Article

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Work-Family Balance or Greedy Organizations?

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This paper re-examines the concept of work-family balance by analyzing qualitative data from interviews conducted with Australian senior female staff and managers at a major metropolitan bank and a large, regional hospital. Extant research suggests that managers and staff in senior roles, who have greater autonomy and discretion than other employees, are better able to balance their work and family demands. This paper finds evidence for work-family conflict among participants, who perceive they have "no balance" and must make many personal sacrifices to meet the conflicting demands of work and family. Our findings are confronted with the greedy institutions framework which provides a suitable metaphor to understand the role of organizations in supporting the dual demands of work-family.

The question of work-family balance has increasingly come to the fore over the past two decades. Two key factors emerge to explain the urgency of finding a balance between the two domains. Foremost among these is the changing roles of women. Their movement from the private to the public domain and their increased presence in the world's workforces have challenged traditional notions of the locus of responsibility for childcare and for the care of members of families and communities (Calas and Smircich, 1996; Chhachhi and Pittin, 1996; Greer, 1970). As women—the traditional providers of care—spend more time outside the home, and are less available to provide time for caring, the question of who can or should contribute to the provision of care for children and other individuals in need

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of care, has increasingly been directed to governments and employers (De Bruin and Dupuis, 2004; De Cieri *et al.*, 2005).

The effects of trends in work-change emerge as another key factor highlighting the need to balance work and family. Since the 1980s, work has changed through the deregulation of labour markets (Beynon *et al.*, 2002), globalization, and increasing competitive pressures on business organizations to cut costs and find greater profit margins (Rapoport and Bailyn, 1998). Management practices and innovations have resulted in many employees working longer hours, and an increased trend towards work intensification (Allan, O'Donnell, and Peetz, 1999; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000).

Some literature suggests that the movement of women into the workforce, longer working hours and work intensification have resulted in less time for family, recreation and community (Pocock, 2003, 2005). In Australia and other advanced industrial economies, governments have advocated for the development of work-family balance initiatives (De Bruin and Dupuis, 2004). Employers have embraced the work-family balance concept, and there is some evidence suggesting that many organizations have introduced policies and practices to assist the balancing of work and family (De Cieri *et al.*, 2005). However, a number of academics question how much employers are doing to support the achievement of work-family balance (Burchell, Ladipo, and Wilkinson, 2002; De Bruin and Dupuis, 2004; Fleetwood, 2006; Greenblatt, 2002; Watson *et al.*, 2003).

Furthermore, some literature suggests that work-family balance may be achieved by senior staff and managers who have greater autonomy and discretion, and greater access to resources that support a balance between work and family (Whitehouse, Baird, and Hoskin, 2007). This area is under-researched. The aim of this paper is to critically re-examine the concept of work-family balance in light of data from senior staff and managers in an Australian context. A further aim is to investigate whether they are able to balance their work and family demands. In addressing this question we collected data from senior female staff and managers in a multi-national bank and a public hospital to understand their specific challenges and responses in the domains of work and family. We confront our findings with the theory of the greedy organization to help explain the role of organizations in the work-family balance equation. Our research is guided by the following key questions: how do these senior staff and managers meet the demands of work and family? What does the organization do to provide support for work and family balance for these employees? Further, do senior staff and managers believe they achieve a balance between work and family? Finally, is there any evidence to suggest that these organizations are greedy?

WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AND THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

In Australia, since the late 1970's the female participation rate in paid employment has continued to increase (ABS, 2006a). In 2004, women's participation in paid employment was 53 per cent. This growth is explained by an increase in full-time employment and especially in part-time employment (Rammohan and Whelan, 2007) (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Women's Employment in Australia 1979-2004

Year	1979	2004
Part-time (%)	14	24
Full-time (%)	26	29

Source ABS 2006 Year Book, catalogue no. 4102.0.

The table indicates that there has been greater growth in the proportion of women who were employed part-time.[1] The proportion of women in precarious forms of employment, such as "casual" employment[2] remained relatively stable at approximately 31 per cent (ABS, 2006b). Managers and administrators were less likely to be employed as casuals (ABS, 2006).

With the growth in female employment participation, particularly working mothers, childcare has emerged as a significant social and political issue in Australia, with implications for the health of communities, and financial costs borne by families (Rammohan and Whelan, 2007). Some international (Blau and Robins, 1998; Michalopoulos and Robins, 2002) and Australian (Doiron and Kalb, 2005) research has identified a negative relationship between childcare costs and female employment. According to ABS (2005), 46 per cent of children aged between zero and twelve years received some type of regular childcare. In most instances paid employment represented the major reason for the use of childcare by Australian parents (ABS, 2005).

There are a variety of childcare arrangements in Australia: before- and after- school care; long day-care (childcare centres); family day-care (government subsidized care delivered by paid individuals); informal care

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1. In general part-time work is defined as working less than 30 hours per week and includes pro-rated entitlements as per full-time employment.

2. This is the term used in Australia to denote an irregular and flexible form of employment with some limitations on hours worked and fewer entitlements including paid leave.

(delivered by relatives, friends and neighbours); paid, private childcare (nannies), and occasional care (government subsidized care delivered at childcare centres) (ABS, 2005). Almost 33 per cent of children used informal care (e.g., care by a grandparent), relative to 19 per cent of children that used formal care (e.g., before and after school care) (ABS, 2005). Despite the Australian Federal Government providing some financial assistance for the costs of childcare, many families continue to voice concern at the high costs of raising children[3] and the availability of childcare (Doiron and Kalb, 2005; ABS, 2005).

