leadership were attributed with saving Chrysler from business failure.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

before the reorganisation that took place between the audit of 31 March 1995 and the start of this study in 1996, and the gender landscape retained the hallmarks of organisational segregation.

Organisationally women's work was largely segregated from men's work through the existence of divisions by occupation and, as Respondent 316 observed, it was 'difficult to move between divisions.' This mainly surrounded the segregation of engineering and technical staff in the separate division of Worldwide Networks (WN). The aforementioned Operator Services was mainly populated by women while WN, with its approximately sixty thousand employees, was mainly male. Group Personnel contained a high number of women and Development and Procurement contained mainly men. This gender-organisation-system approach (Fagenson, 1990) to divisions was constructed round the segregation of men from women in what could be perceived as jobs demanding 'hard skills' from jobs demanding 'soft skills'. Respondent 308 stated 'Women are "pigeon holed" into personnel or more traditional roles. I think some real culture changes are necessary before BT can truly be considered a truly dynamic equal opportunities employer which takes advantage of the skills of all its workforce.'

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

As many studies reviewed in earlier chapters show and as this thesis argues, restraining women in this way reflects society's expectations. For, 'while we socialise our men to aspire to feats of mastery, we socialise our women to aspire to feats of submission. Men are hard; women are soft. Men are meant to conquer nature; women are meant to commune with it..... men are good at mathematics; women are good at literature. If something is broken daddy will fix it. If feelings are hurt, mommy will salve them. We have trained our women to opt out of the technological order as much as we have trained our men to opt into it' (Schwarz-Cowan, 1979, p62). At the same time, some women thought that the 'soft' skills were not valued sufficiently in BT. Respondent 608 thought that there was 'not enough support for softer management styles, "macho rules". [I] do not believe this company is seriously committed to high quality management only a tough macho culture.' Not only have the divisions of labour in BT reflected these sentiments but also the organisation's structure was deliberately, or inadvertently, assembled along gendered lines. This has contributed to the retention of women in areas of BT where low ranks and low rewards are prevalent.

As other organisational settings referred to in Chapters 2 and 3 show, women's position within the opportunities structures, the amount of power they were able to

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

exert and their numerical distribution systematically excluded them from absorbing the required behaviours, actions and attitudes of senior management necessary for obtaining and retaining positions of power (Kanter, 1977). The women in these segregated divisions had less opportunity to gain essential management experience in the 'hard skill' areas or in higher strategic issues. Instead it was men who found that 'advantageous positions foster attitudes, behaviours and values which move people along the so called "fast-track"' (Green and Cassell, 1996, p170). *De facto* men were thus able to occupy the vast majority of management positions from junior manager to board level director. In horizontally segregating women and men into different divisions in the organisation, BT failed to nurture its female workforce and expose women to the 'hard' areas of business management⁷. Even after the reorganisation of 1996 the circumstances of segregation remained and in some cases became more concentrated as women were further segregated or accepted redundancy under one of the many voluntary schemes.

⁷ This is self-evident when the numbers of female managers in areas considered to be 'masculine' are examined.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

Horizontal segregation was most evident in those parts of BT dealing with aspects of business commonly referred to in BT as 'core business'. WN with its 59,901 employees registered 7564 male managers but only 442 (6%) female managers. Post reorganisation, WN was absorbed into Networks and Systems (N&S) and retained responsibility for the provision of engineering and technical support for the delivery of communication systems, including into customers' premises. Employees were mainly time-served and qualified technical and engineering men, communications scientists and support staff comprising relatively few women. This is significant for at the time there were skills shortages due to rapid technical innovations⁸ that ought to have offered staff opportunities to learn new technical skills. However, in what appears as 'the maintenance of closed systems of occupational opportunity as barriers to entry' (Romanienko, 2000, p2) only a few women who found themselves reorganised out of a job were actively encouraged to take up the engineering and technical jobs that could potentially bestow upward mobility and status.

⁸ The innovation of Internetworking Protocol (the Internet) was intensifying use of the telephony system and data traffic was growing very rapidly as a consequence of the increase in numbers of business and personal computers.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

Only thirty-three or 5% of survey respondents reported having undertaken formal retraining. During that period, when the number of women in professional and managerial grades in Britain as a whole rose from 24% to 34% between 1984 and 1997 (Labour Market Trends, 1998), BT had only 17% overall. There was a paltry 6% of women managers in its largest division of Worldwide Networks. Respondent 466 explained 'Women in BT have to prove they are worth promotion, especially once they have a family. I work in a male dominated division... and have on occasion had to overcome anti-female attitudes. I feel that women take longer to get the opportunity of advancement than men having to prove long term experience in relevant positions'.

Not only had the organisation failed to reflect current trends in the constitution of its management, the sub-management engineering and technical grades were registering a fall in the numbers of women⁹. Other organisational aspects in BT also contributed to perceptions of gender segregation as employees in sub-management grades had different terms and conditions depending upon whether they were on the clerical or engineering and technical disciplines. Although clerical and technical

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

personnel may have been represented by the same union, the National Communications Union and subsequent Communications Workers Union, different terms and conditions were negotiated for each discipline. This included access to training, development opportunities and different working hours and conditions¹⁰.

Meanwhile, barely better than WN in its female management headcount was Concert, a division that had been newly formed to serve the developing international aspirations of BT. It had 20 (7%) female managers out of a total of 273 managers. Most of the employees who enjoyed the opportunities of international travel and working were men 'probably because international assignments have long remained a male preserve' (Smith and Still, 1996, p2). The business strategy was unambiguous and the organisation's aspirations for partnerships and alliances mainly surrounded the U.S., Europe and Asia Pacific where conditions for women expatriates were considered safe. Managers responsible for recruitment in BT could

⁹ Women in E&T grades fell from 2% to 1.8% in the latter part of the 1990's according to information provided by group Human Resources.

¹⁰ For example, while clerical workers were encouraged to adopt flexitime and time off in lieu (TOIL) instead of payments for overtime, the engineering and technical sub-management grades enjoyed overtime payments and such working conditions as a nine-day fortnight. The training and retraining programme for engineering and technical people aimed to continuously re-skill these employees.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

not therefore be excused for failing to recruit women on the basis that 'the greater the uncertainty, the smaller the probability that a multinational will assign a woman to an expatriate role' (Linehan and Walsh, 1999, p523). BT's reluctance to give women managers the valuable experience of international travel reflected the findings of previous researchers (Adler, 1984 and 1993) discussed in Chapter 4.

The effect of this disproportionate grounding of its female management was that they lacked contact with the role models, mentoring advice, personal champions and international networks enjoyed by many male managers undertaking international assignments. Yet as 'the under-representation of women in expatriate assignments is increasingly significant in that due to the rapid globalisation of business operations, international experience is increasingly considered as a prerequisite for promotion to the top of the organisational hierarchy' (Linehan and Scullion, 2001, p215) as the following chapters show, few BT women were encouraged to travel. Undoubtedly this was the case in BT where a newly appointed board member immediately stated the requirement for more of his senior management to have exposure to international business cultures.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

Still concerned with aspects of international business, but those undertaken mainly in the UK, Global Communications (GC) had a total of 5138 employees of whom 3053 were managers. Although not so pronouncedly male dominated, nevertheless GC management had only 568 (19%) women managers against the number of 2485 (81%) for men managers. A secondary reason for highlighting the gender constitution of GC management lies in the types of jobs that these managers performed. Relatively few women managers were involved in international travel or negotiations but instead the majority was occupied in support roles for their travelling male colleagues. These horizontally segregated ways of working were commented upon by a number of respondents to the survey questionnaire as shall be seen later. The two international divisions of Concert and Global Communications, along with the amalgam of Group Other¹¹, were the only divisions that recorded more people in managerial grades than sub-management grades. This reflected the status of the personnel and the importance associated with international aspects of

¹¹ It is not clear what personnel constituted Group Other but these were likely to be people working in Headquarters in support of board or corporate functions that demanded separation from the day-to-day business of the organisation.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

BT work at the time¹² as well as the significance of the jobs performed under Group Other.

Presenting a stark example of vertical segregation along gendered lines was the division previously referred to, Operator Services (OS). The majority of the 4095 people in the division were women but only 2 women had reached the ranks of PCG against the number of 26 for men. Meanwhile at the lower ranks, OS was the only division of BT on 31 March 1995 where women outnumbered men with 337 women (61%) as opposed to 214 men¹³. So, although women had reached first line management roles they had not progressed beyond to the decision-making ranks of management in the division. This situation, which did not happen suddenly but was the result of years of management development and promotion custom, must have been frustrating for aspiring women in OS. It was the one area of the business in which women's claim to have appropriate experience, earned in the ranks as telephonists, should by rights have legitimised their claim to occupation of the

¹² BT had embarked upon a series of international acquisitions, joint venture activities and partnership formations.

¹³ Operator Services also had more women than men in non-management grades. Although experience of other studies informs us that the gender breakdown for Personnel (Human Resources) would also find more women than men at all grades, including sub-management grades, a gender breakdown of sub-management grades was not available at the time of this study.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

highest positions. Nevertheless as shown in Chapter 3 in the case of the first US programmers (Kanter, 1977), this did not happen and instead men moved into the division to occupy the higher-ranking positions or were upgraded in overwhelming numbers.

What clearly emerges from both the quantitative and qualitative findings is that women were not considered adequate for promotion into the higher echelons of that feminised division, were not being considered for promotion or were not putting themselves forward for promotion. That men should occupy these positions appears to reflect a cultural phenomenon embedded deep in the gender-segregated history of the occupation whereby, in the nineteenth century, male telegraphists were ranked as clerks¹⁴ and women as telegraphists in order to allow employers to offer different pay-scales. The cultural legacy of the GPO referred to in Chapter 5 remained in the industry psyche right to the point of descent of operator services, with males occupying the senior positions while females were underlings. Having been recruited and trained for the job of telephone operator, which in itself demanded a

¹⁴ As far back as 1855 when women were first recruited as telegraphists, male telegraphists were given the title of clerk so as to enable employers to initiate gendered pay scales. (Source: Women's Work: Female employment in telecommunications to 1981, p2).

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

certain level of technical awareness, operators were phased out but other doors were not opened to them¹⁵. The introduction of desk-top computing during the 1990's, in the same manner as earlier eighteenth and nineteenth century mechanisation referred to in Chapter 2 (Pinchbeck, 1981; Walby, 1986) further reduced the type and number of traditionally female jobs available. These women were not retrained in numbers to help them take up technical positions¹⁶ but instead were reallocated to other areas of the business at the low levels that equated with their positions as operators. Respondent 77 observed that 'BT does not allow transfer into divisions as easily as I would expect, nor does it seem willing to invest in technical background/knowledge for women at management grades'.

As other studies outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 have shown, vertical segregation by gender cannot be extricated from horizontal segregation for the two coexist in a symbiotic relationship and both can be observed in every division of BT. With only

¹⁵ Provision for operators being absorbed into the organisation was not made on a systematic basis whereby retraining was offered with employment guarantees. Consequently many operators left under voluntary redundancy terms. Some were however absorbed into clerical roles which provided them with a higher salary.

¹⁶ The proof of this statement lies in the diminished number of women entering the engineering and technical grades between 1994 and 2000. Telephone operators who did not take voluntary redundancy were absorbed into the business and the nature of their dispersal made assessment of their situation or opportunities impossible.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

718 female managers enjoying the rewards and benefits of the PCG grade out of a total workforce at the time, of 134,351, the chances of women making it into that stage of management were low. Only 12 women occupied positions directly below divisional director in what had long since been identified as a 'double-glazed glass ceiling' (Scase, 25 May 1993 in a presentation to BT Womens Network). Most obviously vertically segregated was Concert with only 6 (4%) women at middle and senior management grades. The next was Worldwide Networks with 51 (5%) women holding middle and senior management posts. The international division and the predominantly technical division were therefore foremost in their lack of women in management.

In the division of Group Personnel, which boasted 276 (37%) female managers at the lowest ranks, a similar position could be observed as the number of women fell to 36 (26%) at the higher ranks. Responsibilities of managers in lower levels of Personnel surrounded the servicing of employee benefits, payments and remuneration, support in the recruitment and selection of personnel and the maintenance and supply of information. However, jobs at the upper echelons involved negotiations with the trades unions, industrial relations and policymaking on employee terms and conditions, working hours and benefits packages. That echelon would also have

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

responsibility for general policy making and recruitment policies. BT had never had a woman in its board level Personnel position, or directly beneath it, despite there having been a large number of women in human resource management. Of course that was not unique to BT and there was also a dearth of women in other areas of the business.

Women were absent in significant numbers in professional selling in BT, which mainly surrounded the organisation's business-to-business relationships. At the time of the study few women, 449 (17%) of 2590 salespeople, occupied these grades which offered bonus payments, company cars and incentive rewards. Instead this area of business, dominated by male values and symbols, has straddled both horizontal and vertical segregation and illustrates the difficulties that women have had in fulfilling the recruitment criteria¹⁷ and attempting to excel in that macho atmosphere. Global Communications had only 99 (15%) women in the PSG grades.

¹⁷ Traditionally women have not been a strong presence in professional selling even in the more egalitarian US. A discrimination case in 1986, involving the recruitment criteria for salespeople exercised by Sears Roebuck, found that the organisation had not discriminated against women. The screening process included the low pitch of the applicant's voice, whether they swore often and if they had wrestled or played football (Kelly, 1991, p15). Sears Roebuck also included aggressiveness, assertiveness, competitiveness, personal dominance and a desire to earn a large income, yet these too were not perceived as discriminatory.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

However, the Personal Communications division, which will be seen to have prompted more support for its management style than any other division surveyed, recorded more women than men in its sales grades. PC had 93 (59%) women and also showed improved figures for women in its upper management positions with 72 (23%) women. That was an improvement on National Business Communications showing (15%) women in its PSG grades and 147 (13%) in PCG grades. These two divisions dealt directly with customers and aspects of the business-customer interface that demanded an understanding of the 'soft' issues surrounding relationships. Each had large sub-management staffs containing female telesales and telemarketing people who undertook extensive product and customer contact training. Nevertheless, when appointing PSG staff, the sales grade that enjoyed company cars and bonus payments related to sales achievements, their numbers were strikingly different.

At the lower management levels of MPG, numbers of women in Personal Communications were relatively high with 424 (37%) while National Business Communications had 675 (23%), both above average for BT divisions. Even these figures for NBC and PC however were far from being gender balanced and show that women at the junior management level were either opting out of progressing or

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

experiencing barriers that were too difficult to overcome. If this had not been the case, the higher percentages of women in management at the lower level would have translated into much the same percentage at the higher levels. These conclusions of gender segregation, drawn from an examination of the employee numbers for divisions of BT produced in 1995, only cursorily address the impact on career progress for individuals arising from the different functions performed by women and men. Attention now turns to the results of the survey questionnaire of 1996 where job functions as well as divisions were included in the research.

Divisions and work areas

At the pilot stage, the estimated time to complete a questionnaire with no or few additional comments was ten minutes and on that basis the responses gained represented around one hundred and two woman hours or thirteen woman days of work. That considerable effort does not include the time taken to write the many comments and letters that were also contributed by these BT women managers to further qualify or expand their submissions. The response rate of 613 (69%), or 12% of the entire female population of BT, and the two hundred pieces of additional text illustrate that women managers in the organisation were not complacent about their circumstances. They were eager to make statements and used the opportunity

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

to raise issues and give voice to their many concerns. Undoubtedly the survey hit a chord, for otherwise there is no explanation for the very large response, or the large volume of textual information provided both to qualify their responses and introduce new topics.

Responses were received from very junior new entrants into the organisation to the most senior levels working in the five BT divisions and from personnel in UK locations from Aberdeen to Belfast, Birmingham to Bristol and Glasgow to London. A simple first-cut analysis of the responses to the survey questionnaire was undertaken (see Appendix 2). Respondents who had been with BT for twenty years or over numbered 107 (18%), those with fifteen to nineteen years numbered 122 (20%) and respondents with ten to fourteen years 140 (23%). The remaining 238 (38%) had been with BT nine years or fewer and had only known BT as an organisation in a competitive environment and not as the monopoly supplier of telecommunications that was the experience of the first group. Of this latter group 89 (14%) had been with BT for four years or less and 5 respondents did not answer this question.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

There was no evidence of women leaving the organisation in large numbers at specific points or of a significant 'family gap'¹⁸ as might have been expected given the lack of numbers in senior management. Had this been the case the percentage of women working in the company for between nine years and nineteen years would probably have dipped more than the 4% recorded. However, women were not taking career breaks that removed them from the management pipeline for significant and possibly career damaging breaks. Women managers should therefore have been enjoying the same benefits of continuous service as their male peers and moving up the management hierarchies along with them. As this was clearly not the case, it can only be concluded that there was some internal factor or feature in BT that was holding them back while their masculine colleagues moved onwards and upwards in disproportionately high numbers.

Of the eleven top level women managers who responded, three had been with BT for five to nine years, two had ten to fourteen years service, two had fifteen to nineteen years service and three had been with BT for over twenty years. One top woman had

¹⁸ In an analysis of the female workforce in 1998 for the BTWN a step change in numbers at each 10-year period of employment was detected. This decrease could not be accounted for by a single reason.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

joined the company within the preceding four years so recruitment of women was not confined only to the lowest levels of direct entrant management. There were 424 (70%) respondents in the lowest levels of management in MPG and PSG grades, 172 (28%) in middle management and 11 (2%) in the most senior management bracket for women.

For reasons that were recorded in Chapter 5, only five divisions had been targeted for this study, Group Finance, Networks and Systems, Global Communications, National Business Customers and Personal Communications however, 17 respondents reported that they worked for other divisions. A breakdown of the respondents by division showed that 176 (29%) women worked in N&S, the largest division in BT containing mainly engineering and technical grades. Of the others, 166 (27%) women managers worked in NBC which dealt mainly with the sales and service needs of business customers, 108 (17%) were with GC, the division that provided services to global customers, and 98 (16%) women worked in PC, the division delivering services to personal consumers. Only 48 (8%) women managers worked with Group Finance and 17 (3%) were in other divisions. Of the N&S respondents, 123 (70%) women were in the lowest levels of management; 52 (29%) occupied middle management grades and one woman was in a senior management

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

job. Initially these figures were comparable with NBC's 119 (72%) respondents at the lowest level of management and 42 (25%) in middle management roles.

However, significantly, NBC had five women at the most senior level of management to N&S's one woman at that senior level. NBC also had 30 women in the professional sales grade with the potential to increase their final salary by up to 15%. PC had 14 women in sales grades and 3 at senior level while both Group Finance and Global Communications each had one senior woman and the majority of their women managers at the lowest management level with 32 (67%) and 38 (62%) respectively. In summary, NBC had five senior women managers, PC had three and Group Finance, GC and N&S each had only one woman¹⁹. The division with the largest number and percentage of women at the lowest level was N&S with 123 (70%) which, notwithstanding the culture, was significant given that the women in that area of BT had the highest levels of education. The lack of an appropriate level of education is unlikely therefore to be the barrier to progress that these women were experiencing.

¹⁹ A breakdown of PCG levels was not provided in the audit of 1995.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

Once recruited into a division of BT it appeared that the opportunities to move jobs depended more on factors such as a manager's transferable skills and the visibility of job vacancies. Noting that 'divisional boundaries are like the Berlin Wall', Respondent 11 commented upon the difficulties of moving from one division to another. While distinctive cultural differences between divisions may have been partially responsible, the diminished ability to move was also a result of the skill sets that personnel gained through the job functions they performed. The functional skills acquired in the course of working in N&S, for example, were not necessarily transferable²⁰ to other divisions of the organisation. Functional work areas with the largest number of women managers were Computing with 113 (18%) followed by Sales with 99 (16%) and Marketing with 85 (14%).

Women working in Finance returned 63 (10%) completed questionnaires and Personnel and Training 44 (7%). Only 19 (3%) respondents described themselves as working in engineering and 11 respondents (2%) stated that they were in Business Strategy, which plans the future direction of the organisation. This means that although women were evident in the customer facing groups, where the day-to-day

²⁰ This covers for example, IT skills for which there is less demand in the customer facing divisions.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

business of the organisation was carried out, they were not present in significant numbers in the areas where long term planning and investment took place. Nor were they in evidence in the functions where many male senior managers would have learned their leadership skills in the engineering, technical and planning functions.

By far the largest single occupational area was computing and of the 113 (18%) respondents in that area, 102 (17%) worked in N&S, which also contained most of the 22 (4%) women in procurement and research. However, a large group of 102 (17%) respondents described themselves as being in work areas other than the functional descriptions offered on the survey questionnaire and it is not clear what their occupations were²¹.

Qualifications and aspirations

'Few companies operate solely within the purview of a single culture' (Cameron and Quinn, 2000, p1) and the divisions in BT had distinct cultures which extended to the

²¹ A recommendation is made that future questionnaires exploring similar circumstances, are designed to allow women to record job function not included in a list.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

education of the personnel. Overall, 244 (41%) of respondents had no formal qualifications beyond 'A' level while 78 (13%) possessed diplomas. Women who already had one degree had a propensity for study as seventy-one percent of these graduates also had a postgraduate qualification. The respondents in NBC and PC had roughly similar profiles and were less well qualified in general. In contrast Group Finance had a high proportion (64%) of respondents with diplomas, first degrees and post-graduate qualifications. Likewise, GC respondents were also well qualified with a high number (63%) having a qualification beyond 'A' levels. Only one of the eleven women at the highest level of management did not have a degree while most of the others also had a postgraduate qualification.

N&S culture was shown in the survey to be distinct from other cultures in BT and more pervasive. Despite the group of women in N&S being better qualified than women in any other division they were less likely to be promoted. Two thirds of all women managers in N&S had a diploma or first degree and many also had post-graduate qualifications. Their educational achievements ought to have made these women confident about their career prospects but they expressed themselves as the least confident group, perhaps because there were so few of them in evidence in the upper echelons of that division. Most N&S women were at the lowest levels of the

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

management and professional grades (MPG) and they did not expect to achieve the same number of promotions as their colleagues in other parts of the business before leaving the organisation.

It is clear that the better-qualified women in N&S were not benefiting from their university or college education as suggested by liberal feminists might happen, for most were on the lowest rung of management while those in PC and NBC, who had least qualifications, were progressing. Not only were the latter groups gaining superior management grades but they also had opportunities to join the professional sales grades. As N&S had no sales function, no woman working in finance and only one of one hundred and seventy-six N&S respondents working in marketing, the women in N&S were employed in a much narrower range of functions than most of the other divisions in BT. With 114 (65%) of the respondents in N&S working in the specialised areas of computing and engineering and a further 19 (11%) in procurement and research, many are likely to have been recruited specifically because of the qualifications they possessed. They may also have needed qualifications to gain entry to the division on internal transfer from another part of BT. However, once in the N&S division, they were not moving up the management ladder at the same rate as women in other divisions and the majority was remaining

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

at the lowest rung. Several women who worked in areas where there were skills shortages commented on difficulties in gaining promotion within their discipline. Respondent 402 reported on, 'A lack of technical career progression which results in good programmers being promoted to be bad managers. There is no focus on people just products, no scope for difference just interchangeable parts'.

Qualifications, or the lack of them, did not appear to be a discriminating factor in the progress of women in NBC, PC, and GC, all of whom shared certain characteristics. Only Group Finance appears to have had a requirement for most of their middle managers to be qualified, as might be expected from a division that serves only one discipline. So, while formal qualifications look necessary for women to be admitted into some jobs in N&S, and for women at the most senior levels in all divisions, the requirement does not appear necessary for the other divisions. More women were qualified than unqualified as 59% of the women who responded were educated to diploma level or above with 51% having an undergraduate degree and 13% also holding a post graduate qualification. The women in N&S were best qualified and the rest of the qualified women were roughly distributed throughout the other management levels in all divisions.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

To assess the progress that women managers had made since joining the company respondents were asked to indicate at which level they were recruited and their current level. They were also asked about their aspirations and the level that they would like to achieve in the organisation before leaving, or retiring, from the company. This question revealed significant differences between the divisions. Respondent 91 stated, 'I have always worked in a man's world... I think women have to work harder to prove themselves'. There were comparatively few such jobs in N&S and, with a lack of role models from whom to learn, women managers in N&S were less likely to seek advancement. Respondent 434 wrote that 'the culture in N&S is built on a fairly narrow view of desirable skills and attitudes and now there are few women in a position to change and broaden this... The company now seems to accept, possibly condone a very uncompromising management style, "this is what I want, don't tell me it is impossible, do it", approach, which can stifle initiative and honesty'. Still in the same vein, the distinctive culture of N&S induced many women to report the difficulties they found in sourcing jobs and the reasons that they gave are covered in the next chapter.

The majority of women managers (57%) entered BT at non-management grades for example as clerical or secretarial staff. Over a third (38%) came into the company

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

as direct entrants from university or college, entering at the first level of management or professional status. Very few respondents (5%) entered BT directly into middle and senior management levels and where this occurred it was probably because of a requirement for their specific skills or areas of expertise. The majority of women therefore (57%) had gained at least one promotion to take them into management grades but, as the majority of respondents (70%) were at the lowest levels of management, most of these women had not gained a second promotion. Only 28% of respondents were currently at the combined grades of middle and senior management. Of course there were fewer positions available as managers climbed the hierarchy but this does not in itself explain the rapidly diminishing numbers of women as the ranks become higher. It seems clear that something else has been influencing women to remain at lower grades.

To further examine the data provided by respondents, analysis was performed on the smaller sample of 380 respondents in NBC, PC and GC, which were combined in order to contrast their results with the respondents of N&S. Global Finance was excluded because the women in that division had a specific professional profile

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

aligned with their financial qualifications²². This analysis, included at Appendix 6, shows that the majority of women managers across all grades (54%) wanted to reach middle management, or remain in middle management grades, and only 16% wanted to reach senior management positions. In response to Q4 in the survey questionnaire which asked 'What grade do you hope to achieve before leaving or retiring from BT' the number of promotions that the respondent would require to reach their aspirational position was noted. Analysis showed that almost half (44%) of women in N&S had no aspirations to achieve further promotions compared to the lower number of one-third (31%) of women from the combined divisions. Only two respondents in N&S hoped to achieve three or more promotions and, overall, N&S women were significantly less ambitious than the women in the other divisions, which seems contrary to their obvious ambitions to achieve good qualifications.

Although the data suggests that women managers in BT were not ambitious enough to want to reach the top the real answer may be quite different. Their qualitative responses cast doubt on the assumptive bases of other analysts (Hakim, 2000) and

²² Appendix 5 provides comparisons on tables for N&S and PC NBC & GC combined for the time served by division, current grades and the numbers of promotions that women have reported.

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

show that many of these women may have been consciously or subconsciously tempering their ambitions for a number of reasons, opting only for lower or middle management roles. By doing so women 'may avoid being under constant scrutiny, needing to dress or behave in particular ways or to tolerate forms of behaviour from their male colleagues which they find unacceptable, including sexual harassment' (Shaw and Perrins, 1995, p30). Some may have found the strain of having to be better than their male colleagues too onerous while others may simply have calculated the cost-benefits of gaining promotion and found the rewards too low (Vroom, 1964). For others who did not desire to progress to senior management, middle management may have offered the degree of both anonymity and authority that women found an acceptable compromise to work alongside their caring responsibilities. Many of the respondents stated that they were very involved with their families and with caring responsibilities to the point where they were clearly willing to relinquish career opportunities for higher management jobs. For many others however, the culture of the organisation was not felt to be conducive to career progression.

The next chapter further explores the survey findings and offers an analysis of the main issues raised in the textual responses that women provided in addition to

WOMEN MANAGERS IN BT: Segregated work areas

answering the questions. The chapter is divided into themes that the survey responses, though not specifically designed to do so, naturally fell into. It addresses different aspects of BT women's experiences and the survey responses are therefore not presented in the same order as the questions in the survey questionnaire. The combination of responses and voluntary text provided an insight into why so many women felt that progression in the organisation was difficult and exposes the contradictions and confusions expressed by women in attempting to outline their concerns.

CHAPTER 9

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES

Industrious women

In the last chapter the management constitution of each of the major divisions in BT, segmented by gender, was outlined and it could be seen that there were comparatively few women managers to the large number of men, and as the ranks rose the proportion of women diminished. This is unlikely to have been the result of lack of qualifications as 59% of respondents, who were a representative group of the whole management population of women in BT, were qualified to diploma level or above. A majority of 72% of these women stated that they thought they had the right qualifications for promotion, although 34%¹ thought that they could need more or other formal qualifications. In response to whether they had enough experience to get promotion, 69% thought that their experience was probably enough and

¹ These two responses were not mutually exclusive.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

respondents were not work-shy for 68% of them thought that promotion would not demand more time at work than they were prepared to give. A similar two-thirds (69%) responded that neither would promotion demand more commitment to work than they were prepared to give. The increased responsibility was not a deterrent either as an overwhelming 83% did not find the prospect of the increased responsibility unattractive and, asked if they would relish the challenge that promotion offered, 81% responded positively.

These confident responses indicate that most women were prepared to take on more responsibility and it is evident that the additional benefits that promotion would bring were not their primary drivers. Only 38% thought the increase in salary sufficient to make promotion attractive so they must have found other aspects of the more senior positions appealing. Just over half (53%) stayed with BT because they thought they had a bright future but perhaps the terms 'a bright future' and 'promotion' were not necessarily synonymous in respondents' minds and consequently meant something quite different to this group of people.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

The optimism that women felt diminished when they were asked about opportunities for promotion in BT as 65% stated that there was little opportunity. This latter group was being more realistic than the 29% who stated that they stayed with BT because they thought the opportunities for promotion were good for it is clear from the organisation's record for promoting women, that a large number would be disappointed. These women were qualified, experienced and enthusiastic, which constitute the attributes normally sought when candidates are considered for promotion, yet were far from convinced that they would be promoted. In this way respondents displayed the characteristics of low self-esteem. Even after having appraised themselves as possessing the qualifications and experience required for promotion, they also declared their intention to remain with the organisation despite the improbability of promotion and the assumptions made by almost half of the respondents (45%) that they could earn more outside BT.

Respondent 323 thought that this could be the result of women not putting enough thought or planning into building the careers they wanted. She stated, 'My biggest barrier to advancement is myself... a diffident self-perception and lack of career

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

planning training. Women tend to do whatever comes their way rather than decide what they want and go to get it.' Most women were realistic however in recognising that if BT was to continue promoting as it had in the past, the majority would not be able to improve their positions by moving up the management hierarchy. Several women had recognised this fact and were moving on to jobs outside the organisation. Respondent 326 for example stated that she was taking redundancy because of 'failure to gain promotion which I felt I deserved. I felt I was stagnating.'

Her frustration was justified for although women were being recruited into the first levels of management in the organisation, with 18% occupancy at those positions, their presence at middle management and above fell sharply to a much smaller percentage and women themselves would be aware of this. Even though most of the respondents would not have been privy to statistics on management by gender it is clear that they did not need to see the figures to know that they stood less chance than men of gaining promotion. Women's experience of the organisation would have informed their understanding as for example, 94% of them recognised that hard work alone was not enough to gain a manager recognition. They were cognisant of

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

other factors surrounding how the organisation operated that had as great an influence on their promotion prospects as the quality of their work output.

Many of these 'pipeline' women felt unable to position themselves to rise through the management hierarchy for the inhibitors were more than simply the fact of the structural vertical and horizontal barriers that have been outlined in the previous chapter. Respondent 504 thought that there was a general trend against women succeeding for she perceived a 'negative reaction to women progressing'. Underpinning this, Respondent 65 thought that there was instead a bias within BT for rewarding the contributions of men. She stated, 'I have experienced that work related proposals are 50% less likely to be accepted when suggested by a woman!' Women therefore perceived two major fortifications standing in the way of their progress.

The first and most compelling was the company culture and the second the limitations that these women were putting on their own progress. These are in part tautological arguments for each has a bearing on the other. Had the organisation's culture and history more openly encouraged female managers as well as male

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

managers, for example in having the same percentages of women occupying all levels of management, then women would have been more likely to build promotion and advancement into their career and life plans. Their expectations would have been the same as men's who after all, had been used to doing this since starting their careers. The difference in BT was that the percentage of men in management increased with the management rank. Like men, women would also have been encouraged to compete by being aware of senior women in responsible roles while maintaining other aspects of their non-working lives. As this was not the case, an attempt has to be made to understand women's motivations in the real situations in which they found themselves. The study will return to issues surrounding the company culture in the second half of this chapter but at this point it is women's perceptions of themselves and their motivations that will be examined.

Tempering ambitions

Perhaps women in BT were being held back by a lack of ambition as observed by Respondent 4 who stated, 'Women need to be more ambitious' and Respondent 22 knew that she was dissatisfied because in her job there was 'Not enough responsibility. Graded too low for experience and capability'. However, women

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

were reluctant to take risks for at the same time as declaring their ambition in other responses, 87% also stated that they were in the right job for them at BT. This picture of contented-high fliers presents an oxymoron. When asked to qualify their answers about being in the right job for them at BT, 177 of the 247 who responded recorded that they enjoyed their jobs. Of the 70 who stated that they did not enjoy their jobs, only 22 answered that they were not stretched and only 1 solitary respondent was unhappy because of the job's limited prospects. Furthermore, although 80% of respondents stated that they would be prepared to leave if a job outside BT furthered their careers it was difficult to identify what might precipitate the parting. In the mixed messages that respondents provided only 31% would leave if they were given an unacceptable salary review and 23% if their workload further increased. Less than half of the respondents (43%) stated that they would leave if they failed to gain promotion within a reasonable time. Although a precise time was not associated with 'reasonable' in the last question, if that number of women had truly been prepared to leave the organisation when promotion was not forthcoming, the female population would subsequently have experienced a sharp down-turn. That has not been the case.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

Conversely, if it were merely the case of women remaining with BT because they were afraid of the unknown then a larger number than 32% would have stated this in their responses. So if the majority of women managers were not afraid of leaving and were prepared to further their careers outside BT then because they were still with the organisation clearly something about it was fulfilling at least some part of their expectations or requirements. This leads to the conclusion that women's motivations for remaining with BT included non-job specific reasons. The most obvious inference is that the majority were pursuing security of employment with BT² at the expense of career opportunities and were remaining in jobs that would allow them to manage the other parts of their lives along with their careers. They were not exempt from the confusion and dilemma that surrounds career planning for so many of their gender. For, in order to have a family or to fulfil caring responsibilities, the career breaks that these women managers would have to factor into their working lives with BT could account for the fulsome 87% response that the

² Sir Iain Vallance, the Chairman of BT at the time the survey was conducted, had given reassurances on many occasions that there would be no compulsory redundancies in BT and to the day of writing, there has not been a single forced redundancy recorded in the media.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

company's benefits and pensions were good³. This indicates that benefits and pensions had a very high impact on women's perceptions of employment with BT and their desire to remain.

Allied to the responses on a question about women managers' starting or adding to their families to which 85% stated that they would not consider leaving under these circumstances, a picture of life-planning emerges⁴. There seems little doubt that many of these women were planning a future career with BT as they had clearly stated their intentions to remain. However, the emphasis of the planning for many appears to have been on coping strategies for the 'conflicting demands of home and work' (Scase, 1993, p6) for in their comments respondents acknowledged that they were often applying a value system that put the needs of family and friends before career progression. They were experiencing the effects of the 'double bind' (Jamieson, 1997) identified by some researchers as the dilemma women feel when

³ At that time women were only entitled to full maternity benefits if they had been employed by organisations for two years or more.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

confronted by conflicting family/home pressures and career aspirations. Although some social commentators have found that women appear to have an innate ability to juggle home and work with both spheres occupying the same mind space (Kanter, 1977), this feat is probably because most women are limiting either one aspect or the other in order to cope. The majority of BT women managers were perhaps able to manage both work and personal commitments because their responsibility levels at work did not impinge on their personal obligations and *vice versa*.

Reference to a previous study on BT senior women managers showed that 72% of that group came from middle-class backgrounds where the dominant values were 'education, hard work and integrity' (Munioz, 1998b, p2). Only 36% had children and high on the list of their personal enablers was 'having a supportive partner'. The priorities of this group of women appear clear for when questioned about their top priorities they did not mention at that point, family life or any activity external to

⁴ These women would also be aware of the favourable conditions for temporary and immediate leave of absence on compassionate grounds that the organisation extended to both female and male personnel. This was leave that could be granted at the discretion of the line manager and was available to employees who were experiencing a temporary crisis in their personal lives such as caring for sick relatives, temporary family emergencies or dealing with a change in personal circumstances.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

BT⁵. If the priorities of the majority of respondents are measured by their answers to the 'mobility' question, then most women in BT do not share the priorities of these senior women. Families were placed higher than a career with BT for the 60% who would leave the organisation if the company forced them to relocate.

Women managers wanted to be recognised for the job they were doing bringing up children while working in paid employment and this was not uncommon (Buxton, 1998). They wanted the company to acknowledge their external responsibilities. Respondent 592 thought, 'The reason many women are unable to progress.... is due to a reluctance for business people in the UK to acknowledge that people have a life outside work.... Married women have to work very hard to overcome the obstacles associated with balancing career and home life.... it makes overnight stays, early morning (before 9am) and late evening (after 6pm) meetings organisational nightmares'. Respondent 69 was emphatic, 'Combining a family with a responsible job causes conflicts.' The pressure women felt increased when

⁵ This group of senior women manager did discuss concerns about their work-life balance and a number of them would decline further promotion if it was offered, but work-life balance was not included in the list of their top priorities.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

they felt they were gagged. Respondent 293 was one of 8 who wrote specifically about coping with the demands of work and family. She wrote, 'I have recently had a baby and I find that women are not expected to have priorities outside work...I feel that to get on I should not mention my responsibilities outside BT'. If any doubt remains that a large number of the respondents were catering for their lives outside the organisation at the expense of fulfilment of their ambitions within it, a further endorsement of this assumption is provided in the evidence given when the question of personal mobility was addressed.