Australian workplaces have adopted a variety of leave arrangements which take into account the family demands of working parents. These include: paid maternity leave; paid parental leave (including fathers); unpaid parental leave; and carers' leave (short-term leave to care for relatives) (De Cieri *et al.*, 2005; Whitehouse *et al.*, 2007). Recent evidence suggests that most parents are accessing some form of unpaid maternity leave (Whitehouse *et al.*, 2007). However, there is evidence suggesting that once parents return to work after the birth of a child, they may not access leave arrangements for childcare (De Cieri *et al.*, 2005; Pocock, 2005; Probert, Ewer, and Whiting, 2000).

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, WORK INTENSIFICATION, AND GREEDY ORGANIZATIONS

The effects of trends in work-change emerge as another key factor highlighting the need to balance work and family. Since the 1980s, work has changed through the deregulation of labour markets (Beynon *et al.*, 2002), globalization, and increasing competitive pressures on business organizations to cut costs and find greater profit margins (Rapoport and Bailyn, 1998). Similar cost-cutting pressures forced changes to work in public-sector industries such as health and education (Burchell *et al.*, 2002; Luke, 2004). Business and public-sector organizations alike responded to external pressures with paradigm shifts evident in the development and use of management innovations, such as Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices (Bartram *et al.*, 2007; Guest, 1997; Schuler and Jackson, 1987). These integrate personnel functions with the strategic goals of the organization to increase flexibility, efficiency and productivity in jobs. Management innovations such as changes to work design, skills

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3. The median weekly cost (after subsidies) per child of formal child-care was Aus$31 (ABS, 2005). Since the 1960's, Australian Federal Governments have funded payments to assist families with the cost of raising children. Currently the Government provides Family Tax Benefits (Rammohan and Whelan, 2007).

development, technological and organizational change, and increased measurement and auditing practices, have resulted in many employees working longer hours, and an increased trend towards work intensification (Allan *et al.*, 1999; Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000).

Work intensification is defined as increased "work effort" (Green, 2001: 56). Work effort is linked to performance and may be intensified by increasing the skills of employees, or by changing job design (Godard and Delaney, 2000; Green, 2001). Work intensification is linked to longer working hours (Green, 2001). A key feature of work intensification is the reduction of "down time" and breaks from work. The negative effects of work intensification on employees include the decline of workers' health and well-being (Allan, 1998; Green, 2001; Willis, 2002), job stress (Green, 2001; Watson *et al.*, 2003), burnout (Guglielmi and Tatrow, 1998; Pocock *et al.*, 2001), low staff morale and work-family conflict (Burchell *et al.*, 2002; Pocock *et al.*, 2001; Probert *et al.*, 2000; Watson *et al.*, 2003).

While intensification manifests through changes such as increased work effort and extended hours, a determinant feature of intensification is its intimate link with the exploitation, alienation and subordination of labour (i.e., separating a worker from her control over her work) for the purpose of "extracting surplus value" (Larson and Nissen, 1987: 134).

Greedy Organizations

The concept of the greedy organization provides a useful metaphor to understand the management innovations that result in the extraction of surplus value from employees. This concept has been borrowed from greedy institutions theory, and has previously been extended in the literature to include other organizations (Franzway, 2001).

"Greedy institutions" (Coser, 1974) describe the characteristics of such institutions as the church, the armed forces and the family. Coser (1974) noted that certain institutions make "total claims on their members" and "seek exclusive and undivided loyalty" (p. 4). They make significant demands on members' time and rely heavily on compliance using mechanisms for "activating loyalty and commitment" (Coser, 1974).

They are exclusive clubs which "attempt to reduce the claims of competing role and status positions" on their members. This is achieved by applying pressure on individual members to "weaken their ties, or not form any ties, with other institutions" (1974: 6). They manipulate the social identity of their members whereby members find their identity "anchored in the symbolic universe" of the institution (1974: 7-8). By extension, organizations are deemed "greedy" when they make extraordinary demands on their members (Franzway, 2001). The increased use of managerial

innovations that have changed work, and have been associated with work degradation and intensification in the private and public sectors, provide some evidence that organizations attempt to make "total claims" on their employees' attitudes, behaviours and time (Peetz, 2006).

GENDER, WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Work-family balance refers to having enough time to fulfil activities in both work and family contexts (De Cieri *et al.*, 2005; Voydanoff, 2002). Work family conflict is a "form of inter-role conflict in which the demands of work and family roles are incompatible in some respect so that the participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other role" (Voydanoff, 2005: 827).

In considering the nexus between work and family, gender is a significant issue (Chapman, 2004). Feminist literature examines the issues relating to women's participation in the workforce (Calas and Smircich, 1996), beginning with the exclusion of women from the "market-place" and public life (Wollstonecraft, 1792); taking in the questions surrounding whether women could be satisfied exclusively in their roles of wives and mothers (de Beauvoir, 1989; Friedan, 1963; Greer, 1970) and identifying issues in equality, difference and stereotyping (Chodorow, 1978; Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983). Moreover, the specific "women-in-management" literature suggests that women's insertion in the workforce continues to be characterized by discrimination (Calas and Smircich, 1996). Recent studies on gender confirm that inequalities persist (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky, 2006). For example, there is evidence that the gender gap is closing in terms of women's participation in the labour market and education (Charles and Grusky, 2004). However, there are mixed findings reported on the narrowing of the gender wage gap, and the metaphor of the "glass ceiling" is widely used to describe the under-representation of women in senior managerial positions. Moreover, research indicates that the "rate of change in the sharing of household tasks within the family […] lags behind the dramatic rise in female labour force participation" (Blau *et al.*, 2006: 6). In other words, although women's participation in the workforce is widely accepted, women still continue to carry the major burden of family or "caring" responsibilities (Chapman, 2004; Whitehouse *et al.*, 2007). Thus, the issue of gender lies at the heart of work-family conflict.

The literature on strategies for work-family balance is largely based on two major theoretical approaches (Galinsky and Johnson, 1998; Greenhouse and Beutell, 1985; Voydanoff, 2005). The "scarcity hypothesis" (Goode, 1960) suggests that the individual has a fixed sum of energy to expend on

her various roles; therefore, the time and energy expended in one domain reduces the amount of energy and time that can be used in another domain. In contrast, the "role enhancement theory" (Marks, 1977) suggests that there are benefits to the individual that ensue from commitment to multiple roles and that resources from one domain can be used to fulfil the role demands in another domain.

Many strategies are identified for achieving work-family balance; for example Bardeol, Tharenou and Moss (1998) identified 100 types of work-family practices such as part-time work and leave entitlements. A major strategy for achieving work-family balance is flexibility. The concept of flexibility especially in terms of working time (flexitime) and work location (flexplace) are often regarded as effective ways to achieve positive spill-over and are crucial to achieving work-family balance (Hill *et al.*, 2001; Galinsky and Johnson, 1998; Thornthwaite, 2004). International evidence suggests that women workers want "control over start and finish times, and exemption from night and weekend shifts" (Thornthwaite, 2004: 176) in order for them to meet their family role demands. However, research regarding the impact of flexible work arrangements on work-family balance is mixed (Hill *et al.*, 2001; Galinsky and Johnson, 1998; Shinn *et al.*, 1989). For example, Galinsky and Johnson (1998) found that employees in general with flexitime had higher job satisfaction and showed more initiative relative to workers with no access to these policies. In contrast, Shinn *et al.* (1989) reported that the perception of flexibility in working time was weakly related to well-being of working parents.

Tausig and Fenwick (2001) provide a more critical analysis of flexible working arrangements and their impact on work-family balance. These authors suggest that flexible work arrangements may enable work-family balance when the worker has control over her working hours. Part-time employment, flexible schedule options and perceived control over schedule were not significantly associated with work-family balance. Moreover, when differences in "hours worked" between full-time and part-time employees were controlled for, part-time employees reported greater work-family conflict (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001). This result raises questions about a widely held belief that part-time work is a strategy for scaling back working time to create more family and personal time as part-time work may carry financial and career costs. Importantly, Tausig and Fenwick (2001) reported that a professional occupation was negatively associated with work-life balance.

Research findings concerning the ability of professionals and managers to balance work and family are also mixed. There is some evidence to suggest that highly educated women in well-paid jobs are "best placed to access supportive policies" (Whitehouse, Baird, and Hoskin, 2007). Some

managers and professionals may be able to minimize work-life conflict by purchasing support such as cleaners and nannies to enable work-life balance (Graves, Ohlott and Ruderman, 2007). Moreover, professionals and managers may have more access to greater flexibility relative to other workers enabling them to better cope with the heavy work and family demands (Eaton, 2003; Rau and Hyland, 2002). Skills developed by female managers in their family role may be useful in their role as managers (Ruderman *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, some research suggests there is no association between family role commitment and work-to-family interference. Parent-role commitment had a positive association with career satisfaction (Graves, Ohlott and Ruderman, 2007).

In contrast, some scholars have suggested that managers and professionals have difficulty in balancing work and family (Drew and Murtagh, 2005; Poelmans *et al.*, 2003; Wajcman, 1999). According to Poelmans *et al.* (2003: 276) managers may play a pivotal but contradictory role, "as both victims of work-family conflict, primary sources of resistance or support for these policies and practices, and agents in their implementation." Senior management culture largely suits men (Drew and Murtagh, 2005). Wajcman (1999) found that senior female managers were reluctant to take up work-life balance options because of concerns that they may be viewed as less suitable for managerial positions. Drew and Murtagh (2005) found that senior management were often frustrated with working long hours. Senior managers felt unable to control their time and to work "normal hours" or take parental leave (Drew and Murtagh (2005: 277). In summary, work-family balance may be an individual perception rather than being dependent on job-role or status.

Employees who perceive that they have organizational support for balancing work and family report significantly improved outcomes, including: higher levels of organizational commitment (Scandura and Lankau, 1997); increased productivity (Cappelli, 2000); reduced burnout (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985); reduced intentions to leave (Simon, Kummerling, and Hasselhorn, 2004) and higher job satisfaction.

The growth in normative work-family balance literature has been met with criticism. De Bruin and Dupuis (2004: 21) draw attention to the simplistic and "unsatisfactory nature of the balance metaphor" on the basis of its limited applicability as many workers are unable to access conditions that might enable balance, and many workplaces are too small to offer these conditions. The literature examined clearly suggests that the concept of work life balance is contested. Our research aims to re-examine work and family balance for senior female staff and managers in a multi-national bank and a public hospital.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected between 2003 and 2007, and consists of semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were designed to elicit general information about participant's work and family roles, role demands, and forms of support. We sought specific information about the availability and use of workplace resources to support family role demands and the availability and use of personal/family resources to support work role demands. Participants were self-selected.