For a number of years the requirement for management mobility has continued to grow in large organisations and as a result the demand to recruit managers who are willing to travel or be placed in another location has generally increased. Women in BT (66%) were confident that they could have gone into jobs that entailed working with foreign administrations and over half (57%) thought that they had equal chances with men for being seconded to BT offices abroad but they were also conscious that they were limiting themselves. Women such as Respondent 347 felt that 'Lack of mobility has certainly hampered promotion.' As for international travel, while there may have been a preference for recruiting men for both overseas assignments and for

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

travelling jobs, to an extent the responsibility for such preferences must be accepted not only by organisations but by women themselves. Even when travel forms part of their career progression and offers opportunities for rapid career enhancement, women managers in the UK have been resistant to movement, even to another town (Goldthorpe, 1980; Leggett, 1968). One BT woman outlined the pressures she felt her female colleagues with children must be experiencing. Respondent 273 explained, 'I have no children and this makes it easier to be flexible about time spent at work, to travel and to relocate. BT is still a corporate giant and it demands a certain style of management that often requires a lot of time over and above that contracted. This without a doubt is difficult for women with families to comply with.'

The last question in Section 1 of the survey explored how mobile respondents were prepared to be. This issue, which emerged as an extremely sensitive matter, prompted the inclusion on their questionnaire responses of additional textual comments from three hundred and thirty-four (54%) respondents. Although the question was included primarily to explore respondents' readiness to consider

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

relocation to another job in the UK or to take an assignment abroad, their additional comments showed that they wanted to share their general anxieties about mobility.

Through internal newsletters and briefings all personnel in BT were aware of the organisation's aspirations to expand globally both organically and by acquisition. Each employee was aware of the organisation's need for managers who were willing to relocate or take travelling jobs and they would have observed the career progress of managers who were able to travel. The organisation's stated aims were therefore to recruit and promote a proportion of people into senior management roles who were flexible and adaptable enough to travel or undertake overseas assignments to service the joint venture and alliance partnerships. A second requirement for mobility has surrounded the organisation's consolidation of offices and establishments into fewer buildings in fewer locations in the UK so the question of mobility has therefore been important to the perceptions of promotability of many managers, female and male in BT.

Despite this, in response to a question on how mobile they were regarding where they worked 64% of those responding stated that they were 'not mobile' or 'not very

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

mobile' and further defining the latter category, 7% stated that they were 'not at all mobile'. At the same time many respondents like Respondent 61 realised that 'It is very much a full timers, staying late, travelling to the end of the country at the drop of a hat kind of culture'. Only 36% of respondents described themselves as being mobile while 6 women did not answer the question. Where respondents had provided more than one reason for their perceived immobility, the primary reason was taken as the first that they recorded. Perhaps, given their responses of immobility, it is not surprising that 46% of this group gave their spouse/partner as the primary reason. Many of them elucidated their answers by explaining that they could not move because of their partner's employment, particular job or business interests.

The second most common inhibitor to movement was family/childcare with 38% of the immobile group of respondents recording this as their primary reason. Respondent 410 wrote, 'One major disadvantage to achieving very senior management positions is my commitment to my family'. This illustrates again that women managers were aware of the consequences on their careers and a proportion of the forty-one (7%) respondents who wrote that they had decided to take voluntary

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

redundancy in March 1996 left for the same reasons as Respondent 9. She wrote about life as a 'Balancing act between career and family. This is getting more difficult as BT's demands grow...I have chosen release to spend more time at home, these things restrict mobility and promotional opportunities'.

In addition, a significant number of women gave other responsibilities as their primary reasons for not being mobile and these included a large number (12%) who were caring for invalid parents, relatives and even neighbours who were infirm. This number accords with an audit conducted for the Princess Royal Trust (Princess Royal Trust: Carers in Employment Report, 1995), in which it was estimated that 15% of the UK workforce was looking after someone needing special attention at home, excluding those who cared for healthy children. So strongly did the majority of women feel about mobility that 60% declared they would leave BT if they were forced to re-locate further away. Unlike some threats to leave BT for other work-related reasons, this response had the ring of credibility as it was corroborated by the largest number of additional text from respondents from every division surveyed.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

When many of these women joined BT the organisation had little need for the relocation of managers to other countries and for managers working in specific disciplines only a limited requirement to travel even within the UK, beyond the occasional training course. Moreover, as the expectations of senior management changed during the mid-1990's with the twofold development of the BT corporate strategy towards globalisation and de-centralisation of offices and functions. Many women managers increasingly felt that they could no longer comply with the new requirements of mobility and travel. Suddenly, for a large number of middle and senior management jobs, mobility became part of the qualifications and just as many women have recognised the consequences of their immobility so they may also have perceived themselves to be of less value to the organisation. The culture and practices of the organisation were changing but not for the better as far as many women were concerned.

Although not so undermining as the demand for mobility, women felt under pressure to work extended hours in the office, over and above their contracted hours. They felt that presenteeism, those long unproductive hours in the office, had become confused with commitment to the company. This presented a problem for many

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

women who saw their male colleagues spending time in the office simply in order to increase their visibility with more senior management. Respondent 323 thought that some women 'cannot compete with a single career person, i.e. a person without a working spouse. As long as Commitment = long working hours = promotion, is the norm the situation will not change.' Almost half of the respondents (45%) thought that BT rewarded hours in the office more than quality of output but additional time in the office was not something that most women who commented wanted to do. They were reluctant either because of personal commitments outside work or because they felt it was part of a nonsensical practice. Respondent 602 had experienced that 'Comments are still passed to those leaving at 5.00... the question is why does the culture force us into the situation, regarding rewards for hours/versus output.'

For some women these activities were seen as part of men's tactics for gaining promotion and Respondent 95 observed, 'I feel that managers who "play the game" in BT get promoted more easily, even when their standard of work and management style are quite poor'. Presenteeism was also counter to the flexibility that many women wanted to achieve in work and while these women were actively working towards a more flexible pattern for work, they could see that many male colleagues

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

were spending more time in the office. The organisation was also seen to encourage the practice as Respondent 471 explained, 'BT expects extra hours to be input with little consideration of one's personal life.'

Respondent 505 stated, 'I feel that BT should change its expectations of managers as the long hours worked cannot be efficient either in work terms or in the stress put on families.' In the changes and turmoil that BT was undergoing some women felt they were becoming increasingly marginalised and saw problems in terms that were described by Respondent 38 as 'Male principles, authoritative behaviour, long hours, self-interest.' In a long letter this respondent speculated that women did not wish to get ahead if it meant adopting behaviours they did not find acceptable. 'Hence', stated this respondent 'they self-select themselves away from promotion.'

Many of the women managers surveyed made comments about not being what the organisation was looking for in a manager. It is already known that in times of rapid change, 'in the absence of consistency, changes run the risk of creating new 'poor fits'' (Mabey and Mayon-White, eds., 1993, p94). It would appear that these women were now the 'poor fits' in many parts of the organisation. But, while the

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

majority of women (88%) responded that they did not expect a job for life in BT, few were prepared to leave unless forced by issues of mobility to do so.

Macho management and the tactics of exclusion

Instead of leaving for other reasons such as the apparently intolerable actions of macho management described by many respondents, women appeared to have developed strategies that helped them to remain. Respondents described in detail the tactics used by some of their male colleagues and management that hampered them in doing their jobs or excluded them from opportunities. Even the corresponding post- privatisation covert discriminatory activities that respondents perceived as supporting inappropriate recruitment practices were somehow understood and tolerated by these women. They realised that progress was unlikely unless they fitted a stencil of characteristics against which BT measured candidates' suitability for more senior management positions. Fear and intimidation were considered rife by many respondents who saw these factors as the basis of current management styles. Respondent 511 shared her experience, 'Management style has a lot of organisational fear in it in my experience' and Respondent 497 was concerned for the effects on business, 'Management by fear seems to be prevalent, it does not work in that it directly drives down productivity.' These respondents were

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

typical of a number who thought that the old style culture of management by objectives, as opposed to responsibilities, was a barrier to efficiency. This method of supposed motivation, which was still prevalent in BT, had long been discredited.

More enlightened motivators agree that 'The culture of fear that is driven by targets and false paranoia is more productively replaced by a pledge of personal commitment and a collective responsibility to the group and organisation' (Goshal and Bartlett, 1997, pp113 – 118). Respondent 320 also noted the rise in aggressive attitudes and the subsequent impact on the culture. She stated, 'Men have become more aggressive...treating females as 'silly little women'. We are having to fight much harder to maintain our position. Ego battles are common.... Male bad manners are rife e.g. excessive swearing, shouting you down. Female colleagues are better skilled in the people and team skills and hold them together. Despite senior managers saying that people matter, still people are treated like bodies to be moved about ...without consultation or consideration of their aspirations... I have slogged my guts out for the last three years...I have had little recognition, yet I have seen male colleagues whose backs I have covered, who have ridden on the back of my work, getting promoted, and financial rewards.'

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

This theme was repeated many times with respondents complaining about their treatment at the hands of some male managers who did not seem to have any respect for female colleagues. Respondent 605 stated, 'BT does not recognise different management styles between men and women, experience counts for very little and no consideration is given to people focused style as opposed to a totally target orientated style with a bully boy style. Women are placed in jobs where they have to exceed what would normally be expected to have a chance of recognition or further promotion.' Over 40 respondents wrote complaining of the ill treatment of women that they had observed under the excessively macho culture in BT. They provided details of their experiences and in some cases the names of male managers who, in their opinions, were responsible for perpetrating intimidating atmospheres in which the contributions of women were consistently undermined. Respondent 602 speculated that bullying was a worrying factor for both female and male managers as 'Currently managers of both sexes are concerned at the increasing levels of 'bullying', this is now more than ever being adopted as an acceptable style.' The denigration of women colleagues included openly sexist comments such as that provided by

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

Respondent 338 who stated, 'My senior manager makes a joke of women being only good for one thing. Attitudes are still a decade behind where they should be.'

However, the plea for change was loud and reinforced by the call of 90% of respondents from every part of the organisation surveyed, who thought that BT needed new management styles in order to thrive. Perhaps, with hindsight, these women recognised the urgency for change in BT more than their male counterparts for whom, as has previously been recorded, the organisational structures were designed and within which these styles thrived. Respondent 314 thought that the basic problem lay with 'the culture at senior level which tends to result in promotion in own image.... Attitudes of what women can do are more stereotyped. There is a problem particularly at more senior level with role models'. For Respondent 262 the problem also lay at the door of senior management as she stated, 'I do not see any opportunity for promotion nor any willingness by the current senior management team to include me in their (all male)⁶ club as a peer.'

⁶ Respondent 262's parenthesis.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

Given that there were 5001 women managers in BT when the questionnaire was dispatched, the response of 90% who thought that BT needed new management styles in order to survive represented over 10% of the female management population and their call for change was universal. In decrying the current management styles, women were also calling for a replacement style that would recognise the contributions of every member of staff. They wanted a more open, tolerant and co-operative style instead. Respondents clearly recognised that male and female managers in general had different management styles and while 45% of respondents thought that generally, men were happy with current management styles, only 17% of women thought that their female colleagues were happy with current management styles. Other respondents felt that double standards were present and that it was not merely a case of undermining different management styles but the presence of a deeper set of values that were held by the organisation and embedded in a hierarchy that discriminated against women. They described a range of behaviours that they had experienced, behaviours that left them feeling ineffective, devalued and humiliated. Respondent 511 thought that, 'BT appears to be very positive towards women, but culturally is still male dominated in its attitudes and expectations. Women succeed if they adopt male working styles and

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

procedures, but expressions of 'Bimbo' are still heard of women in managerial positions.'

Respondent 414 realised that a vacuum was not the solution and proposed, 'BT still places too much emphasis on traditional styles of management and often fails to realise the benefits of a more co-operative style.' But again, women saw the leadership for changes in style as having to be generated from the top down. Respondent 597 thought that 'We need more successful role models at senior level if we are serious about changing the culture in BT management'. She was calling for innovative role models irrespective of gender. The management culture of BT, which was raised spontaneously by more respondents than any other subject addressed, attracted almost 70 pieces of additional text, notes and letters from respondents (see Appendix 3).

For 63% of women the current management structures stifled initiative and for 90% BT needed new management styles in order to thrive. BT women wanted to shed the past and move on and most thought as Respondent 441 that, 'BT's rigid structure is hard to overcome and the employees seem to be at either end of the spectrum i.e. all

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

out to help or completely 'no way' ... still feels like the Civil Service'. An example of the influence that the organisational structure had on management styles in BT can be observed in the responses of women in different parts of the organisation. While 69% of women generally thought that they had equal chances with men of managing large teams of people, women in N&S perceived otherwise.

Working in the area with the highest concentration of engineering and technical disciplines 36% of respondents found it difficult to believe that they would have equal chances in N&S of managing large teams. They also thought that where they were located inhibited their development in BT. Respondent 96 stated that there was, 'little opportunity for women to be selected for managerial positions on the engineering side as there appears to be a feeling that women are not capable of managing large teams of men'. Because of their job function and skill area some women, particularly in N&S, found that movement within BT was restricted unless they were willing to change career direction and adopt or learn a new skill that would help them to move easily to another part of the organisation.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

Had the mainly 'masculine' areas of N&S been dispersed throughout the organisation their effect might have been diluted. For example, 102 of the 111 women with computing skills worked in N&S where women felt the culture was particularly unsympathetic towards them and this is discussed later in the chapter. For others the culture of BT, defined in large part by its inability to view the contributions made by all of its people equally, was exclusionist. This view was apparently shared by many of the men managers working in BT in 1998 for almost 44% of middle managers overall, recorded in the CARE survey⁷ of 1998, their concerns that individuals who were different were not accepted and respected in BT.

The legacy that a woman carries from her place in the home and in society cannot be shed at the door of the company as she enters work each day, any more than men can cast off the image that society bestows on them. But, whereas men in the work environment generally benefit from their status in society, the rank of women managers in BT could be at odds with their status outside the company.

⁷ This mainly annual survey conducted by the organisation on its workforce has at times been suspended when morale was particularly low in the organisation.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

Respondent 346 thought that 'society in general still has difficulty visualising women in senior roles', echoing the views of other studies which show that women are hampered by their perceived lack of authority whereas men are regarded as holding it naturally (Burman, 1990). Actions taken by women could therefore be perceived differently to the same actions taken by men, which Respondent 462 described in the following. 'One of the most difficult situations... as a woman manager is putting forward a strong belief or argument which is often interpreted by (male)⁸ managers as "moaning or whinging"... or "the irrational women's thinking". Respondent 256 thought that, 'It does seem that women have a more difficult task in achieving recognition etc. i.e. a positive man = an aggressive woman etc.!'

For Respondent 437 it was the attitudes of her male colleagues in one team in which she worked that she found sexist. She stated, 'If I answer a colleague's phone, sometimes the man on the other end assumes that as I am a female and answering a phone, I must be my colleague's secretary. [In the team] the language used.... contained sexual innuendo and things I said were twisted to contain *double*

⁸ Respondent 462's parenthesis.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

entendre. The men were not unpleasant people.... but I found the time depressing and stressful'.

Jobs for the boys

Respondents noted that the mechanisms used by men to control female employees included a range of blatant sexual comments that left many women managers feeling guilty, tainted and resentful. Most respondents however, realised that these comments were used by the men to control situations and to make them feel more powerful. This is perhaps because women still represent the unknown and could 'threaten the authority of the holders of knowledge, of those in charge, or those in power. For those in charge, continuity is comfort, and predictability ensures that they can continue to control' (Handy, 1990, p10). However, one of the most distressing elements of these exclusionist practises was that the offensive comments and actions were apparently delivered with impunity. Women felt that there was nowhere to take their complaints even though the abuse was openly delivered.

This was the case for Respondent 100 who wrote, 'I have never experienced a senior manager so openly making sexist comments and feeling as a lower class citizen

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

because of my sex. Openly in meetings of 20 or more it has been said 'every woman can be bought, they all have a price'. In a meeting I had with (name supplied by respondent) along with my colleague I was told that I had become a pain because I was female'. The description of discriminatory behaviours displayed by men in BT ranged from undermining women in meetings by asking them to pour the tea to outright sexual discrimination where women managers were told they were not to be given a job because of their gender.

Professionally, the most damaging actions of discriminatory managers were in allocating the poorest quality work to their female staff thus affecting their credentials and experience and possibly preventing them from gaining promotion or even a sideways move in the future. There were also unacceptable behaviours that included extreme aggressiveness, intimidation and exclusion from team meetings. Although these behaviours were not universal, respondents expressed their belief that this macho management style was encouraged by default, as those executing it were still working in BT. As has already been observed, it did not appear to harm their promotion prospects although their tactics were well known. This left many women managers feeling insecure, undervalued and lacking in confidence for

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

promotion. Respondent 328 believed that rather than improving, the prevailing environment was becoming worse for women and stated, 'Culture is becoming more macho and the differing style of women managers is not sufficiently valued. I do not feel that the company really values my efforts.' Under such circumstances it is hardly surprising that many women felt their chances of promotion were severely reduced.

The issue of jobs being allocated without the recruitment process having been gone through concerned a high number of women. Many jobs were not advertised and candidates therefore were not drawn from the wider community that would have included women. Echoing the findings of other studies (Brenner, 1998) referred to in Chapter 4, BT women put this down to the existence of an old boys' network that held back the progress of individual women and women as a group. Respondent 326 commented, 'Old boy network...very frustrating to cope with' and for Respondent 274 it was simply the case that 'Women are held back by management styles and a reluctance in some quarters to promote them.' Patronage was suspected especially where jobs were not advertised but were allocated by management without even an interview or assessment.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

One respondent was not sure that a formal recruitment process was still in existence. Respondent 412 stated, 'Since old board system and compulsory advertisement of posts was abandoned opportunities for women to get beyond MPG4 have vanished.' Respondents thought that managers were selecting applicants not for their qualifications or suitability but because they were men or part of a clique and that this prejudice existed at every level of management and was not confined to middle or lower management. The culture of discrimination was so deeply embedded in habit that some male managers were not aware of their prejudices as Respondent 316 points out. 'The discrimination ... is subliminal, most male managers do not realise they are doing it. [There are] two forms: 1) When they are thinking about names for promotion or special jobs, female names do not get mentioned at all. 2) If [a] female name is mentioned, invisibly a comment is made by the Proposer or a colleague like 'she has young children' or 'they have just moved house so she will not want to do it'. One manager told me I would not get promoted because he did not like women working directly to him.'

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

The lack of transparency caused women to feel betrayed by the organisation and Respondent 278 thought that 'Since serious downsizing, the progress that women had made in BT seemed to come to a halt. More appointments are filled without advertisement!' Failing to gain promotion is disappointing but it is when employees perceive an element of procedural injustice in the bad news that their commitment and productivity are affected (Shapiro and Kirkman, 1999, p53). Some women felt they were excluded on a number of counts. Respondent 111 observed, 'Promotion depends on who you know...other avenues for these relationships to exist are external groups to BT, such as the Masons, Round Table etc.. Women are much less likely to belong to these.' These networks undoubtedly helped to build personal relationships but were only one tactic used by men who were trying to network upwards in the organisation. Of course women were also networking, for there is the example of the BT Womens Network which was sponsored by the organisation to encourage more women to progress in the organisation as it recognised that women did not have access to the same power networks as men. However, there is evidence that women have different motivations for networking and therefore tend to network with people lower down in the organisation (McGuire, 2000). Women in BT did not have the same opportunities to network with higher-level women

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

managers for the simple reason that there were so few senior women. While the BT Womens Network existed and was well supported by women across BT, however well meaning, it could not compensate for the lack of women in positions of influence in the organisation. For this reason, many respondents felt that they had to work harder to be recognised in a culture into which they could not assimilate.