Our approach to "making data" is broadly interpretivist (Miles and Huberman, 1994). We were conscious of developing questions that were sufficiently *focussed* while allowing respondents sufficient *scope* to present their perspectives without being "led" to provide a specific answer (Kvale, 1996; Morse and Richards, 2002). Questions included: "What is your work role? What are your family responsibilities? How do you manage both roles? What resources does your workplace offer to help you to manage your family roles? What non-work, personal or family resources do you use to help you to manage your work roles?"

The duration of interviews varied from between thirty minutes to one hour. One set of interviews represents views and experiences of a group of five female senior staff and managers from the human resource management (HRM) department of a large multi-national bank operating in Victoria, Australia. Among these employees, one worked on a full-time basis and four worked part-time.[4] They performed various roles, including supervising middle-managers and providing internal consulting services. All had family responsibilities relating to the care of children of various ages (e.g., aged between 11 months to 11 years) (see Table 2).

The other set of interviews represents views and experiences of a group of nine senior nursing and administrative staff holding managerial responsibilities across various functional areas at a regional hospital in Victoria, Australia. Among these, five worked full-time and four part-time. Their roles include Nurse Unit Manager (NUM); Project Manager; HR Director; Manager of Midwifery; Payroll Manager; Theatre-Unit Manager; Manager of Special Projects. All had family responsibilities relating to the care of children of various ages (e.g., aged between 2 to 24 years) (see Table 2). For the purpose of this paper we have given each participant a fictional name.

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4. Existing literature suggests that this sample is somewhat atypical in terms of time-fraction worked.

TABLE 2
Summary of Work-Family Characteristics

Participant name (B=Bank), (H=Hospital)	Work role	Full-time (ft) Part-time (pt)	Relationship status	No. of children	Ages of children	Childcare arrangements (formal)	Child-care arrangements (informal)
Alice (B)	HR	ft	single	2	8, 10	school, nanny	grandparents, father
Brenda (B)	HR strategy	pt (4 days)	married	2	5, 5	school, nanny	father, friends, grandma
Christine (B)	HR strategy	pt (4 days)	married	2	3, 5	school, crèche, nanny	grandparents
Debbie (B)	recruitment	pt (3 days)	married	2	7, 11	school, baby sitter	none
Elizabeth (B)	IT	pt (2 days)	married	1	1	crèche	none
Ginny (H)	NUM	ft	married	4	2; 10; 13; 16	school, after-school care, crèche	grandparents, friends
Jenny (H)	projects	ft	married	2	11; 13	school	none
Susie (H)	HR	pt (3.5 days)	single	2	4; 7	school, after-school care, crèche	father, friends, grandparents
Ali (H)	midwifery	pt (4 days)	married	2	7; 10	school	father, grandparents
Genevieve (H)	NUM	pt (4 days)	single	3	10; 12; 17	school	friends, grandparents
Erica (H)	NUM	pt	married	3	8; 13; 16	school, after-school care	friends
Elaine (H)	theatre unit	ft	married	2	19; 21	none	none
Raeline (H)	payroll	ft	married	2	23; 24	none	none
Roxanne (H)	special projects	ft	married	3	7; 16; 18	school, after-school care, paid carer	none

The use of a qualitative methodology was well suited to this study since meaning was sought in the lived *experience* of individuals (Morse and Richards, 2002). Transcriptions of recorded interviews were examined to make and record reflections, to identify key emerging themes, and to seek patterns and commonalities. Emerging themes were coded by a process of condensing, categorizing and interpreting data (Kvale, 1996). Data were initially analyzed to identify emerging categories. Categories were then compared to enable the determination of any central categories, to identify links between categories, and to validate the categories. Researchers sought to identify categories which were confirmed by other interviews, in order to highlight any individual and shared experiences. Our findings are thus reported in the categories that were identified.

FINDINGS

In general, the discourse of senior staff and managers highlighted differences in the nature of work, and the goals and objectives of the two organizations. The major objective at the hospital, as a public organization, is to deliver health care services to the local community in a financially prudent manner. In contrast the major objective of the bank, as a private business organization, is profit maximization.

Overall, participants in this study rejected the notion of work-family balance; a number of respondents found suggestion of work-family balance ludicrous and they actually laughed. Moreover, the data suggest that in order to support both their roles as senior managers and parents, these women required substantial support from partners, family and friends, as well as paid agencies such as childcare centres and nannies.

Strategies for Completing Work-Family Roles

Staff at the bank used personal time-organization to meet their work demands and to minimize the impact on their family roles. Strategies included doing advance preparation, keeping a diary and taking work home. Participants used the following terms throughout the interviews to describe their time-organization practices: "Being really organized; setting boundaries; significant preparation; plan in advance; comprehensive diary; big coordination piece."

At the hospital, despite being well-organized, the nature of patient-care often involves responding to critical incidents and emergencies. Therefore, these women reported "staying back" in order to complete their duties. As one manager stated "you can't take this work home; you have to stay back until it's done" (Ginny). The HR Director, however, reported taking work home to finish it.