When women are given opportunities they are likely to work harder than their male counterparts as previous studies have shown but the results are different. 'Women have to work harder to get to the same position as men and to maintain their position once there. When they are there, they are less powerful than men in the same position' (Itzin and Newman, eds., 1995, p38). These double standards have also been reflected in respondents' comments. Respondent 258 thought that 'Managers who are female are expected to work harder...expected to do so for less reward, lower grades and less respect. If BT wishes to keep talented female managers they must change these attitudes. BT is still populated by sexist male managers.' Respondent 295 also thought that more was expected of women managers and stated, 'I do think that women managers still have to work harder and appear to be more determined than their male colleagues. I in particular feel that I should play

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

down my personal life i.e. wife and mother role, so as to avoid being considered weak or not 100% committed to my job. BT neither rewards quality or quantity'. Respondent 336 also pointed out the pressure on successful women to work harder, 'I feel that the female managers in the company are usually at least twice as good as their male counterparts'. Even where women managers were working at the same levels as men they were still dependent upon fair treatment to have their work accepted.

Despite all of the evidence of discrimination where promotion and filling job vacancies were concerned however, 82% thought that they had equal chances of being selected for job interviews and around two-thirds (62%) of respondents thought that they had equal chances for promotion. When asked about moving from one division to another overall 79% of women thought that they had equal chances with men. However, the majority of women distinctly perceived a 'glass ceiling'. This existed below divisional director level as 65% thought that they did not have equal chances with men in BT of becoming a head of division or divisional director. Perhaps this is because BT had no female in that position and there was not even a token role model. Although there were several female functional

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

directors there were no female divisional directors. Divisional heads had power and influence on the organisation's future and strategies and were high worth individuals whose earnings were negotiated individually. There had never been a woman in such a powerful position in the history of the organisation. It is therefore unsurprising that most women could not conceive of themselves in those positions.

Accommodating behaviours

Although women realised that change was essential, their responses reveal that as individuals they were impotent to change either the company culture or the styles of management. Organisational change, especially when it encompasses attempts to change attitudes, demands changes from the top down and cannot be implemented on a bottom-up basis for such change depends on the people or role models at the top. The personality traits of strategic decision makers interact with environmental conditions faced by the organisation to influence the likelihood of a change in strategy (Mullins and Cummings, 1999 pp462 - 479). Changes to bring about equality of opportunity in the organisation would have demanded such a strategic change and a very different type of leadership.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

To thrive in such an environment, many aspiring women had developed styles of management akin to those that received rewards and promotions for their male colleagues. However, 'women are not the same as men and if they pretend to be or act 'like men' they render themselves hostages to fortune. Individual solutions to an unequal and gendered world, i.e. to a structural problem, are rarely possible' (Shaw, ed., 1995, p30). In BT the description of 'macho' as a style of management was not restricted to men in the organisation and some respondents thought that the style had been selected by some senior women in order to progress. Respondent 259 stated, 'I feel that some of the senior female role models have [a] somewhat aggressive and 'male' approach which I would not want to emulate...I do not want to sacrifice home life and personality to work the hours and adopt the style I observe at a senior level.'

While it was not every senior woman manager and role model that had developed a form of macho management as a style, undoubtedly this group of women had to develop some form of coping strategy. A survey conducted on senior women managers in 1997 revealed that this group of women had to be 'persistent and confident' and 'to take care not to fulfil negative stereotypes about women' (Munioz, 1998, p2). Although not specifically stated, these stereotypes are likely to have

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

included displaying the softer feminine characteristics. Yet, many of this same group of women also thought that 'using their 'feminine' skills such as interpersonal skills and 'softer' management techniques' (Munioz, 1998, p3) had enabled them to gain promotion and remain in senior positions. This would imply that women needed to develop a mix or portfolio of interpersonal skills so that they might be utilised in different circumstances. Respondents acknowledged that women still had to struggle to rise to, and maintain their senior positions. Respondent 471 stated, 'I feel that if you are prepared to fight your own corner you will achieve results.'

Successful women who adopted this style of coping were themselves the target of criticism and had their nemesis in other respondents like Respondent 99 who stated, 'I get really fed up of not feeling valued. I'm self-motivated and well able to fight my own corner but quite honestly I can't be bothered any more'. For some respondents the prejudice they were experiencing was not so much a gender issue as one of priorities. They thought that women in the organisation were perceived as being less reliable or responsible and liable to take time off if there was a requirement at home, which led to some women to compensate by being very conscientious. Respondent 257 thought that 'Prejudice still exists for promotion –

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

men viewed as reliable – able to cope with all sorts of pressure – women viewed as unreliable and weak – easily dissuaded by pressure/can't balance priorities between work and home commitments'.

Some women, 7%, who were not satisfied with the quality of the work they were being given or the organisation's culture were taking the opportunity to leave the organisation with a severance package. However, as well as those respondents who had already planned their exits there was a large number of women, 44%, who indicated that they had considered voluntary redundancy. From the start the redundancy programmes had been voluntary but individuals could be selected and 'offered'⁹ a severance package. So, while only 6% of respondents thought that women were unfairly targeted or selected for voluntary redundancy, 21% stated that they thought women who volunteered were more likely to be accepted than men. That is, line managers had the option of refusing to let their members of staff leave if they were deemed to be valuable members of the team. Around one-fifth of the

⁹ This usually meant that team members were selected by their line manager and told that due to a reduction in numbers, there was no longer an appropriate job for them to perform in the team.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

respondents thought that managers would be more likely to retain male staff rather than female staff.

Meanwhile, some women felt under pressure to leave under the release schemes because of lack of support from their managers or their lack of progress in the company. Respondent 498 recounted her experience. 'My previous line manager made life hell, he achieved this by: shouting at me over the telephone, never knowing or explaining what he wanted from me, then criticising when it was not exactly what he wanted, saying my ideas would not work, then claiming them as his own to his line manager, not giving recognition or mention of achievements in the appraisal. I found out afterwards that I was the third woman he had treated in this way...I will be taking Release '95....my reason is because of the uncertainty of who my next line manager will be, how I will be treated.'

The Release programmes have at least taught BT people, not only BT women that two-way loyalty has eroded. As another researcher found, 'you have a better chance of getting a gold watch from a street vendor than you do from a corporation' (Stewart, 1997, p199). Although the previous respondent probably did not consider

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

her decision to leave as accommodating her male manager, this is what she was almost certainly doing. Had she complained and forced an investigation, the manager would have been challenged on his behaviour. Unfortunately her experience was not uncommon. Despite publicity about the benefits of new principles and practices entering the public realm and the justification that they could no longer be ignored there was little evidence of the diminution of macho cultures. Resistance to 'the public culture obsessed with Warrior values' (Helgesen, 1990, p255) was not possible in BT at the time.

There was a dearth of the flexibility that so many women had been calling for to help them manage their work-life balance more effectively. For several years before the survey BT had been trying new working methods in several business centres and a programme, Workstyle 2000¹⁰, was initiated in 1996 to encourage more flexible working patterns and better use by BT managers of technologies that would assist

¹⁰ The initiative covered both home-office working and also flexible working in BT offices mainly around the M25 where 'hot-desks' could be found.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

working from home¹¹. But while many respondents (54%) recorded their perception that management was encouraged to be flexible and adaptive there was little evidence of that style of working in the written responses received from a number of women. They thought that flexible working would help them because of home or family commitments but they were experiencing difficulties in persuading their line managers' that it would not result in a decline in their output. Respondent 86 stated, 'There is scope for greater flexibility but in general I feel that top managers would view this as non commitment to the company i.e. you are only dedicated if you work from 8am to 8pm and lieu time is not viewed favourably – there is little trust.' Many felt unable to ask their management to extend flexible working conditions to them despite the obvious benefits. Respondent 318 thought that, 'Women with such responsibilities [as husband and children]¹² have particular problems with current working practices, which require long hours, you virtually have to live the job, and long journeys to work.'

¹¹ BT produced a booklet for managers entitled BT Flexible Working: Implementation Guide for Managers, 1997 to inform managers of the ways in which flexible working could be facilitated.

¹² The phrase was used elsewhere in the respondent's text to describe the situation.

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

Trust in the manager-to-manager relationship was not assumed however as some women felt they were being assessed not on contribution but on hours in the office. On this matter, Respondent 108 thought that BT was not truly committed to change. 'BT needs to be genuinely committed to and not just pay lip service to women's and people issues in general, there needs to be greater flexibility and trust in working hours, equipment, facilities for working from home and recognition of contribution.... More thought needs to be given to career progression.' Yet, by all accounts this type of equipment and the flexible ways of working were available to many women who were simply too reluctant to ask. They were loath to force the issue so they accommodated their management by remaining silent and undemanding. Part-time work was not deemed visible so women thought it could be career limiting to pursue especially for those who wanted to progress up the management hierarchies.

Other industries had tried it with success and without loss of seniority for their personnel. For instance, a male Senior Systems Programmer in industry had found that it did not inhibit his progress, 'I think working part time has had no effect one way or the other on my promotion prospects (New Ways to Work, 1996, p65). Yet,

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

many women managers reported that because their managers felt unable to allow them flexible working conditions they did not pursue it despite its obvious advantages to them personally. Respondent 31 thought that 'BT appears to offer little in the way of part time working, reduced hours, flexible working, career breaks, work place crèches etc. Juggling a full time job with a family can be exhausting.' This respondent was one of around 10 who thought that BT ought to help with childcare arrangements. Respondent 508 stated, 'I firmly believe that women are expected to juggle family and work life and not let it interfere with their day to day effectiveness. I think that more crèche facilities ought to be made available in or near BT premises'. The lack of flexible working conditions also affected this and other groups of women.

Clerical grades enjoyed more flexible working conditions than managers as they were able to take off any additional hours worked at a convenient time. This facility was not however extended to management and was in part the cause of presenteeism and long working hours for some teams. As well as more than half of respondents (53%) calling for flexible working hours for management, 68% also wanted to have a choice of whether they worked in their home or in the office. However, only 6% wished to

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

be permanently based at home. It was not only women with families who wanted flexible working conditions as a number identified themselves as single women wanting more flexible arrangements. At the same time, many women realised that there were logistical challenges associated with flexible working. Generally it was because they thought their managers did not trust them to work their full hours that deterred women from asking for flexitime conditions, time-off-in-lieu and working from home. Women would have been happy to combine working in an office near home and working from home for they did not feel the compunction for visibility that drove many male managers to practise presenteeism.

The ritual of going to the office or place of work each day did not appear to women as bound up with their place in society or their feelings of self-worth. Men thus must have difficulty understanding the motivations of women to do a good job when there is no one there to see it being performed (Dixon, 1993). Likewise, male managers who may not have the same aspirations for flexible working may find granting it difficult, as they are unlikely to understand the motivations for it. The basis of good flexible working relationships therefore has to be trust and at times respondents felt that this was in short supply. Respondent 62 expressed her opinion

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

that 'Home working and reduced hours not viewed favourably.' For Respondent 311 the argument was deeper, 'Even though in some areas management is encouraged to be flexible I think it is still difficult to get them to change their established ideas. I am very keen to come to a more flexible working arrangement and have brought the subject up with several managers, attitude to it seems very variable, some are very positive and some very negative, but the general message from higher management seems to be of resistance. I have found that part-time work has affected the type of work I am given.'

Women however, with their different styles of management are used to trusting and to teamwork. A large proportion of respondents, 84%, believed that generally women placed great value on teamwork. For these women teamwork was a natural choice for managing and they were much more likely to adopt a consensus approach to management, looking for co-operation and agreement, shared goals and achievements. However, the effort that women were prepared to put into team working also contained an element of accommodating behaviours for while ambitious male managers were apparently self-promoting and enjoying the role of the entrepreneur heading their teams, women were working away in support roles for the

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

benefit of the team. The new structures where 'teams would be the new heroes of the future as the myth of the entrepreneurial hero, the maverick, died out' (Henry and Walker, 1991, pp62 – 64), had clearly not reached BT.

Women are likely to spend more time doing their jobs and less on publicising themselves (Tannen, 1995). In doing so they fundamentally misunderstand the politics of large organisations where ambitious people seek to influence others and not necessarily support their aspirations. The promotion process was a mainstay of the command-and-control structure that was prevalent in BT and was about climbing the hierarchy and the tactics that could be employed to achieve it. Teamwork occupied a lesser part of that process for if it were uppermost then women would already be in evidence in large numbers at every echelon. Women complained in their responses of the command-and-control types of management styles because they preferred the approach that invited comment and discussion, consensus and agreement instead of order-issuing obduracy. While it may be true that the consensus style of 'it's time for a change, where do we go from here' encourages individuals to use their abilities to best effect (Stevens, 1996, pp30 – 31) BT could not accommodate it. Respondent 516 pointed out that, 'BT is very competitive and

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

political and men dictate this pace. Women have a different way of working to achieve the same results but because of the general critical competitive culture, women don't get a chance unless they behave the same as men.'

Willingness to adopt these new styles of management also implies that women managers in BT would be prepared to retrain in order to position themselves for more senior posts. Around 8% (48 women) reported that they had been on a formal exchange programme or secondment and three-quarters of them said that they thought it had helped their careers. Meanwhile a lower figure of 5% (33 women) had undertaken formal retraining, some in technical and engineering disciplines, to help them become involved in areas in which they were previously unqualified. The attitudes of their male colleagues frustrated women. Respondent 413 noted the attitudes towards women could affect the type of work they were given. She thought that BT was 'Very old boy network orientated, with a job for the boys' attitude. Chauvinism is still rife, even in those managers who try hard to be unbiased. I was not invited to an exhibition as it was considered to be 'too technical'. Women managers always seem to be placed in support roles e.g. help desk, admin. Managers'. Respondent 408 also complained about the way women in a technical

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

environment were treated and stated, 'People tend to assume that a woman is non-technical until she proves otherwise whereas a man's assumed to know what he's talking about until he proves otherwise.' This atmosphere and treatment, while not so extreme as that outlined in the next chapter, nevertheless made women feel that the other barriers to progress that existed for them were man made.

Since the early 1990's, BT has endeavoured to involve a few women in retraining programmes to introduce them to new areas of the business. In the first steps towards what could be considered 'way through jobs' (Garnett, 1973, pp35 – 36) BT has encouraged women to compete with men managers for places on a two-year part-time Master of Science in Telecommunications course which offers a better understanding of the organisation's core competencies. Women who were eager not to be denied opportunities because they had not undertaken the apprenticeships or engineering degrees common amongst their male counterparts could apply. The course would have enabled women to take the lead more confidently in technical departments and one of the respondents who had undertaken the course wrote about how it had opened up job possibilities that did not exist for her before. However, because participants were expected to maintain their outflow of work at BT while

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

studying for the degree, for some women with caring responsibilities taking the course was impossible.

One respondent who identified herself by name recalled that the combination of working and running a home would have been impossible but for her supportive husband even though she had no children at the time. So as well as the organisation offering limited access to these opportunities, the number of female managers able to comply with the demands of such a course was therefore relatively small. At the same time there was no evidence to suggest that it was the lack of technical expertise alone that was holding women back. Other studies have shown that 'It's not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but mainly as "threshold capabilities"' (Goleman, 1998, p3).

In other areas however, training was being provided and this was praised by one new entrant to BT who appreciated the opportunity she was being offered. Respondent 94 stated, 'I'm pleased to say that I am one of six graduate trainees...we are being trained and developed with PC Marketing with a view to assuming responsible middle/senior management posts.' This was not the only letter in praise of PC,

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

which appears to have had a much more woman-friendly working climate than the other divisions in the study. Several respondents thought that PC was more innovative and ready to accept new ideas.

The penultimate question on the survey questionnaire asked women about their optimal journey times to work and this provoked much of the comment on part-time working and flexible working which were included earlier. Most women (67%) wanted to work within 45 minutes journey-time of their place of work while 27% were prepared to travel up to an hour and 6% were prepared for up to one-and-a-half hours travel time. The present government has put transport high on its agenda for the next few years and has indicated that it is addressing the special needs of women travellers since they are less likely to have their own transport than men.

In the last question, when asked what they would do if they were not working for BT, respondents' answers were varied. However, most of them (27%) thought that they would prefer working for themselves and this number was closely followed by a group (26%) who stated their preference for working for a large company similar to BT. Of the others 18% would go into consultancy and only 9% would use their

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

skills for a telecom competitor. A large number of BT women were therefore entrepreneurial and confident that they would be able to work for themselves but they were also loyal to BT as they did not wish to work for a competitor. They were industrious and wished to remain at work since they did not express desires to retire or to do nothing. This shows that these women thought they had skills that would have taken them on to their next job. They took a great deal of interest in their jobs, environment and colleagues. 'Many theorists have recently begun to explore the idea that women can be different without disadvantaging themselves' (Paton et al, 1996, p15). Perhaps then instead of benefiting BT with their skills, diligence and accommodating behaviours in a culture that undervalued their efforts, women could have started to work to new models to benefit themselves.

Homogeneity

In reading these comments and digesting the information, there were perhaps only one or two respondents that could be identified as having a distinct dislike for the organisation. Most respondents made the distinction between the actions of individuals working with the organisation and the organisation itself and BT was referred to in most cases in respectful and often affectionate terms. This is noteworthy because it could account for the disparity in responses to the survey

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

questionnaire compared with the complaints received in the written comments and letters. So many responses were homogenous, raising the same issues, concerns, experiences and inhibitors to progress that at times it was difficult to imagine that they had come from women working in different countries and towns in the UK and from different national and ethnic backgrounds. Respondents used the same vocabulary and terminology to describe situations and they appeared to have almost the same level of education to judge from their written English. They exhibited an almost uniform understanding of the organisation and its structures and hierarchies which to an extent was surprising given the disparate nature of their work and their locations.

However, perhaps this simply illustrates two key activities in BT at the time. The first was the internal communications of the organisation, which efficiently enabled internal information to flow throughout the company. This provided, amongst other things, information on senior promotions and the work profiles of people in positions of power who were almost exclusively male. The internal vehicles for information also reinforced the organisation's values. The second activity surrounded the recruitment practices of this large organisation that employed the same recruitment

BARRIERS TO PROGRESS: Identifying the causes

criteria nation-wide and awarded employment places to people who apparently mirrored a contracted range of characteristics. The tendency to recruit 'clones' is especially prevalent in large organisations and undoubtedly extends to both genders.

There were few respondents who exhibited high levels of independent thought or incisiveness in their responses. Nevertheless their responses were intelligently and coherently assembled and some of the letters were especially poignant which must have been distressing to write for those respondents. Only two correspondents wrote that they resented the approach of a gendered study with the implication that such an exercise promoted gendered attitudes. They did not complete questionnaires. However, in contrast many letters and notes expressed support for this investigation with the largest number of these coming from the N&S division. As this was also the division that displayed the highest number of negative responses and comments a separate chapter has been added to address their particular circumstances and concerns and this now follows.

CHAPTER 10

N&S: A DISTINCTLY GENDERED CULTURE

The purpose of this investigation was to discover the barriers to women's progress in management hierarchies across the company and for that reason the five largest divisions in the organisation were analysed. However an early analysis of the responses from the largest division by numbers employed, N&S, showed that women managers felt more distinctly discriminated against than women in the other divisions. Because their responses were more negative, deeper analysis was merited. This short chapter therefore compares the responses from N&S with those received from the combined divisions of PC, NBC and GC (see Appendix 8). Group Finance was excluded from the combined group for two reasons. The first was that the type of work undertaken by GF was distinct from all of the other four divisions in the study (PC, NBC, GC and N&S) as it was mainly finance based. The second reason for omitting it from the group to be compared is that many of the women in Group Finance had finance related qualifications which were not usually found in any of the other four divisions in significant numbers. Because of these factors, Group Finance women managers generally enjoyed higher status than their counterparts.

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

Two-hundred and forty questionnaires were dispatched to women managers working in N&S. In response they returned a disproportionately high number of completed questionnaires with 73% (176) compared to 68% from the combined divisions of PC, NBC and GC and more than half of those received also included letters or notes or used the blank sheet of paper provided¹ to flesh out their answers and raise additional issues and concerns. Therefore, as well as 5% more responses coming from N&S they provided 10% more written comments than the combined divisions. They clearly wanted to contribute more information to the study and possible interpretations of this phenomenon are that they felt more strongly than the others that they had something significant to say and they lacked other vehicles for imparting the knowledge. In any case their contributions added greatly to the knowledge on the tactics of a certain type of management and women's responses to it.

Slow progress in the engineering environment

¹ A distinction was made between comments that were written on the returned survey questionnaires and those letters and notes received on a separate piece of paper.

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

The technical and engineering side of the telecommunications business had traditionally provided a nursery for senior management since that is where aspiring managers could learn about the products and services provided. It provided the opportunity for education in all aspects of products, product management and project management and non-managers could be trained on the workings of the various systems. As it housed around 60,000 non-management staff there were also opportunities for career minded employees to learn about managing the people working on the day-to-day delivery and maintenance of services. This type of work gave the people who executed it a common language, culture and shared experiences. Furthermore for the reasons that were given in Chapter 4, less than 2% of the technical and engineering employees were women and most men would have had no opportunity to work with women as equals or to build working relationships with female colleagues.

N&S was therefore very male oriented and this appears to have had a great effect on the achievements of the women in that division and their aspirations. Women in N&S were more highly qualified than the combined divisions with 58% of women holding a degree and 23% of them also having a further post-graduate qualification. This compared favourably to the 40% with a first degree and 18% with post-graduate

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

qualifications in the combined divisions. Yet, despite their superior achievements in formal learning N&S women not only occupied lower level management posts in general than their counterparts but were retained in those low level jobs for longer than their counterparts in the combined divisions (see Appendix 6).

At the first level of management the percentages appear to be roughly the same but achieving promotion for N&S women took an average of 5 years more than the women in the other divisions. In percentage terms 39% of N&S women at the lowest grades had been with BT for 15 years or over compared to 32% in the combined divisions. At the next management grades of PCGV/PCGU 60% of the respondents in N&S had been with the organisation in excess of 15 years compared to 50% of women from the combined divisions with those years' service. The higher management grades of PCGT/PCGS in N&S had 39% with an excess of 15 years service compared to 19% for the combined divisions. At the highest management positions in BT held by women, N&S had only one woman while the combined divisions had nine women amongst them.

When respondents from the combined divisions of PC, NBC and GC are examined, 45 (13%) of a total of 355 respondents who responded to that question were at the

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

categories of PCGT/PCGS/PCGR levels while in N&S respondents reported only 14 (9%) out of 164 at the same management categories. In absolute terms there were only 2 PCGT/PCGS respondents in N&S who had under ten years service while in the combined divisions there were 20 PCGT/PCGS respondents with the same number of years positioned for promotion to higher levels.

However, because of the different functions performed in N&S its women managers were segregated into only a few skill areas with more than half of the respondents working in computing, an area that was fast becoming feminised in the lower ranks. An analysis of job functions shows that of the 176 women who responded from N&S, 102 (58%) were in a computing and 12 (7%) were in engineering. So, it would appear that even though they were in the division that was regarded as 'core business' most were in support roles instead of in engineering. Women in N&S did not have the opportunity of working in the variety of jobs available to their counterparts in the combined divisions and this may have had an impact on their confidence at applying for jobs outside of N&S as 23% thought they were more disadvantaged than men for moving from one division to another. Respondent 402 stated that there was, 'A lack of technical career progression which results in good

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

programmers being promoted to be bad managers. There is no focus on people just products, no scope for difference just interchangeable parts’.

The N&S culture appears to have been a particularly hostile environment for women and many women thought that they were unlikely to progress up the hierarchies. Yet movement to another division was thought to be difficult. Many therefore seem to have become reconciled to remaining at low levels and consequently showed less ambition than women in the combined divisions for promotion. Illustrating this point, 44% of N&S women responded that they did not think they would achieve even one promotion compared to 31% of women in the combined divisions. In a further comparison, almost 10% less in N&S thought that they had equal opportunities with men for managing large teams of people and 83% saw no opportunities in BT for promotion compared to 54% in the combined divisions.

Macho management

As well as the restricted promotion opportunities perceived by N&S women it was clear that other factors were making these women more negative in their outlook than their counterparts in other areas of BT. The unique nature of the N&S environment

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

led to many comments such as that by Respondent 412 who wrote, 'I think that D&P² (as was) has the most paternalistic/male orientated attitude of any part of BT.' Respondent 434 thought 'The culture in N&S is built on a fairly narrow view of desirable skills and attitudes and now there are few women in a position to change and broaden this... The company now seems to accept possibly condone a very uncompromising management style, 'this is what I want, don't tell me it is impossible, do it', approach which can stifle initiative and honesty'. This respondent's views were endorsed in the survey findings. Respondent 95 thought that there was 'Little opportunity for women to be selected for managerial positions on the engineering side as there appears to be a feeling that women are not capable of managing large teams of men'. The statistics (see Appendix 8) confirm the assumptions of these respondents since they had less likelihood of managing at higher levels than their BT counterparts in other divisions. Only 11 respondents believed that current management styles were acceptable and 162 (93%) N&S respondents did not. Respondent 47 thought, 'Bias against women... ingrained'.

² D&P (Development and Procurement) was integrated into N&S shortly before the survey questionnaire was dispatched.

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

Through the responses of these women, a distinctive type of management emerges where the tactics of exclusion were more visibly practised than in the other divisions. Respondent 20 observed that in these 'Men only domains. Women miss out on information, recreational activities, even the loo.' Respondent 39 remarked on her feelings of isolation, 'People's attitudes... at most meetings I attend I am the only woman and this has resulted in me being treated as a quasi-secretary...which in turn makes me feel undervalued.' N&S women were aware of their more limited opportunities for promotion yet by the other standards of education and experience, the opportunities of these women should have been better than those in other parts of the organisation.

Many of the men in N&S who were promoted would have completed technical apprenticeships together, spending time in telephone exchanges, cable trenches and manholes and in other occupations such as planning and network design. These are the places that women were unlikely to have been able to share their experiences. Respondent 502 recounted, 'I was put in a management role straight away in an engineering environment with what I feel was very little support, being the only female manager out of about 100 can be very daunting...I feel there should be a better support network for women and new entrants to BT.' This respondent was

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

experiencing the stresses of working in a fishbowl environment with the attendant lack of personal networks or support. The camaraderie experienced by men in BT during their early years is likely to have anchored their understanding of the workplace and the place of genders within it. It is not surprising therefore that when they found themselves in positions where they were able to recruit or promote personnel their early experiences would impact upon their actions.

Yet, women were now competing for promotion in the same division and challenging social norms. Respondent 32 observed that 'the education of men to accept that they are not, of right, superior and more entitled to promotion etc. will take a long time.' The women managers in N&S, just like their male colleagues, should have been well positioned for promotion in the organisation but when asked if they thought they had a bright future with the organisation, two-thirds responded negatively. They were managing in the part of the organisation that provided services to all other parts of the organisation and therefore ought to have been able to take advantage of the overview that this provided. Instead 73% of N&S women thought that the current management styles stifled initiative and this may have been responsible for their lack of progress and extended time in 'pipeline' positions. Their

N&S: A distinctly gendered culture

expectations were more identifiably tempered than those of the women in the combined divisions for as has been seen, they expected fewer promotions.

In almost every category of question in the survey N&S women's responses were more negative and pessimistic than the women in the other divisions even to the point where almost half of all women in this area had considered taking redundancy. Nevertheless they were remaining with BT not because they feared the unknown but possibly, like the women in the combined divisions, because of perceived job security. There is little doubt that women in the N&S area of the business considered that division to be consistently and overwhelmingly hostile to the progress of women resulting in their lowered expectation and feelings of impotence.

These issues are again raised in the following chapter which makes conclusions about the study findings and their validity. There is no doubt that BT is unique in its background and structure but there are linkages that can be made with other industries and other studies that together help in the understanding of women's positions in industry in general and help to explain their absence in equal numbers to men in management. The concluding chapters of this study therefore attempt to make sense of the information and analysis that constitutes this study.

CHAPTER 11

BT IN CONTEXT: LINKS WITH OTHER STUDIES

In conducting case study research 'the aim is not to infer the findings from a sample to a population but to engender patterns and linkages of theoretical importance (Bryman, 1989, p173). While the findings of this study clearly pertain to the case study organisation, as indicated in Chapters 6 and 7, there are nevertheless links with the theoretical perspectives developed in previous studies through similar findings. There are also areas where this study contradicts the findings of other researchers. Theoretical frameworks both reinforce our understanding of circumstances and help to reconcile apparent contradictions in the findings of research. The aim of this chapter was therefore to highlight the commonalities of this study with others and to look at the limitations of a case study of this type.

Theoretical perspectives

While the 'glass ceiling' over the heads of top women managers has been written of in many forms, comparatively little has been written about women in the management pipeline. Women embarking on a management career should expect to gravitate

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

upwards in the same ways as their male colleagues. Instead, as this study has shown, the vast majority find themselves occupying lower management positions for their entire management careers unable to move upwards in the same way as their male colleagues. The experiences of these 'pipeline' women who have been eclipsed by their more successful 'glass ceiling' sisters have hitherto been unrecorded in the numbers represented by this study.

Women in the study group were generally well educated but they were failing to reap the rewards of their personal investment in education and training that ought to have accrued to them under the Human Capital theory. This theory, which suggests that there is a correlation between the time and effort invested in gaining educational qualifications and the rewards received by the investor, cannot generally be applied to the women since other influences can override the investment. The majority of the women managers in this study were educated to degree or diploma level but despite their qualifications and number of years with the organisation, occupied the lower management positions. This was especially the case where women had entered the engineering and computer programming areas where their qualifications were probably essential for applying for the job. Not only had these women fared poorly in their attempts to gain promotion they were less likely than their less qualified

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

female colleagues to gain promotion. Their qualifications may have been able to gain them entry to the traditionally masculine areas of the business but did not gain them entry to the ranks of the old boys' network that apparently thrived in the macho culture which was stronger in that division than any other. Even single, childless women felt held-back despite their devotion to their jobs in terms of time.

The Marxist theory that the individual behaviours of women and men are governed by the expectations of society would explain why many women respondents assumed the major caring role in the family and why they stated that they were not mobile or able to move further away because of their spouse's career or family's interests. Supporting these expectations has probably meant that many women respondents have forfeited opportunities to gain higher skill sets in for example the international arena. The response of half of the respondents that they did not consider themselves mobile also showed that women still consider themselves to be secondary earners in their households. They were voluntarily placing themselves into what the Dual Labour Market theory describes as the secondary labour sector despite some of them confirming that they earned more money than their spouses who were given as the reason for their perceived immobility. A large proportion would have been prepared to forfeit their careers with BT if forced to relocate. However, where the Dual

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

Labour Market theory is simultaneously contradicted in the study is that these women were not ill educated or without experience, skills or prospects for they were in the management pipeline with the potential at least to progress. It was as though these women believed they would not be able to sustain a successful partnership and a successful career if mobility was a condition. Many women with childcare responsibilities in the study were eager to take part-time or job-sharing positions and although not explicitly stated they probably saw their careers as secondary to their spouse's as a way of maximising the household income.

Also, although women were not excluded from the engineering and technical areas of the business or the skilled jobs in the organisation as had been the case in other industries (Braverman, 1978) they were heavily underrepresented at 2%. The number is so low that it would be reasonable to assume that women were not being encouraged to enter those areas. The majority of women were congregated in relatively few disciplines such as computing which was fast becoming feminised, in marketing which was already feminised and in areas of sales. Meanwhile men occupied the engineering and technical skill areas which appear to have facilitated easier promotion not only through the skills they acquired but through the networking opportunities they presented.

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

However, job segregation by gender is *de facto* prevalent in the telecommunications industry and encompasses what are even today regarded as traditional female and male occupations. Many jobs are physically demanding, require working in close proximity with colleagues, are carried out in dirty conditions and are often subject to shift work. These jobs have traditionally been filled by males and this has hardly changed in the thirty years since the break with the Civil Service. By declining the opportunities afforded by these 'masculine' jobs however, women forfeit the future benefits of a powerful network, peer bonding and acquired skills. Gendered occupations are perpetuated by the attitudes not only of the recruiters but of the applicants and this combination may have been responsible for the decline in numbers of women in the technical and engineering disciplines in the case study organisation during the time of the study.

With a female management workforce that is more generalist than specialist, there is credibility in the Marxist explanation that this represents a Reserve Army of Labour within the organisation. As has been recounted in a previous chapter, during wartime the telecommunications industry benefited from the skills of women doing men's jobs with the women being drawn from the telephonist and clerical ranks. Not since that time have women in telecommunications again been employed in the same

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

numbers in the same range of occupations. Instead, the organisation and industry has held an intelligent but largely unskilled reserve of female workers in the so-called de-skilled areas vulnerable to new technologies. This has had the effect of keeping women and their ambition under control and has allowed the organisation to reward some sets of managers over others. The relative values placed on skills have also contributed to the larger proportions of women at the lower end of the management pipeline.

It would appear that the apportionment of a value to skills has either consciously or unconsciously been used by the case study organisation to control the salary bill. Promotions and salaries are premised on the concept of rewarding and retaining skills and this has left women at the lower end of the promotions and pay scales, in vertically and horizontally segregated areas of the business. Yet, most women felt skilled and experienced enough to undertake more responsibilities. These higher responsibilities that so many women in the study felt able for would remain elusive for most of them as the style of management and the structures of the organisation virtually excluded them from top jobs.

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

A significant volume of the additional comments made by respondents concur with Marxist-Feminist explanations of on segregated occupational constructs as being the deliberate actions of men to retain the better paid, more powerful jobs. The men managers described by respondents achieved a deeper level of segregation however through their often extreme macho behaviours and old boy's club attitudes designed to intimidate and undermine challengers to their authority. Women with children felt particularly vulnerable to this behaviour and many reverted instead to their families for the derivation of satisfaction, forfeiting opportunities for advancement. The culture of the case study organisation was such that it was not prepared to treat women as individuals and the women felt caught between their caring responsibilities and organisational requirements that often had nothing to do with the quality of the work they delivered. The women managers in the pipeline presented a profile of conscientious and dedicated workers who were anxious to do a good job. They realised their political naivety and lack of business networking support but in the main did not know how to change their situations. There was also evidence of male management's reluctance to train or coach their female staff by excluding them from learning opportunities (Summerfield, 1984).

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

It is not possible to legislate for attitudes, only actions but it is clear from this study that current policies are insufficient to deal with the deeply embedded prejudicial attitudes that express themselves in discriminatory practices. As long as organisations profit from these ways of conducting business they will continue to support individuals who retain personal power through discriminatory practices.

Critique

Whatever the collection method for data this type of study is always historical and represents a moment in time captured through an opaque instrument. This study does not purport to reflect the only answer but the one that was provided on that day by that group of women in the particular circumstances that were prevalent in BT at the time. It seeks to add granularity to what is already known about women in management and has therefore taken a largely uncritical view of the respondents' additional qualitative information which was offered specifically for that purpose. While aware that this will have been at the cost of alienating some reviewers who perceive it as unbalanced, nevertheless it was a deliberate decision. The research extends the boundaries of knowledge on women because the findings are based a study with a number of unique attributes.

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

No similar research exists in terms of size as the respondents were all working in the same organisation. The respondents covered a range of management grades and responses came from a wide geographical spread across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These responses illustrated the strength of a company's culture through the homogeneity of the qualitative answers and quantitative texts. Although HR management in BT was involved in decisions on the research methodology adopted and the questions used in the survey, they clearly did not influence the qualitative responses provided by almost half of the respondents. Previous studies identify the gaps of 'headline' discrimination whereas this research has provided the practices that support the exclusion of women from senior positions. It provides a comprehensive description of the actions that some managers are prepared to take in order to disadvantage and undermine their female staff.

Improvements to women's career prospects have been aided by external influences such as the growth in the number and quality of jobs and by introspective studies that have sought to influence legislators, educators and employers and women's own perceptions of themselves. It is hoped that this study does not just add one more empirical study that demonstrates the implementation gap between theory and practice. That is indeed a function of the work but its key contribution lies in

BT IN CONTEXT: Links with other studies

cataloguing the tactics of a style of management that has systematically inhibited the progress of women. Although the case study used a telecommunications company to examine these tactics, the lack of women in management in similar environments suggests that the tactics are not exclusive. As more knowledge is gained on how exclusion is perpetuated then policies and practices can be developed to counter the effect. This study illustrates that claims of a post-feminist age are not only premature but can be damaging as employers divert their focus and policies from equal opportunities arguments. The final chapter which follows reiterates the aims of the study and summarises the key findings.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSIONS: A MICROCOSM OF BRITISH INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

The previous chapter has shown that this study both confirmed the findings of other research in the field, and extended it. In particular it shows clearly that the closer women work to men's disciplines, that is the jobs traditionally done by men, the more extreme are the exclusionary practices to which women are subjected and this will be explored more deeply in this concluding chapter.

The overarching aim was to explore the reasons for women's lack of progress up the management hierarchies in the same proportions as their male counterparts, by providing the opportunity for women themselves to speak. BT was the case study for achieving this as it offered both a number of unique characteristics as well as features to be found in other organisations. Its uniqueness lay in the access it provided to a far larger group of women managers than had been available to previous studies and they were spread across the length and breadth of the UK. Furthermore, they were easily contactable and willing to participate in the study.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

The features it had in common with other organisations were the range of functional skill areas and disciplines in which women managers were engaged and the management levels they occupied, with most being in the lower ranges of management.

But, until this study, there had never been such a large investigation on women in management in a post-privatisation organisation in the UK or one that set out to assess the attitudes of its female management force. Emerging from its background as a utility provider and relieved of government constraints, the promise of privatisation was that the energies and creativity of all of its people would be released for the benefit of stakeholders and shareholders. There was an implication of equality for everyone in the early assurances of the liberalised monopoly and this created enthusiasm and hope among its people. Confidence was further elevated by the organisation's vigorous equal opportunities programme that was gaining recognition and accolades for its pioneering work on behalf of women in the workplace. To what extent privatisation enabled the achievement of equal treatment for all managers can be seen in the responses of the 613 women whose careers and ambitions were invested in the organisation. BT therefore presented, in many

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

ways, a microcosm of corporate Britain and for the researcher the added advantage that the organisation was willing to fund and support the study.