Paid Support, Unpaid Family/Social Support and Complex Childcare Arrangements

At the bank and the hospital, female managers reported using some combination of paid help to enable them to meet their work and family roles. This included paid childcare (crèche/school), paid nannies or baby-sitters, paid house-cleaners and gardeners. In addition to paid help, all the women used any available combinations of partner/spouse, parents, in-laws, friends and supportive supervisors and work-colleagues to support their work and family demands:

> I have a cleaner to help me… One of the baby-sitters cooks a meal. I have two baby-sitters and I predominately use one, but I have a back-up one and also my parents pick up the children (Debbie: Bank).

> [My] two children are 7 and 4 … they have lots of childcare arrangements. Basically, Jimmy has after school care three days a week, but the issue for me is getting him to after-school care because they do not pick [children] up, so I have to have a kind of informal arrangement around trying to do that. And sometimes that can be me, when all else fails; and then on Wednesday his dad picks him up and I have Friday's off so I can pick him up. And then, the kinder [kindergarten] child, has two days of changing between child-care and kinder and so, again, that's all informal arrangements; we have nothing in place, so pretty much it's his dad, but it's me when he can't do it (Susie: Hospital).

While the use of distinct forms of support may be unremarkable, a salient feature of the data is the emerging complexity in the practical details. There is evidence of multiple combinations of support used and evidence of the physical and emotional drain represented in planning, organizing and "running around" to drop off, and pick up children from their various locations of care, multiple carers and numerous activities. For some women, this was reported with a sense of normalcy, while others communicated their anxiety around the level of complexity, and feeling emotionally torn by a sense of guilt about not being able to do more with the family:

> I've always [used] some level of bought-in support. It's a terrible thing to say that you outsource your children, but I do (Brenda: Bank).

> …you feel guilty because you can't actually provide a little bit more, that you feel you should, and because you compensate for all the other times that you are not able to do other stuff [with the family] (Ali: Hospital).

Working Long Hours

At both sites, the women reported working long hours in order to complete work tasks:

> I am often working from home in the evening when the baby is asleep and I am also taking calls during the day (on days off). I work 2 days and with the amount of work, I am thinking of going 3 days (Elizabeth: Bank).

I am always late…because I have to make sure it's right...I feel committed to work a lot because when there is theatre on, we don't have a lot of staff for everybody, so I stay there until it's done. And I do take a lot home to do after hours (Elaine: Hospital).

Respondents identified the following issues with working long hours: "work overload," i.e., instances when the job was bigger than the hours paid to do it; unpaid overtime resulting from meeting the demands of work overload; and "spill-over," mainly from work to family, but sometimes also from family to work:

It is very hard to always leave things at work and not take some of the stuff home. So when you are home, you are not just leaving an eight-hour shift and going home and being mum; you are…still spending a lot of your mind-time…actually doing other [work] stuff at home…My kids are aware…that I do a lot of stuff on the computer…outside work hours and that I am on-call…I was on call for midwifery last night; that was an issue because my husband was not going to be home…I have actually had to bring kids with me to work sometimes. I think that it would be really nice to just go to work and work for eight hours and then go home and not take any of this stuff home with you but I do not remember a time in the last five years that I haven't (Ginny: Hospital).

Personal Sacrifice

All the responses suggest there is a level of personal sacrifice required to meet work and family commitments. These include carrying personal stress (Brenda: Bank; Susie: Hospital); getting home late and having to start cooking (all women); relocating close to work and selling the family home (Christine: Bank); loss of personal time: "no lunch breaks, no time for fitness, reading or personal learning" (Christine, Elizabeth and Alice: Bank; Ali, Roxanne and Ginny: Hospital); loss of social time: "I cannot go out a lot now" (Alice: Bank); exhaustion: "I feel exhausted and I work all weekend…it is so hard and relentless" (Alice: Bank; Roxanne: Hospital); interference of work in family time: "When I spend time with my son, I can't switch off from work…there is conflict all the time" (Elizabeth: Bank; Ginny, Jenny, Genevieve: Hospital)

Location

Senior staff and managers at the bank suggested that living close to work and schools or childcare supported work and family demands. Christine and her partner were going to sell their family home in order to be located closer to work, schools and family: "So that would make life more easy with less travel time…." Alice also made a point of the benefits of living close to both work and schools: "Since I work close to my children's schools I can attend the various activities."

In contrast, the issue of location was not mentioned by any of the women interviewed at the Hospital. A possible explanation for this lies in Australian geographic conditions and distance, especially for rural residents who are accustomed to travelling long distances for business, health and recreation.

Organizational Support

Both organizations provided work arrangements that could be used to support work and family demands. Flexible work arrangements and leave entitlements, enshrined in Australian legislation, were available to all staff at both locations. At the Bank, Brenda, Christine, Debbie and Elizabeth spoke of using flexible work arrangements to meet demands of both work and family. Being able to work part-time was one of these practices. The Bank also provided support in the form of information about parental leave (Brenda). Elizabeth stated that she appreciated flexibility in the form of "communication and having a lap-top and remote access. The other thing is that the Bank is very organized about giving you information about how to manage your pay and being able to work part-time on a temporary contract."