Some time has passed since the field research was undertaken but conditions have not changed greatly since then in either BT or in British employment practices. Most tellingly there are still no women executive directors on the BT board or women at the heads of BT divisions. In this respect BT is no different from other organisations where women remain as underrepresented in the upper echelons and on the boards of organisations, as they did at the outset of this study. Despite years of equal opportunities initiatives inside organisations and outside, men continue to dominate the key decision-making areas of commerce where they retain the most powerful posts.

This lack of visibility of women managers in significant numbers in the pipeline to the top can also be observed in the Civil Service, NHS, former utilities companies, banking and finance, teaching and in almost every large organisation in the UK. This is despite the improved educational standards of women and the increasing propensity of women to remain single and career focussed. Although the government's labour force statistics show that more women are entering and

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

remaining in the workforce, and that enforced gaps for caring are becoming shorter not longer, employers still expect women to be satisfied with the status and conditions of their predecessors twenty or thirty years ago. The frustration amongst women is that while they are aware of different forms of discrimination they feel impotent to challenge it effectively. This can induce women to deny ambition and force them into the accommodating behaviours that are to be observed throughout large organisations. These conditions can be seen in almost any industry and organisation in the UK that has a long history of employing women and men in different functions. Gender segregation is maintained by vertical and horizontal barriers that restrain women's progress while serving to enable the progress of men.

BT had 12 senior women managers at the time of this study of a workforce of over quarter-of-a-million. These women represented 4% of the people at their grade yet the organisation purported to treat job applications from women and men equally. Did this mean that women in the organisation were not ambitious? The evidence of this study shows otherwise. They were ambitious, well qualified, loyal to the organisation and its aspirations and willing to work hard. In accounting for their lack of representation at the highest levels in BT and their correspondingly low numbers at each of the intervening management positions these women managers

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

pointed to several key issues. The most disabling was the hostile company culture and associated macho attitudes that women had to encounter. Then there were the confined functional areas of the business from which women found moving difficult and the lack of transparency in opportunities governed by an Old Boys Network. As Akers (1998) observed when examining other enterprises, 'A gendered sub-culture underlies organising and helps to explain the persistence of male dominance and female disadvantage in spite of years of attempts to implement gender equality policies'.

What this study shows moreover, is the immutability of such gendered organisational cultures. They are maintained, albeit in discrete forms, despite changes in both organisational structures and their production or technological base. The complex ways in which women accommodate to these processes, lowering their aspirations and adjusting to the organisation's expectations, mirror the broader social pressures on them. Both re-affirm and extend earlier findings. This type of case study presented a set of intertwined issues that could not be extricated for the whole had more meaning than each of the untangled elements. It examined not only the women to be studied, their ambitions, education and skills but also the organisation's structures, style and shared values. It was impossible to remove the

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

women who provided information from the context of their situations as they were managing in a large former utility organisation that retained the remnants of that culture and a history of gendered job divisions. Nevertheless, the organisation claimed to have shed its past discriminatory practices and was proud of its equal opportunities policies. But, as many researchers have found before, policies are not practices and the evidence of this study is that these admirable policies were mere rhetoric, unenforced in the company.

On the surface the research responses appeared to contain some contradictory aspects. Women had to complete the questionnaire first so it was only having done this that they could then reflect on the questions. In doing so many reverted to writing letters, notes and additional text about their experiences. Having realised that their responses needed to be further explained respondents went on to provide supporting qualitative material. This would explain phenomena like the very positive 82% of these women who scored the box stating that they thought they were equally likely to be selected for job interviews as men and the 69% of respondents who thought that they had equal opportunities for managing large teams of people. Yet, these assumptions are contradicted in the additional written material. The value of the additional information cannot be overestimated and shows the difference

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

between asking for responses and allowing women to recount their thoughts. Reading the letters from these women, who raised a broad range of issues in their writings, facilitated a deeper understanding of their concerns and the processes which maintain gender divisions in management.

Furthermore, although 62% of respondents scored the box stating that they had equal chances with men in gaining promotion, over 70 (11%) respondents wrote specifically complaining about discriminatory and prejudicial practices. There are two possible reasons for such responses. The first is that, as previously observed, respondents differentiated between BT and the individual managers who worked for BT. They could believe that the organisation's policies provided equal opportunities and were therefore supportive of both women and men. However, the letters received on the subject from respondents raised concerns about the behaviours of individual managers and their practises. Respondents thus seem to have believed that BT was fair but individual managers were not, which in itself shows the efficiency of the organisation's internal communication of its policies.

The study particularly shows that women were concerned by a number of issues. Overwhelmingly they thought that BT needed new management styles in order to

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

thrive and that the current management structures stifled initiative. BT had constructed horizontal barriers behind which the engineering and technical expertise in the organisation, deemed to be the core activity, was ensconced. Yet this was also the area from which the majority of the organisation's senior management was drawn. Women were therefore hampered by the gendered organisational structures that had also hindered women operators generations before, for they had only very limited access to technical training or decision making positions in that area of the business. Furthermore, new ghettos for women were being built and women with technical abilities were not being introduced to engineering but to computing jobs instead from which, as a number of respondents pointed out, progression into more senior management was almost impossible.

Macho management that resulted in women being undermined, exploited and intimidated was common throughout the organisation but clearly rife in the division with mainly engineering and technical jobs. Bullying was apparently ignored by the organisation's hierarchy and discrimination against women in various degrees was allowed to thrive. This extended beyond emotional bullying and affected the type of work that women were given as many complained of its low quality. This ultimately affected their opportunities to improve and with the macho management

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

that nurtured an old boy's culture ensured the perpetuation of gendered processes and the progression of men over women. Through the survey it can be seen that women in the management pipeline did not possess the same macho management styles as their male colleagues and therefore did not fit the profile that BT apparently preferred to promote. Furthermore, direct entrants into management were unaware when joining the organisation that the division into which they were recruited would almost certainly determine how they would be able to progress in subsequent years. The 'choice of attention area, choice of entry point, choice of factors, these are all part of the first stage of thinking. And such choices will predetermine the final result of the thinking process' (De Bono, 1971, p12). When women were recruited into BT they had little choice over which part of the organisation they entered. This entry point however would almost certainly determine their future opportunities for skills training and the gathering of experiences necessary for senior management positions or career enhancement.

Even where women were well qualified and had experience of different parts of the organisation's operations, they did not possess the same engineering and technical qualifications as their male counterparts who were being promoted. This too was an inhibitor to progress at various interim management stages as was their unwillingness

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

to adopt the 'political' stances of their male colleagues. Women wrote of the inflexibility of management and of a culture that valued presenteeism, long unproductive time in the office and visibility, over quality. The persistent and resilient nature of the old utility culture of the engineer-manager, which permeated the structure and styles of management was being maintained by a senior management team reluctant to challenge and prepared to turn a blind eye to the inequities it generated. Not only were some of the discriminatory practices inherited from the Civil Service maintained by BT, they were enhanced¹ in the post privatised organisation.

In the management pipeline

The study shows that many women had attempted to position themselves to break the 'glass ceiling' but were aware that they lacked the networks that could propel them upwards and therefore found their progress hindered. Others had tried to better their positions through adding a post-graduate qualification to their first degree but the study shows that they were just as likely to be detained at the lower levels as their

¹ There were fewer women in the engineering and technical (E&TG) disciplines in 1998 than there had been ten years previously.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

less well qualified female colleagues. Perhaps the most surprising finding in that study was that this group, who worked mainly in the engineering and technical part of the company, were the most despondent about their future careers. They had apparently decided that they were not going to be able to move vertically in the organisation, so would cease to try. This is an illustration of even well-qualified women being prepared to accommodate to their environment. The study shows that these women were motivated by the jobs they were doing but were sufficiently unhappy with the atmosphere in which they worked, and their limited prospects for advancement, that they were developing other areas of their lives.

If these women thought however that the 'glass ceiling' would also provide an umbrella that shielded them from the discriminatory practices of male managers, they were wrong. This study also showed through the voices of N&S women managers especially that the 'glass ceiling' did not provide shelter for women who had opted out of the competition for higher status jobs and they remained the objects of discrimination despite their acquiescence. Indeed the closer to the traditionally masculine areas of the business these N&S women were, the more intense the

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

discriminatory practices became. To an extent these women were accommodating the organisation by remaining static since it was to BT's advantage to have a well trained, intelligent, highly qualified and dedicated yet submissive workforce and where women did not go for promotion, proportionately more men could be offered it.

In BT as in other organisations there was a lack of female role models in management and it was noted that the women who had succeeded in climbing the hierarchies often reflected the masculine traits of senior male managers. These were the attributes surrounding non-consensus decision-making, the exercise of command-and-control management and an apparent penchant for focusing on the job to the exclusion of other aspects of private life. These fostered the perception of dedication to the company but most women were loath to do this if it was at the expense of their caring obligations. Women admitted to valuing their private lives and putting the requirements of partner and children above their personal career aspirations and to this extent they were following a stereotype already noted in much of the literature. Organisations on the other hand, perhaps because they are led mainly by men, are not yet ready to bear these apparently conflicting and disloyal sentiments. These women are therefore marked out as uncommitted to their work.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

Female role models who relocated to another country or town for BT were also very scarce so even many aspiring women managers in BT did not express confidence that they would be able to relocate. Many did not consider themselves mobile and were concerned about the effect moving would have on their spouse, family and caring commitments. A large number even stated that they would leave the organisation if they were asked to relocate but without the visible signs of support and success provided by role models, this is hardly surprising. Certainly, many would have given priority to their caring commitments. But, it is highly unlikely that given the confidence and reassurance that they too could succeed, many ambitious women would not have risen to the challenge of relocating if it was in order to improve their career prospects.

For those women with family commitments who were asked to travel on a short-term basis, new ways to work might have calmed their fears. Travel and even meetings to which they had to travel were problematic for many women even though they realised that this could potentially inhibit their progress and eliminate them from many more senior positions for which travel was considered necessary.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

Horizontal segregation

Most organisations select their senior management not from the full spectrum of job families in the business but from a relatively small number of skill areas which are deemed to be 'core' to the business. However, women's access to these areas have been restricted by recruitment practices that for a number of reasons select male candidates by the retrograde selection processes for promotion that in turn selects in its own image and own discipline. Women who are segregated into so-called 'soft' areas in organisations, where they have little opportunity to gain the high level skills that contribute to the core business function, stand little chance of progressing beyond middle management ranks, if that. As old feminised ghettos, such the customer-facing telephone operator or counter-clerk in banking have declined they are quickly replaced by new feminised areas of business such as the customer-facing call centre or support role programmer. The dynamics of business also show that as women have moved into traditionally masculine disciplines so the value of the job decreases along with the rewards and benefits. For example the masculine position that was a 'marketing executive' becomes a 'business manager' as women move into the jobs and men move up and create new titles.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

This study has exposed not the inability of women to function at senior levels of management or the inflexibility of women to deal with the vagaries of big business. It has exposed however, the intransigence of a senior management steeped in an 'old boys' club' culture that permeated every recruiting level of the organisation. BT was beset with token gestures such as an equal opportunities policy not monitored or measured for efficacy, women only training courses for a relatively minuscule number of women and equality-speak from board level managers with a huge investment in the status quo. However there was an almost complete absence of the effective practical actions that ensure the implementation of equality programmes in other organisations, particularly monitoring individual recruiting and promoting practices for transparency of opportunity for applicants.

Women managers perceived the promotion process as being influenced by the formal and informal networks that existed amongst men but were not replicated in the experience of women. The male understanding of value systems that were different to those of women included practices such as 'presenteeism' that had grown over the previous twenty years, and 'cronyism', which was rife. These resulted in women being overlooked or positively discriminated against when opportunities for promotion arose. In such circumstances it is not surprising that women were found

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

in the low status, low wage jobs that generated low self-esteem and lack of confidence. In those places it was often assumed that they were unambitious and uninterested in planning a career. This was not to say that women were excluded entirely from promotion but rather to confirm that ambitious women had to be that much more focussed than men on positioning themselves ready to take any opportunity. Many women in this study therefore dealt with frustration at work by focussing instead on their home and social life. They rationalised their position by compromising and remaining at a low level in the management chain that allowed them to concentrate on other non-work activities.

At a time when the technology that was on the market to BT customers could have offered the same flexible benefits of working at different times and places for its women managers, BT was failing to implement these new ways of working. The lack of availability of flexible working conditions and new ways to undertake work therefore inhibited progress for many women. They felt that given suitably flexible conditions they would have been able to balance the demands of work and home lives more effectively. Very few women raised the issue of crèches or financial help for childcare so they clearly were prepared to take full responsibility for caring arrangements. They simply needed to be allowed to do their work in an environment

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

where the demands of home life were also recognised and accommodated. That the demand for more flexibility was not answered by BT was thought to be more to do with the lack of trust in management relationships than the difficulty of fulfilling women's requirements and this could only be an indication of poor management practise.

In this time of highly enabling technology solutions, women should not feel that meeting the demands of both home and workplace are mutually exclusive for the means exist whereby flexible working from home or office and the ability to work at different times of the day is achievable.

The paradox of BT

At the time of the survey BT was one of the largest organisations in the UK by market capitalisation and one of the most profitable. For the previous twelve years it had been undergoing constant change programmes urged on by external consultants and internal 'champions' but little had changed regarding the treatment of women in the organisation. The reluctance and perhaps inability of some areas to change was reflected in many of their working practices. The exclusion of women from places of

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

authority and the upper echelons of the organisation has been but one of the symptoms of the general malaise towards progress.

However, the competition for customers for the new wave digital and e-commerce products is more fierce than BT has ever experienced and these products are the ground on which BT will win the battle for survival as the UK's largest communications provider or not. To do so, it will have to change the attitudes of both women and men in the organisation for it will need to capitalise on all its resources if it is to retain its present position. The organisation needs to avoid creating new genderised ghettos where the old ones have been demolished for example in Call Centre operations where the work is mainly performed by females but where the senior management is once again male.

If BT fails to harness the energies that women have to offer then the company will inevitably lose ground in an internationalising marketplace that is becoming increasingly aware of the need for gender balanced workforces. It is therefore not a question of working on each of the issues to eliminate them for they are inextricably linked by the glue of a culture that only a radical approach could change. Rather it is the challenge of moving the culture to a new position that BT will need to meet. The

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

ideal of course would be for each person to be treated as an individual and not as a resource for industry or organisations. Respondent 464 explained, 'The main objective should be to encourage women into management within industry. This needs to be addressed at school level rather than at this level.... I feel that by women only activities/courses etc, we are creating what may be viewed as a "separate stream" for women rather than being a mainstream member of the team.... training/counselling etc., should be based on individual needs irrespective of gender.' However, until this stage is reached women will have to work to achieve incremental improvements, raise their expectations and continue to push the boundaries. The future of management is towards the new styles of consensus and discussion and emotional maturity that are already the domain of women (Goleman, 1997).

If the benefits of successful management of diversity are better decision-making, greater creativity and innovation and more successful marketing to different types of customers (Cox, 1991) then it can be assumed that the converse would apply where the management of diversity has not been successfully implemented. Even knowing this, as most organisations undoubtedly do, has brought no guarantees that environments will be built where the contributions of all members of a diverse workforce can be valued and encouraged. In such companies initiative is stifled by

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

complacency, progress by entrenchment, value by contempt and acceptance by inherent prejudice. Affecting these pejorative attitudes is a portfolio of exclusionist practices that facilitates their nourishment and above all shields the ambition of those of the power majority to maintain the status quo even at the expense of the body corporate. Payback for these deep-rooted attitudes for other organisations has been the driving down of business and revenues and the arrival of the organisation at a delta that has forced change or commercial demise². It is clear that at the time of this study the cultural background of engineering was made into a mode of domination and a form of domination, which was a male-only preserve. BT still manifested the culture of the engineer-manager which had been prevalent since its inception. Such organisations work to encourage engineering to remain a male monopoly (Hacker, 1989; 1990).

BT failed its women managers by allowing them to be held back by layers of prejudice and exclusionist practices of varying depths. The old gendered legacies of

² History offers us examples of companies such as IBM (Garr, 1999; Slater, 1990) that prided themselves in their image of the corporate man, white and middle class who almost exclusively populated the decision-making echelons of management in the organisation. Only a turning away from entrenched attitudes and practices saved IBM from business failure and bankruptcy in 1993)

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

the Civil Service were enhanced by newly conceived hostile practices that were allowed to flourish under senior management that was too weak and impotent or just resolutely careless. Any one of these layers would have been permeable but the cumulative effects of several of them resulted in very few women managers in BT managing to puncture them. At the same time, the culture of the company nurtured a macho, paternalistic and patronising atmosphere that discouraged most women managers from attempting to reach their management potential, instead remaining in the management pipeline and serving under the leadership of men. BT has consistently promoted more men into middle and senior management positions than women even where women were qualified and had appropriate experience. Those responsible for promoting showed a preference for promoting men and this preference grew with the status and rank of the job showing that prejudice existed at every level in the organisation for the more senior the job to fill the more senior the interviewing bestowing, manager.

On reflection

This study has taken over six years to complete from the time the questionnaire was dispatched to producing the findings, and it has therefore been seen in retrospect. From such a view many of the decisions on the research procedures and processes

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

look as though they could have been improved. I have learned for the six years it has taken and continue to reflect on the arguments for the equal status of women in management. Although a first cut analysis of the results was produced for dispatch to the survey respondents who requested it and the BT Human Resource managers who sponsored the work, the main conclusions took longer. The reasons for this were twofold. I was a line manager with a large number of staff in BT at the time the study was started and was seeking to progress. My staff and career were a priority and for the time that I was with BT had to take precedence over this study. However, when the opportunity arose to take up an academic post that would allow me to complete the study, I was able to speed the completion. The second reason that producing the results of this study took so long was the volume of letters that had been received with the study and my anxieties to do them justice by including them in the analysis. Ignoring these letters and the issues that they raised would have diminished the depth of the study. I could not do that and maintain faith with the respondents who had taken so much time to inform me of their concerns. Had I known their eagerness to respond in words I would have constructed a reply sheet that invited these women to add text in 'issue' boxes to aid the analysis.