At the Hospital, flexible hours, part-time work and other flexibility options were identified as work arrangements that enabled them to meet certain family demands. However, the issue of flexibility was identified as being complex and having both benefits and costs. They spoke about "fitting more in" because flexible arrangements enabled this. Since flexible hours enabled different start and finish times, the women tried to "fit in" additional activities with their children and partners. Moreover, work demands still had to be met, and this was done by working additional hours or taking work home. They reported that this flexibility resulted in them being more "exhausted" and that flexibility was an arrangement that increased the role demands of both domains. Simultaneously, women at the Hospital perceived they had a high level of organizational support given the nature of hospital work, i.e. an essential service operating 24 hours. This sense of a supportive organization came from their ability to negotiate their working conditions, as well as perceptions of high levels of collegial support.

Lack of Organizational Support

There was a perceived lack of organizational support at the Bank relative to the Hospital. Women from the Bank reported a culture of autonomy without support. Information about working arrangements was provided on the staff intranet and they had to use their own initiative to work out their best available options. Two of the managers stated that the Bank did not provide sufficient support in the form of flexibility. Debbie stated that she was precluded from having remote access at home. Alice

suggested that the organization had a focus on time spent at work rather than on outcomes, and that there was pressure to be in the office:

> This department has a very low tolerance of work-life balance. There is a lot of pressure for you to be in the office. The bank should be more grown-up: as long as the work gets done, other things are not important (Alice).

> I don't have access at home to the Internet. It is critical to have internet access from home…. So that for example if I have a sick child I could work from home (Debbie).

Hospital staff did not speak about lack of organizational support. Although they acknowledged workplace difficulties, they suggested that conditions were the best they could be.

Employee Values

Bank participants indicated they had no expectations of support from the organization. They seemed to have internalized a sense of personal responsibility for meeting work and family demands which they perceived as individual, rather than organizational. They claimed that the organization did not "owe" them anything and could do no more for them. Hospital participants indicated that they too had internalized a sense of personal responsibility in meeting the goals and values of the organization: they felt personally compelled to overwork in order to fulfil the objectives of the hospital of providing the best possible care to the community. This seemed to have an effect on their personal stress and exhaustion, and on their relationships:

> I find I am spending more hours here. I don't take the work home, I just stay here longer hours (Raeline: Hospital).

> I get home and he (husband) wants to chat and I don't. He can't understand why I just look at him and say: don't speak to me for a couple of hours. You walk in the door and he is at you; the kids are at you; it's like: oh my god; it's very difficult. I've just spent 8 hours talking (Ginny: Hospital).

In both instances, the internalization of organizational values had a personal cost in terms of time-pressures, stress, and exhaustion and caused conflict in relationships. None of the participants challenged organizational values, or their levels of organizational commitment.

Work Satisfaction

Overall, staff at the Hospital appeared to be happier than at the Bank. Hospital staff spoke positively about their work, their colleagues and the Hospital management. At the Bank, responses suggested varying levels of work satisfaction. Brenda and Christine suggested they required, and even thrived on the stimulus of work, while Debbie, Alice and Elizabeth pointed

to some levels of dissatisfaction relating to workplace culture, support and arrangements.

DISCUSSION

The data points to some differences within the locations of our two research sites. The discourse of the hospital's senior staff and managers highlighted their sense of duty to their patients by performing their roles fully and meeting the health care needs of the community as required by an essential service. While there was evidence of work overload, the respondents conveyed a sense of being satisfied at work and feeling supported by their colleagues, senior managers and the organization. In contrast, the discourse of the respondents from the bank conveyed a sense of work overload, pressure to meet performance targets, some job dissatisfaction, accompanied by a low expectation of support from the organization. These differences may be partly explained in the ethos and nature of work at the two locations and the different over-arching goals and objectives of the two organizations.

This paper posed various key questions on work and family balance: how do these senior staff and managers meet the demands of work and family? What do the organizations do to provide support for work-family balance for these employees? Further, do these employees believe they achieve a balance between work and family? Finally, is there any evidence to suggest that these are greedy organizations?

The data suggests that these senior female staff and managers expended various types of personal resources in managing the role-demands of work and family. At both organizations, they relied on every combination of social support, such as partners, friends, neighbours and family to assist with meeting family-role demands especially childcare. Respondents at both locations also spoke at length about various sacrifices and limitations required to meet work and family role demands, such as giving up personal leisure pursuits and having limited social time. Staff at the bank were using more financial resources than staff at the hospital to buy support services, such as nannies, cooks, and cleaners. This may reflect salary differences between bank and hospital staff.

Respondents suggested that the bank and the hospital provided support to staff in the form of various flexible work arrangements. In general, the bank offered these senior staff and managers some ability to work from home periodically; they offered statutory (paid and unpaid) parental-leave entitlements at the birth of a child; some flexible start and finish times; sick-leave entitlements which could be used to meet family role demands, and "on-line" information. At the hospital, employees could take the statutory (paid and unpaid) parental-leave entitlements at the birth of a child; they had

access to a wider range of flexible work arrangements such as the ability to work from home, flexible start and finish times, "48/52" arrangements[5], and limited paid over-time.

Flexible working arrangements suggest a focus on individual choice regarding the use of time. We question why there is such great emphasis on the provision of various types of flexible working arrangements as the major mechanism for organizational support for work-family balance. A possible explanation may lie in social perceptions underpinned by specific cultural values. For example, there may be a generalized perception that the wellbeing and care of children and other members of the community is largely an individual responsibility with individual benefits.

A major question arising from our findings relates to whether the provision of flexible work arrangements leads to work-family balance. Despite the many individual and organizational resources used to support the role demands of both domains, in general, respondents from both organizations suggested that they had "no balance" and there was some evidence of work-family conflict. At best, these women reported that they were juggling the tensions of competing demands. Moreover, what is striking are the personal costs incurred by trying to "do it all." Most notably there were emotional costs in feeling guilt about not being able to do more in both roles. Any additional resources offered by their work roles did not seem to alleviate the conflict between the two domains. Most of these women stated that flexibility had "disadvantages." While flexibility enabled them to meet their work demands, it did so at the great personal costs of working late, working excessive hours, and trying to fit more in, resulting in their personal exhaustion. This indicates that flexibility is a complex issue. Of itself, it does not resolve work-family conflict. This needs to be acknowledged by both employers and employees who should engage in further dialogue on flexibility to address its shortcomings.

In light of our findings, to what extent does the greedy organization metaphor relate to the bank and the hospital? Our findings relating to over-work and to the many personal resources utilized by employees to meet their work and family demands, lend some support to the claim that organizations make extensive demands on their employees. In our discussion of greedy institutions we isolated three key criteria for greedy organizations. The first was that they seek exclusive and undivided loyalty from members, by making significant demands on member's time and requiring their loyalty and commitment. The data supports this criterion. Both the bank and the hospital may be seen as "greedy" in so far as they demanded various significant commitments of time and loyalty from employees which impacted on their families.

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5. Effectively the employees work 48 weeks, they receive eight weeks leave and 48 weeks pay spread over 52 weeks.

The second criterion for greedy organizations is that they attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions by pressuring members to weaken their ties with other institutions and persons. While the bank and the hospital did not actively discourage their employees from adopting other roles (such as parenting), it may be argued that the stringent demands of the work roles of senior staff and managers left them carrying the burden, and feeling the effects, of work and family conflict.

The third criterion for greedy organizations is that they try to influence the identity of their members, so that members find it "anchored in the symbolic universe of the institution" (Coser, 1974: 7-8). The data suggests that these women deeply identified with both their roles as workers and mothers. However, both sets of employees showed evidence in their discourse of having internalized the values of the organization, sometimes to their personal detriment and that of their family relationships. Thus, there is some support for this criterion.

While the greedy organization concept may be useful for understanding organizational motives underlying employment practices, it does not explain why employees cooperate with these, or their commitment towards their place of work. Employee commitment is explained by various theories including professionalism (Larson, 1980; Wallace, 1995); psychological theories such as reciprocity (Goulder, 1960) and resilience (Goleman, 1995) and theories based on religiosity such as the protestant work ethic (Cokley *et al.*, 2007).

Overall, this research finds more support for work-family conflict (rather than balance). The greedy organizations metaphor is useful to describe the excessive demands of the workplace, which have an impact on the ability for employees to meet the demands of family, and suggests that employers should work in partnership with employees to address the complexities of balancing work and family demands.

Our research has some limitations: the data set is limited by its size and scope, and thus the findings cannot be generalized to other employees and organizations. Participants were self-selected and their views may not represent those of other senior staff and managers at the bank and hospital. Further research in the area of corporate social responsibility and prevailing social values may shed light on the failure of organizations to engage more deeply with the social complexities arising from employment.

CONCLUSION

Our data demonstrates that organizations have an awareness of the challenge implied in combining the roles of work and family. Both

organizations and their employees, acknowledged the tensions between the role demands of the work and family domains. The key findings of this paper suggest that senior staff and managers had no work-family balance, and there was evidence of work-family conflict, which was not alleviated by their resources. Flexible working arrangements did not result in balance and created other challenges. Employees managed both domains at great personal cost. There was evidence that workplaces may make excessive demands on employees. Finally, the greedy organizations concept captures the excessive workplace demands on employees, including those who have greater autonomy and access to resources.

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RÉSUMÉ

L'équilibre travail-famille ou des organisations voraces ?

Deux variables clef ressortent au moment où il devient urgent d'arriver à un équilibre entre le domaine du travail et celui de la famille. Au premier rang de ces variables se situe les rôles changeants exercés par les femmes. Leur passage du domaine privé au domaine public a remis en cause les notions traditionnelles du lieu des responsabilités à l'endroit de l'éducation

des enfants et de l'attention à accorder aux membres de la famille et de la communauté (Chhachhi et Pittin, 1996).

Depuis les années 1980, la nature du travail s'est modifiée avec la déréglementation des marchés du travail (Beynon *et al.*, 2002), la mondialisation et l'accroissement des pressions sur les entreprises d'affaires vers des coûts d'opérations plus bas et une bonification des marges de profits (Rapport et Bailey, 1998). Ces phénomènes se sont traduits par l'augmentation des heures de travail chez les salariés et par une tendance accrue vers l'intensification du travail (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000)

L'entrée massive des femmes sur le marché du travail, des heures de travail plus longues et une intensification du travail ont contribué à réduire le temps consacré à la famille, au loisir et à la communauté (Pocock, 2003, 2005). Les publications sur le sujet s'interrogent sur l'effort que les employeurs s'apprêtent à faire en vue de contribuer à l'équilibre travail-famille (De Bruin et Dupuis, 2004; Greenblatt, 2002).