CONCLUSIONS: A microcosm of British industry and commerce

Eight hundred and eighty-nine questionnaires were dispatched in the expectation that around 10% would be returned. That number of completed questionnaires and even additional written responses would have been simple to process. However, the subject clearly raised passions in BT women managers and 630 responses had to be analysed (17 were rejected as incomplete). Had I known about their enthusiasm on the subject I might have assessed my audience and the subject differently and dispatched only a fraction of the questionnaires - but then I would not have benefited from the knowledge gained and this study would have been the poorer. I shall be eternally grateful to those women who thought fit to take the time to write to add to my understanding of the challenges ahead for women in management.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. BOOKS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdala, L. **Breaking Through the Glass Ceilings: A practical guide to equality at work for women and men**, London, Metropolitan Authorities Recruitment Agency (METRA), 1991
- Adkins, L. **Gendered Work: Sexuality, family and the labour market**, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1995
- Ajzen, I. Fishbein, M. **Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behaviour**, Englewood-Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1980
- Alford, B. W. E. **British Economic Performance 1945 - 1975**, London, Macmillan 1988
- Amsden, A. H. ed. **The Economics of Women and Work**, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980
- Arnot, M. and Weiner, G. (eds.) **Gender and the Politics of Schooling**, London, Hutchinson, 1987
- Bandura, A. **Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A social cognitive theory**, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1985
- Barker, D. L. and Allen, S. (eds.) **Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage**, Chapter on Sexual divisions and the dual labour market by Barron R. D. and Norris, G. M., London, Longman, 1976
- Barlow, D. H., Hayes, S. C., Nelson, R. O. **The Scientist Practitioner: Research and accountability in clinical and educational settings**, New York, Pergamon, 1983
- Barrett, M. **Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist analysis**, London, Verso, 1980
- Becker, G. S. **Discrimination, Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunities: An economic and social perspective**, Vancouver, Fraser Institute, 1982

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beddoe, D. **Discovering Women's History: A practical manual**, London, Pandora, 1983
- Beechey, V. **Unequal Work**, London, Verse, 1987
- Bilton, T. and Bonnett, K., Jones, P., Skinner, D., Stanworth, M., Webster, A. **Introductory Sociology**, 3rd edition, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996
- Bilton, T. and Bonnett, K., Jones, P., Skinner, D., Stanworth, M., Webster, A. **Introductory Sociology, Chapter by Webster**, 3rd edition, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996b
- Birn, R. and Hague, P., Vangelder, P. **A Handbook of Market Research Techniques**, London, Kogan Page, 1990
- Blauner, R. **Alienation and Freedom: The factory worker and his industry**, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964
- Blaxter, L., Hughes, C., Tight, M. **How to Research**, Buckingham, Open University Press, 2001
- Blossfeld, H-P, and Hakim, C. **Between Equalisation and Marginalisation: Women working part-time in Europe and the United States of America**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997
- Bond, W. J. **Going Solo: Developing a home-based consulting business from the ground up**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1997
- Bourdieu, P. Wacquant, L. J. D. **An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology**, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992
- Bradley, H. **Men's Work, Women's Work**, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989
- Bradley, H. **Gender and Power in the Workplace: Analysing the impact of economic change**, London, Macmillan, 1998
- Bradley, H. and Stephenson, C., Williams, S., Erickson, M. D., Williams, Stephen **Myths at Work**, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Braybon, G. **Women Workers in the First World War: The British experience**, London, Croom Helm, 1981
- Braybon, G. and Summerfield, P. **Out of the Cage: Women's experiences in two world wars**, London, Pandora, 1987
- Brown, P. and Scase, R. **Poor Work: Disadvantage and the division of labour**, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1991
- Brownmiller, S. **Against Our Will: Men, women and rape**, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976
- Bryman, A. **Research Methods and Organizational Studies**, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989
- Burman, E. **Feminists and Psychological Practice**, London, Sage, 1990
- Buxton, J. **Ending the mother war: Starting the workplace revolution**, London, Macmillan, 1998
- Cadbury, E. and Matheson, M. C., Shann, G. **Women's Work and Wages**, London, Fisher Unwin, 1906
- Carr, C. **Choice, Chance & Organisational Change: Practical insights from evolution for business leaders and thinkers**, New York, American Management Association, 1996
- Carr-Ruffino, N. **The Promotable Woman: Advancing through leadership skills**, Belmont, C.A., Wadsworth, 1993
- Carr, W. Kemmis, S. **Becoming Critical: Education, knowledge and action research**, London, Falmer Press, 1986
- Chell, E. **The Psychology of Behaviour in Organisations**, London, Macmillan, 1987

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chiplin, B. and Sloane, P.J. **Sex Discrimination in the Labour Market**, London, Macmillan, 1976
- Clark, A. **Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century**, London, Routledge & Kegan, 1982
- Clarkson, P. **The Achilles Syndrome: Overcoming the secret fear of failure**, Shaftsbury, Element, 1994
- Clutterbuck, D. and Devine, M. **Business Woman Present and Future**, London, Macmillan, 1987
- Cockburn, C. **Brothers: Male dominance and technological change**, London, Pluto, 1983
- Cockburn, C. **In the Way of Women: Men's resistance to sex equality in organisations**, London, Macmillan, 1991
- Coleman, G. **Investigating Organisations: A feminist approach**, Bristol, School of Advanced Urban Studies, 1991
- Colgan, F. and Tomlinson, F. **Women in Organisations: Challenging gender politics**, Chapter on Women in Book Publishing – A feminised sector, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996
- Collinson, D. L. and Hearn, J. (eds.) **Men As Managers, Managers As Men: Critical perspectives on men, masculinities and managements**, London, Sage, 1996
- Collinson, D. L. and Knights, D., Collinson, M. **Managing to Discriminate**, London, Routledge, 1990
- Coontz, S. and Henderson, P. **Women's Work, Men's Property: The origins of gender and class**, London, Verso, 1986
- Cooper, C. and Davidson, M. (eds.) **Women in Management**, London, Heinemann, 1984

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cooper, C. and Davidson, M. **High Pressure: Working lives of women managers**, London, Fontana, 1982
- Cooper, C. and Lewis, S. **Balancing Your Career Family and Life**, London, Kogan Page, 1998
- Coote, A. **Equal at Work? Women in men's jobs**, London, Collins, 1979
- Coyle, A. **Redundant Women**, London, The Women's Press, 1984
- Coyle, A. and Skinner, J. (eds.) **Women and Work: Positive action for change**, Basingstoke, Macmillan Education, 1988
- Crompton, R. and Mann, M. (eds.) **Gender and Stratification**, Chapter on Gender Class and Stratification: Towards a new approach (Walby, S.), Cambridge, Polity, 1986
- Crompton, R. and Sanderson, K. **Gendered Jobs and Social Change**, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990
- Dahlberg, F. (ed.) **Woman the Gatherer**, London, Yale University Press, 1981
- Daniels, L. and Shooter, R. (eds.) **The Employers Guide to Childcare**, London, The Working Mothers Association, 1991
- Davidson, M. **The Black and Ethnic Minority Women Manager: Cracking the concrete ceiling**, London, Paul Chapman, 1997
- Davidson, M. and Burke, R. (eds.) **Women in Management: Current research issues**, Chapter on Managerial Sextyping: A persistent and pervasive barrier to women's opportunities by V. Schein; London, Paul Chapman, 1994
- Davidson, M. and Cooper, C. **Shattering the Glass Ceiling: The woman manager**, London, Paul Chapman, 1992
- Deal, T. E. and Kennedy, A. A. **Corporate Cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life**, London, Penguin, 1988

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- De Bono, E. **Lateral Thinking for Management**, London, Penguin, 1971 and 1977
- De Bono, E. **Tactics: The art and science of success**, London, HarperCollins, 1986
- Dex, S. **The Sexual Division of Work: Conceptual revolutions in the social sciences**, Brighton, Wheatsheaf, 1985
- Dex, S. **Women's Attitudes Towards Work**, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988
- Dixon, P. **Making the Difference: Women and men in the workplace**, London, Heinemann, 1993
- Dowling, C. **The Cinderella Complex: Women's hidden fear of independence**, Glasgow, HarperCollins, 1994
- Drake, B. **Women in Trades Unions**, London, Virago, 1984
- Drucker, P. F. **The Concept of the Corporation: General Motors**, New York, New American Library, 1964
- Durkheim, E. **Sociology and Philosophy**, Translated by D. F. Pocock, New York, Free Press, 1974
- Earl, P. **The Corporate Imagination: How big companies make mistakes**, Brighton, Wheatsheaf, 1984
- Ellis, Wheeler, **Women Managers: Success on our own terms**, Auckland, Penguin, 1991
- Esping-Andersen, G. **Social Foundations of Post-Industrial Economies**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999
- Flanders, M. L. **Breakthrough: The career woman's guide to shattering the glass ceiling**, London, Paul Chapman, 1994
- Friday, N. **My Mother Myself: A daughter's search for identity**, New York, Laurel, 1977

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Frow, E. and Frow. R. **Engineering Struggles: Episodes in the story of the shop stewards' movement**, Manchester, Working Class Movement Library, 1982
- Game, A. and Pringle, R. **Gender at Work**, London, Pluto, 1984
- Garnett, J. **The Work Challenge: Leaders at work**, London, The Industrial Society, 1973
- Garr, D. **IBM Redux: Lou Gerstner and the business turnaround of the decade**, New York, HarperBusiness, 1999
- Gellner, E. **Legitimation of Belief**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974
- Goffee, R. and Scase, R. **Women in Charge: The experiences of female entrepreneurs**, London, Allen and Unwin, 1985
- Goldthorpe, J. H. **Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980
- Goleman, D. **Emotional Intelligence: The most critical leadership competencies**, London, Bloomsbury, 1997
- Goleman, D. **Working With Emotional Intelligence**, London, Bloomsbury, 1998
- Golombok, S. **Gender Development**, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994
- Goode, W. J. Hatt, P. K. **Methods in Social Research**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1952
- Goshal, S. and Bartlett, C. A. **The Individualised Corporation: A fundamentally new approach to management**, New York, Harper Business, 1997
- Gray, J. **Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus: A practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your relationships**, London, Thorsons, 1992

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gregson, N. and Lowe, M. **Serving the Middle Classes: Class, gender and waged domestic labour in contemporary Britain (International studies of women and place)**, London, Routledge, 1994
- Hacker, S. **Pleasure, Power and Technology: Some tales of gender, engineering and the cooperative workplace**, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989
- Hakim, C. **Key Issues In Women's Work: Female heterogeneity and the polarisation of women's employment, Conflict and change in Britain Series: A new audit, 4**, London, Athlone, 1996
- Hakim, C. **Work-lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference theory**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000
- Hakim, C. **Research Design: Successful designs for social and economic research**, London, Routledge, 2000
- Hammer, M. and Champy, J. **Reengineering the Corporation: A manifesto for business revolution**, London, Nicholas Brealey, 1993
- Hammersley, M. ed. **Social Research: Philosophy, politics and practice**, London, Sage & Open University, 1993
- Handy, C. **The Future of Work**, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984
- Handy, C. **The Age of Unreason**, Boston, Harvard Business Press, 1990
- Harragan, B. **Games Mother Never Taught You**, New York, Warner, 1977
- Hartmann, H. (ed.) **Integrated Circuits-Segregated Labor: Women in computing related occupations and high-tech industries, Chapter on Computer Chips and Paper Clips**, Washington, Washington D.C. National Academy Press, 1987
- Harvey, J.C. and Katz, C. **If I'm So Successful Why Do I Feel Like a Fake: The impostor phenomenon**, London, St Martins Press, 1985
- Helgesen, S. **The Female Advantage: Women's ways of leadership**, New York, Doubleday, 1990

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Henry, J. and Walker, D. **Managing Innovation**, London, Sage, 1991
- Hewitt, P. **About Time: The revolution in work and family life**, London, IPPR/Rivers Oram Press, 1993
- Hicks, M. J. **Problem Solving in Business and Management: Hard, soft and creative approaches**, London, Chapman & Hall, 1991
- Holt, R. T. and Turner, J. E. (eds.) **The Methodology of Comparative Research: A symposium from the Centre of Comparative Studies in Technical Development and Social Change and the Department of Political Science**, Minnesota, University of Minnesota, 1970
- Humphreys, B. V. **Clerical Unions in the Civil Service**, Oxford, Blackwell & Mott, 1958
- Itzin, C. Newman, J. (eds.) **Gender, Culture and Organisational Change: Putting theory into practice**, London, Routledge, 1995
- Jamieson, K. H. **Beyond the Double Bind: Women and leadership**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997
- Joseph, G. **Women at Work**, Oxford, Philip Allen, 1983
- Kanter, R. M. **Men and Women of the Corporation**, New York, Basic Books, 1977
- Kanter, R. M. **When Giants Learn to Dance: Mastering the Challenges of Strategy, Management and Careers in the 1990's**, London, International Thomson Business Press, 1989
- Kelly, R. M. **The Gendered Economy: Work, Careers, and Success**, Newbury Park CA, Sage, 1991
- Kirby, R. (ed.) **European Engineering Yearbook**, London, Cambridge Market Intelligence, 1996

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Knights, D. and Willmott, H. (eds.) **Gender and the Labour Process**, Aldershot, Gower, 1986

Knights, D. and Willmott, H. (eds.) **Gender and the Labour Process**, Chapter on Patriarchy and the Labour Market: Occupational control strategies and the medical division of labour by A. Witz; Aldershot, Gower, 1986b

Knights, D. and Willmott, H., Collinson, D. (eds.) **Job Redesign: Critical perspectives on the labour process**; Chapter on Managerial strategies: New technology and the labour process; London, Heinemann, 1985

Ledwith, S. and Colgan F. (eds.) **Women in Organisations: Challenging gender politics**, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1996

Leggette, J. C. **Class, Race and Labor: Working class consciousness in Detroit**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968

Lewenhak, S. **Women and Trade Unions: An outline history of women in the British Trade Union movement**, London, E. Benn, 1977

Liddington, J. and Norris, J. **One Hand Tied Behind Us: The rise of the women's suffrage movement**, London, Virago, 1978

Mabey, C. and Mayon-White, B. (eds.) **Managing Change**, Chapter by David Nadler on Concepts for the management of organisational change, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1993

Maddock, S. **Challenging Women: Gender, culture and organisation**, London, Sage, 1999

Mandelken, Theme - **The Glass Border**, a reference for this author could not be found

March, J. G. and Cyert, R. M. **A Behavioural Theory of the Firm**, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992

Marshall, J. **Women Managers: Travellers in a male world**, Chichester, Wiley, 1984

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Marshall, J. **Women Managers Moving On: Exploring career and life choices**, London, Routledge, 1995

Marx, K. **Das Kapital, English**, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1956

Marx, K. and Engels, F. **Collected Works**, London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1976

May, T. **Social Research Issues: Methods and process**, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1997

MccGwire, S. **Best Companies for Women: Britain's top employers**, London, Pandora, 1992

MacEwen Scott, A. **Gender Segregation and Social Change: Men and women in changing labour markets**, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994

Mies, M. **Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the international division of labour**, London, Zed, 1986

Mies, M. and Kumari, L. **Indian Women in Subsistence and Agricultural Labour**, Geneva, International Labour Office, 1986

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. **Qualitative Data Analysis: A sourcebook of new methods**, Beverley Hills, London, Sage, 1984

Milkman, R. **Gender at Work: The dynamics of job segregation by sex during World War II**, Chicago, University of Illinois, 1987

Mullins, L. J. **Management and Organisational Behaviour**, 5th edition, London, FT Pitman, 1999

Munn, P. Drever, E. **Using Questionnaires in Small-Scale Research: A teacher's guide**, Edinburgh, Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1990

Murdock, G. P. **Atlas of World Cultures**, London, Feffer & Simons, 1981

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Newman, J. **Shaping Organisational Cultures in Local Government**, London, Pitman, 1996
- Neville, M. **Promoting Women: Successful women in education**, 1988
- Nicolson, P. **Gender, Power and Organisation: A psychological perspective**, New York, Routledge, 1996
- Oakley, A. **Subject Women**, London, Fontana, 1981
- Oakley, A. **Experiments in Knowing: Gender and method in the Social Sciences**, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000
- O'Brien, V. **Success on Our Own Terms: Tales of extraordinary, ordinary business women**, Chichester, Wiley, 1998
- Oppenheim, A. N. **Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement**, London, Pinter, 1998
- Ortner, S. and Whitehead, H. (eds.) **Sexual Meanings: The cultural construction of gender and sexuality**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981
- Paton, R. and Clark, G. et al (eds.) **The New Management Reader**, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1996
- Penrose, E. T. **The Theory of the Growth of the Firm**, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1972
- Peters, T. **Thriving On Chaos: Handbook for a management revolution**, London, Pan, 1987
- Peters, T. and Waterman, R. H. **In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies**, New York, Harper and Row, 1982
- Pinchbeck, I. **Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750 - 1850**, London, Virago, 1981

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Planchard, K. and Zigarmi, P., Zigarmi, D. **Leadership and the One Minute Manager**, London, Fontana, 1987
- Pollard, S. **The Genesis of Modern Management: A study of the industrial revolution in Great Britain**, London, Edward Arnold, 1965
- Porter, L.W. and Lawler, E.E., Hackman, J. R. **Behaviour in Organisations**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1975
- Powell, G. N. **Women and Men in Management**, London, Sage, 1993
- Pringle, R. **Secretaries Talk: The power and paradox of organisation sexuality**, London, Verso, 1989
- Rasiel, E. M. **The McKinsey Way: Using the techniques of the world's top strategic consultants to help you and your business**, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1999
- Rees, T. **Women and the Labour Market**, London, Routledge, 1992
- Reskin, B. and Pedavic, I. **Women and Men at Work**, Thousand Oaks California, Pine Forge Press, 1994
- Roberts, C. **We Are Our Mothers' Daughters**, New York, Morrow, 1998
- Roberts, H. ed. **Doing Feminist Research**, London, Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1981
- Robson, C. **Real World Research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers**, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993
- Rosaldo, M. Z. and Lamphere, L. (eds.) **Woman, Culture and Society**, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1976
- Rosener, J. B. **America's Competitive Secret: Utilizing women as a management strategy**, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995
- Routh, G. **Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906 - 79**, London, Macmillan, 1980

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Rubery, J. and Smith, M., Fagan, C., Grimshaw, D. **Women and European Employment**, London, Routledge, 1998

Ryan, K. and Oestreich, D. K. **Driving Fear Out of the Workplace: Creating the high-trust, high-performance organization**, Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1998

Salaman, G. **Class and the Corporation**, London, Fontana, 1981

Sampson, A. **Company Man: The rise and fall of corporate life**, London, HarperCollins, 1995

Sargent, A. G. **The Androgynous Manager: Blending male and female management for today's organisation**, New York, Amacom, 1981

Schwartz, R. M. (ed.) **Women at Work**, Los Angeles, LA Institute of Public Relations, University of California, 1988

Seccombe, W. **The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism**, London, IMG Publications, 1978

Sekeran, U. and Leong, F. T. L. (eds.) **Womanpower: Managing in times of demographic turbulence**, 1992

Senior, B. **Organisational Change**, London, Pitman, 1997

Shakeshaft, C. **Women in Education Administration**, London, Sage, 1989

Shaw, J. and Perrons, D. (eds.) **Making Gender Work: Managing equal opportunities**, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1995

Shipman, M. D. **The Limitations of Social Research**, London, Longman, 1972

Slater, R. and Ascroft, P. **Quantitative Techniques in a Business Context**, London, Chapman & Hall, 1990

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Smith, M. B. **The Single Woman of Today: Her problems and adjustment**, London, Watts & Co, 1951
- Smith, C. R. and Still, L. V. **Women in International Assignments: The Australian experience**, Perth, Edith Cown University, 1996
- Snell, K. D. M. **Annals of the Labouring Poor: Social change and agrarian England 1660 - 1900**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985
- Seldon, N. C. **Women in British Trade Unions 1874 - 1976**, Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1978
- Spender, D. **For the Record: The making and meaning of feminist knowledge**, London, Women's Press, 1985
- Sponcer, F. **Behavioural Studies for Marketing and Business**, London, Hutchinson, 1989
- Stake, R. E. **The Art of Case Study Research**, Thousand Oaks London, Sage, 1995
- Stead, B. A. **Women in Management**, London, Prentice Hall, 1978
- Steel, M. and Thornton, Z. **Women Can Achieve Career Success**, Wellingborough, Grapevine, 1988
- Stevens, M. **How to be a better problem solver**, London, The Industrial Society, 1996
- Stewart, T. A. **Intellectual Capital: The new wealth of organisations**, London, Nicholas Brealey, 1997
- Stone, B. **Confronting Company Politics**, London, Macmillan Business, 1997
- Summerfield, P. **Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and patriarchy in conflict**, London, Routledge, 1984

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tannen, D. Talking from 9 to 5: How women's and men's conversational styles affect who gets heard, who gets credit and what gets done at work, London, Virago, 1995

Tashakkori, A. and Teddlie, C. Mixed Methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, London, Sage, 1998

Taylor, F. W. The Principles of Scientific Management, New York, Harper & Bros., 1911

Taylor, F. W. Scientific Management: Comprises Shop Management (1993), Principles of Scientific Management (1911), Taylor's testimony to the House of Representatives' Special Committee (1912), New York, Harper and Row, 1947

Trist, G. and Wiggin, W., Murray, H., Pollock, A. B. Organisational Choice: Capabilities of groups at the coal face under changing technologies, The loss re-discovery and transformation of a work tradition, London, Tavistock Publications, 1963

Vickers, J. and Yarrow, G. Privatisation and Liberalisation – The UK Experience, Chapter on Telecommunications: Liberalisation and the Privatisation of British Telecom, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986

Vinnicombe, S. Colwill, N. L. The Essence of Women in Management, Series Editor Adrian Buckley; London, Prentice Hall, 1995

Vroom, V. H. Social Learning Theory: Work and motivation, New York, Wiley, 1964

Wajcman, J. Managing Like a Man: Women and Men in Corporate Management, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998

Walby, S. Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and capitalist relations in employment, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986

Walby, S.(ed.) Gender Segregation at Work, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Walby, S. **Theorising Patriarchy**, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990
- Walby, S. **Gender Transformations**, London, Routledge, 1997
- Walton, C. C. **The Moral Manager**, New York, HarperBusiness, 1988
- Waring, M. **If Women Counted: A new feminist economics**, London, Macmillan, 1989
- Waring, S. P. **Taylorism Transformed: Scientific Management Theory since 1945**, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1991
- Warren, W. W. and Buffalohead, W. R. **History of the Ojibway People**, Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society, 1984
- Weber, M. **The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation; Part 1 of Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft**, Translated by A. R. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, London, William Hodge & Co., 1947
- West, J. (ed.) **Work, Women and the Labour Market**, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982
- White, K. **Why Good Girls Don't Get Ahead But Gutsy Girls Do: Nine secrets every career woman must know**, London, Arrow, 1995
- Wilkinson, F. (ed.) **The Dynamics of Labour Market Segmentation**, London, Academic Press, 1981
- Wilkinson, H. **No Turning Back: Generations and the genderquake**, London, Demos, 1994
- Wilkinson, H. and Muligan, G. **Freedom's Children: Work, relationships and politics for 18-34 year olds in Britain today**, London, Demos, 1995
- Wilkinson, H. and Howard, M. **Tomorrow's Women**, London, Demos, 1997
- Wilson, J. F. **British Business History 1720 - 1994**, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wise, N. B. and Wise, C. **A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at work in World War II**, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1994

Worrall, L. and Cooper, C. **The Quality of Working Life: Survey of managers changing experiences**, London, Institute of Management, 1997

Yin, R. K. **Case Study Research; Design and Methods**, Beverley Hills, California, Sage, 1984

Young, P. **Person to Person: The international impact of the telephone**, Cambridge, Granta, 1991

Zaretsky, E. **Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life**, London, Pluto Press, 1976

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2. GUIDES, REPORTS AND REVIEWS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler, N. J. Organisational Dynamics; 13:2 pp66 - 79, Women do not want international careers and other myths about international management, 1994

Adler, N. J. Journal of Management Development; 13, pp24 - 41, Competitive frontiers: managing across borders, 1993

Aker, J. Gender, Work and Organizations; 5:4, p197, The Future of Gender and Organizations: Connections and boundaries, 1998

Aylen, J. Lloyds Bank Annual Review; 1: p129, Privatization and Ownership, London, Pinter, 1988

BBC British Broadcasting Corporation: Annual Report 1998, BBC, 1998

BT 1001 Facts – Pocket guide to BT, BT, 1996

BT Annual Reports, 1987, 1995, 1999

BT BT Today, April 2000

BT Flexible Working: Implementation guide for managers, 1997

BT Organisational Guide to BT, 1999

Baack, J. and Carr-Ruffino, N., Pelletier, M. Women in Management Review; 8:2 Making it to the Top: Specific leadership skills - A comparison of male and female perceptions of skills needed by women and men managers, 1993

Beechey, V. Feminist Review; 15: pp23 - 45, What's so special about women's employment? A Review of some recent studies of women's paid work, London, Virago, 1983

Beesley, M. and Littlechild, S. Lloyds Bank Annual Review; p18, Privatization and Ownership, London, Pinter, 1988

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Braverman, H. Monthly Review Press; Labour and Monopoly Capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century, New York & London, 1974**
- Braverman, P. H. Monthly Labor Review; Labor and Monopoly Capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century, London & New York, 1979**
- Brenner, J. Monthly Review; 50:6 p9, On Gender and Class in U.S. Labor History, New York, November 1998**
- Bruegel, I. New Socialist: Will Women Lose Out Again, Toronto, New Socialist, July 1985**
- Buffalohead, P. Minnesota History; 48:236 Farmers, Warriors, Traders: A fresh look at Ojibway women, Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society, 1983**
- BusinessWeek, Europe's Wired-Collar Workers: Call centres are proliferating, creating jobs and helping companies compete (international edition), London, McGraw-Hill, 18 January, 1999**
- Cameron, K. S. and Quinn, R. E. Journal of Organisational Change Management; 13:3 Diagnosing and Changing Organisational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework, 2000**
- Cassell, C. and Walsh, S. Paper presented to British Academy of Management Conference, 14 - 16 September; Falling Back or Fitting In: Cultural barriers to women's progression in management, 1994**
- Catalyst Women in Corporate Leadership, New York, March 1996**
- Commission of the European Communities (CEC), White Paper (Delors) on Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century, Luxembourg, Office for the Official Publications of the European Community, 1993**
- Connections, Magazine for the union for telecom executives; Connect, Jan. 2000**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cooper, C. (ed.) **Practical Approaches to Women's career development: A report on the conference at St. Hugh's, Oxford, 16 – 17 September 1981**, Sheffield, Manpower Services Commission, 1982
- Corcoran-Nantes, Y. and Roberts, K. **Work Gender and Organization; 2:1 We've Got One of Those: The peripheral status of women in male dominated industries**, Cambridge, Blackwell, January 1995
- Cox, K. K. and Enis, B. M. eds., **Marketing Classics: A selection of influential articles**, Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1991
- Crompton, R. **Work Employment and Society; 3: Women in Banking: Continuity and change since the Second World War**, London, British Sociological Association, 1989
- CSCA, **Civil Service Clerical Association Compendium**, London, 1952
- Daimantopoulou, A. **European Union: Gender Equality, Draft report from the Social Affairs Commissioner**, Luxembourg, Office for the Official Publications for the European Union, January, 2000
- Dodds, I. **People Management; 1:8 p40, Differences can be strengths**, London, 1995
- Epstein Debate: **Harvard Business Review pp150 - 152: Ways Men and Women Lead**, January – February 1991
- Equal Opportunities Commission, **Institute of Manpower Studies Report No 234: Merit Pay Performance Appraisal and Attitudes to Women's Work**, Brighton, IMS, October 1992
- Equal Opportunities Commission, **Women and Men in Britain, Pay and Income: New Earnings Survey 1998**, Manchester, EOC, 1999
- Equal Opportunities Commission, **Gender Equality and the Careers Service, Issue 99:3, New EOC research shows good careers advice can help achieve sex equality at work; (by Rolfe, H)**, Manchester, EOC, 1999b

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Equal Opportunities Commission, Gender and Differential Achievement in Education and Training: A research review, ISBN 1 870358 80 5, Manchester, EOC, 1999c

Equal Opportunities Commission, Women and Men in Britain: The Labour Market, Manchester, EOC, April 2000

Equal Opportunities Commission, Valuing Women: Campaign for Equal Pay, Manchester, EOC, February 2001

European Womens Management Development (EWMD), Directory of members 1998, EWMD, 1998

Evetts, J. Women in Management Review; 13:8 Managing the technology but not the organization: women and careers in engineering, 1998

Experian, Female directors lead Britain into the 21st Century, Experian, January 2000

Fagenson, E. A. Journal of Business Ethics; 9: pp267 - 274, At the Heart of Women in Management Research: Theoretical and methodological approaches and the biases, 1990

Feminist Review (Editor), Waged Work – A Reader, London, Virago 1986

Financial Times, CEO of Yorkshire Bank promotes women into management, p27, London, 9 April 1997

Financial Times, Take Your Daughters To Work, London, 20 March 1998

Finlayson, L. R. and Nazroo, J. Y. Gender Inequalities in Nursing Careers, London, Policies Studies Institute, 1998

Florkowski, G. W. and Fogel, D. S. Perceived host ethnocentrism as a determinant of expatriate adjustment and organizational commitment; Paper presented at the Academy of Management Conference, Vancouver, 1995

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fortune, 138:7 The global glass ceiling and ten women who broke through, New York, 12 October 1998

Fortune, 140:4 Why can't a woman be more like a man? New York, 16 August 1999

Goleman, D. Harvard Business Review; What makes a leader? November - December 1998

Green, E. and Cassell, C. Gender, Work and Organization; 3:3 pp168 - 176, Women Managers, Gendered Cultural Processes and Organisational Change, 1996

Guardian Newspaper, Shelagh Diplock, Fawcett Society, interviewed by Poly Toynbee about Opportunity 2000, London, 2 December 1996

HMG: Cabinet Office, Women's incomes over the lifetime, London, Cabinet Office, 2000

HMG: Department for Education and Employment, Government Green Paper: Meeting the Childcare Challenge (setting out the National Childcare Strategy), May 1998

HMG: Department for Education and Employment, Government White Paper: Fairness at Work, May 1998

HMG: Department for Health, Making the Difference: Strengthening the nursing, midwifery and health visiting contribution to health and healthcare, July 1999

HMG: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey, Spring 1998

HMG: Womens Unit, Ministers for women pamphlet, July 1998

HMG: Womens Unit, Ministers for women: Delivering for Women – Progress so Far, November 1998

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Haas, L. L. and Hwang, P., Russell, G. (eds.) **Leadership & Organisational Development Journal**, 22:1, **Organisational Change and Gender Equity: International Perspectives on Mothers and Fathers at the Workplace**, 2001

Hakim, C. **Employment Gazette, Sexual Divisions in the Labour Force**, London, Department for Employment, November 1978

Hakim, C. **Contemporary Social Research Series; 13; Research Design: Strategies and choices in the design of social research**, London, Allen & Unwin, 1987

Halford, S. and Leonard, P. **Women in Management Review; 16:2 p2, Gender, Power and Organisations**, Basingstoke, Palgrave (formerly Macmillan Press), 2001

Hammersley, M. **Sociology; The Journal of the British Sociological Association; 26:2 pp187 – 206, On Feminist Methodology**, Solihull, 1992

Hansard Society for Parliamentary Reform; **Report on Women at the Top**, London, 1990

Henley Centre **British Household Panel Study; The Future is Female: Planning for Social Change 1996 – 1997**, London, Henley Centre, 1996

Higher Educational Statistical Agency (HESA), **Students in Higher Educational Institutions 1996/97**, 1997

Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA), **Students in Higher Educational Institutions 1998/99: Full time graduates by subject area**, 1999

Highlands and Islands Alliance, **Job-share challenge for better representation** (press release), 2 December 1998

Holton, V. **Women in Management Review; 10:3 pp16 - 20, Women on the boards of Britain's Top 2000 companies**, 1995

Holton, V. and Rabbetts, J. **Women on the Boards of Britain's Top 200 Companies**, Opportunity 2000/Ashridge Management College, 1997

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Horrell, S. and Humphries, J. Economic History Review XLVIII: Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male Breadwinner Family 1790 – 1865, London, Economic History Society, 1995

Humphries, J. Journal of Economic History XLVII, The Most Free From Objection: The Sexual Division of Labour and Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century England, London, Economic History Society, 1987

Hymounts, C. The Corporate Women: The glass ceiling, Wall Street Journal, 24 March 1986

Institution of Professional and Civil Servants (IPCS), Institution of Professional and Civil Servants Handbook, Leicester, Blackfriars Press, 1968

Institute of Directors, Annual Report: Women on the boards of British companies, London, 1998

Institute of Public Policy Research, Family-Friendly Employment Practices in the UK, IPPR, 1998

InternetWeek, Lead article, CMP Media, November 1997

Jacobs, S. Gender, Work and Organization; 6:1, Trends in Womens Career Patterns and in Gender Occupational Mobility, Oxford, Blackwell, January 1999

Johnson, C. Lloyds Bank Annual Review; Privatisation and Ownership: Volume 1, London, Pinter, 1988

Labour Market Trends, Women in the Labour Market: Results from the spring 1997 Labour Force Survey, March 1998

Lane, N. Women in Management Review; 13:5 pp184 - 191, Barriers to women's progression into nurse management in the National Health Service, 1998

Linehan, M. and Walsh, J. S. The Journal of Management Development; 18:6, pp521 - 530, Recruiting and Developing Female Managers for International Assignments, 1999

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Linehan, M and Scullion, H. Journal of Managerial Psychology; 16:3 pp215 -218, Challenges for Female International Managers: Evidence from Europe, 2001

McGuire, G. Work and Occupations; Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Networks: The factors affecting the status of employees' network members, Thousand Oaks, November 2000

McRea, H, The Independent Newspaper: New dot.com companies, London, 22 December 1999

Management Today, Up Front at Pearson, London, Haymarket Publishing, May 1998

Management Today, 'bad language', (pp50 – 56), London, Haymarket Publishing, May 1997

Management Today, In the Company of Women (p66) extracted from Women in Business Survey 1997, sponsored by Barclays Bank, London, Haymarket Publishing, June 1998

Management Today, Women in Opportunity 2000 Organisations, London, Haymarket Publishing, July 1998

Martin, J. and Roberts, C. The Women and Employment Survey: A lifetime perspective, London, HMSO, 1984

Metro Newspaper, Report on job advert for applications for trainee London Tube Drivers in March edition of Cosmopolitan, London, Associated Newspapers, 22 February, 2001

Middleton, C. Sociological Review; 29:1 pp105 - 154, Peasants, Patriarchy and the Feudal Mode of Production in England, London, 1981

Mincer, J. The Production of Human Capital and the Lifecycle of Earnings, Cambridge Mass., National Bureau of Economic Research, 1994

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mori Poll, **Britain's Top 500 Companies**, London, Mori and The Daycare Trust, 1998

Morrison, A. M. and Glinow, M. A. von, **American Psychologist: 45**, pp200 – 208, **Women and Minorities in Management**, 1990

Mullins, J. W. Cummings, L. L. **Journal of Organisational Change Management; 12:6** pp462 - 479, **Situational Strength: A framework for understanding the role of individuals in initiating proactive strategic change**, 1999

Munioz, E. **Senior Men Managers within BT: Profile and work experiences**, BT, April 1998

Munioz, E. **Senior Women Managers within BT: Profile and work experiences**, BT, April 1998

NHS, **Making a Difference**, London, National Health Service, 1999

New Ways to Work, Changing Places: A manager's guide to working from home, New Ways to Work, 1996

Opportunity 2000, Opportunity 2000 Newsletter, Winter 1998

Opportunity Now, Sticky Floors and Cement Ceilings, Opportunity Now, April 2002

O'Sullivan, J. and Sheridan, A. **Women in Management Review; 14:1**, **Ms representations: Women, management and popular culture**, 1999

O'Toole, J. **Journal of Organizational Change Management; 11:1** **Leading Change: The argument for values-based leadership**, 1998

Personnel Today, BT Women's Course Benefits Too Few, Haywards Heath, Reed Business Publishing, 17 September 1997

Phillips, A. and Taylor. B. **Feminist Review: Waged Work, A Reader**, London, Virago, 1986

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Princess Royal Trust for Carers, **Carers in Employment Report**, PRTC, Nov./Dec. 1995

Quinn, R. E. **Journal of Organisational Change Management; 12:1 Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within**, 1999

Quintas, P. Storey, J. and Bradley, K. **Management of Intellectual Capital for Innovation, Individuals and Organisations**, Economic and Social Research Council, 1999

Ragsdell, G. **Journal of Organisational Change Management; 13:2 pp104 - 120, Engineering a paradigm shift?: An holistic approach to organisational change management**, 2000

Ramazanoglu, C. **Sociology, The Journal of the British Sociological Association; 26:2 pp207 – 212, On Feminist Methodology: Male reason versus female empowerment**, Solihull, 1992

Richardson, C. **Women in Management Review; 11:4 pp13 - 19, Snakes and Ladders?: The differing career patterns of male and female accountants**, 1996

Romanienko, L. A. **Women in Management Review; 15:8, Structural Impediments to Managerial Mobility in Industrialised Nations**, 2000

Rubery, J. and Tarling, R. J. **Women in the Recession: Department of Applied Economics, Economic Reprint No. 68**, Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 1983

Scase, R. **Notes of presentation to BT Womens Network by Richard Scase on 25 May 1993 from the book by Scase, R. and Goffee**, reproduced by Suman Sharma, BT. Copies held by the author.

Schein, E.V. and Davidson, M. J. **Management Development Review; 6:3 Think Manager, Think Male**, 1993

Schwarz-Cowan, R. **Technology and Culture; 20: pp62, From Virginia Dare to Virginia Slims: Women and technology in American life**, January 1997

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Shapiro, D. L. and Kirkman, B. L. **Journal of Organisational Change Management; 12:1 pp51 - 66, Employees reaction to the change to work teams: The influence of "anticipatory" injustice, 1999**

Sharpe, P. **Economic History Review LXVIII; Continuity and Change: Women's History and Economic History in Britain, London, Economic History Society, 1995**

Snell, M. **Feminist Review: Waged work, Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination, London, Virago, 1986**

Sonnenfeld Debate: **Harvard Business Review, pp159 – 160, Ways Men and Women Lead, January – February 1991**

STE Review, Magazine for the Society of Telecom Executives, June 1996

Stone, B. **Women in Management Review; 14:3 Confronting Company Politics (1997), 1999**

Storey, J. **Sociology, The Journal of the British Sociological Association; 19:2 p193 – 211, The means of management control, Solihull, 1985**

Symons, G. L. **Women in Management Review; 7:1 The Glass Ceiling is Constructed Over the Gendered Office, 1992**

The Independent Newspaper, Industrial Tribunal: GLS vs. Ms Nwoke, London, 7 December 1996

The Independent Newspaper, Interview with Jane Root, Controller of BBC2, p9 London, 18 December 1999

Wellington, S. **Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects, Catalyst, March 1996**

Westwood, R. I. and Leung, S. M. **International Studies of Management and Organization; pp64 - 85, The female expatriate experience: Coping with gender and culture, 1994**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wheeler, K. G. Journal of Occupational Psychology; 56, pp79 – 81, 1983

White, B. and Cox. C. Women in Management Review 6:2 A Comparison of the Characteristics of Female Managers and Female Entrepreneurs, 1991

Woodd, M. Women in Management Review; 14:1 pp21 - 28, The move towards a different career pattern: Are women better prepared than men for a modern career, 1999

Yankee Group The Users Speak: Trends in Call Centres and Web-based Customer Care, 2000