L'équilibre travail-famille peut être atteint par l'effectif senior et par les dirigeants qui possèdent plus d'autonomie, de discrétion et un accès plus large aux ressources qui facilitent un équilibre travail-famille (Whitehouse, Baird et Hoskin, 2007). Ce point a peu fait l'objet de recherche et le but de cet essai consiste à réévaluer d'une manière critique la notion d'équilibre travail-famille à la lumière de données recueillies auprès de 14 personnes de l'effectif senior et de dirigeants dans le contexte australien. Nous avons obtenu nos données d'une banque multinationale et d'un hôpital du secteur public en vue de mieux saisir les défis spécifiques et les réactions dans les domaines de la famille et du travail. Nous confrontons nos conclusions avec la théorie des organisations cupides afin de comprendre le rôle des entreprises dans l'établissement de l'équation travail-famille. Les questions suivantes ont fait l'objet de notre recherche : comment des personnes de l'effectif senior et des managers rencontrent-ils les exigences du travail et de la famille ? Que font les entreprises en vue de fournir un support à l'équilibre travail-famille dans le cas de ces employés ? De plus, est-ce que ces personnes croient qu'elles réalisent un équilibre entre le travail et la famille ? Enfin, existe-t-il un minimum de preuve à l'effet que ces entreprises sont voraces ?

Nous avons observé une surcharge de travail dans les deux entreprises; cependant, il existe certaines différences entre elles. À l'hôpital, les répondants nous faisaient part d'un sentiment de satisfaction, également appuyé par leurs collègues de travail et leur entreprise. Au contraire, à la banque, les répondants sentaient une pression continue pour rencontrer les objectifs de rendement, démontraient une certaine insatisfaction au travail et des attentes faibles à l'endroit d'un appui de la part de leur entreprise. Ces différences peuvent être attribuées à la présence d'une éthique et d'objectifs

différents, de la nature différente du travail à accomplir au passage d'une institution à l'autre.

Les employés seniors de sexe féminin et les dirigeants consacraient des ressources de types variés en cherchant à rencontrer les exigences de rôle au sein de la famille et au travail. Dans les deux organisations, ils pouvaient compter sur chaque combinaison de support social, tels que les partenaires, les amis, les voisins et la famille, à titre d'aide leur permettant de répondre aux exigences des rôles au sein de la famille, plus précisément, ceux reliés au soin des enfants. Ces personnes nous ont fait part en long et en large des divers sacrifices et contraintes présents au moment de rencontrer les exigences de rôle dans la famille et au travail (par exemple, le temps social et de loisir personnel plutôt limités). Le personnel de la banque utilisait plus de ressources financières que le personnel de l'hôpital pour se procurer des services d'aide, ceci reflétant possiblement des différences de rémunération entre les deux institutions.

La banque et l'hôpital offraient aux employés un appui sous forme de divers aménagements flexibles du travail. De façon générale, les deux institutions offraient au personnel senior et aux dirigeants des possibilités d'exécuter du travail à la maison de façon périodique, que ce soit des congés parentaux (payés ou non payés), des jours fériés à la naissance d'un enfant, des horaires flexibles de travail, des droits à l'absence maladie qui pouvaient être exercés au moment de répondre à des exigences de la famille et de l'information en ligne. En plus, l'hôpital ouvrait l'accès à un éventail plus large d'options de flexibilité, telles que l'aménagement 48/52.

Des aménagements flexibles du travail mettent en évidence le choix d'une personne dans l'emploi de son temps. Nous questionnons l'emphase que l'on met sur différents types d'aménagements flexibles du travail comme mécanismes importants d'un appui organisationnel à l'endroit de l'équilibre travail-famille. Une des explications plausibles réside dans les perceptions sociales étayées par des valeurs de culture. Par exemple, il peut y avoir une perception généralisée à l'effet que le bien-être et le soin des enfants, et d'autres personnes dans une famille, soient une responsabilité individuelle procurant des avantages en ce sens.

Une question importante qui découle de nos recherches consistait à se demander si l'offre d'aménagements flexibles du travail conduisait effectivement à l'équilibre travail-famille? En règle générale, les répondants dans les deux institutions laissaient entendre qu'il n'existe pas d'équilibre et ils rapportaient qu'ils étaient en train de jongler avec des exigences concurrentielles. Le point le plus frappant résidait dans les coûts impliqués par le fait de vouloir tout faire. Toute ressource supplémentaire offerte par leurs rôles au travail ne semblait pas apaiser le conflit entre les deux secteurs. Comment la métaphore de l'organisation vorace est-elle reliée à

ces institutions? Nous avons signalé trois indices clef pour reconnaître ce type d'organisation : la recherche d'une loyauté exclusive et entière chez les membres; la tentative de réduire les demandes de rôles concurrentiels et de positions; enfin, le désir d'ancrer les identités des personnes dans l'univers culturel de l'organisation. Les données recueillies apportent un appui à ces critères. Les deux institutions pouvaient être qualifiées de voraces en autant qu'elles faisaient appel à un engagement en termes de temps et de loyauté de la part des employés, alors que cela avait un impact sur leur famille. Les employés portaient alors le fardeau du conflit travail-famille tout en internalisant les valeurs de l'organisation à leur détriment personnel et celui de leurs proches.

La métaphore de l'organisation vorace s'avère utile lorsqu'on veut décrire les exigences excessives des lieux de travail, qui ont une influence sur l'habileté des employés à satisfaire aux demandes de leur famille. La flexibilité comportait des inconvénients : elle permettait de satisfaire à des exigences de travail à des coûts personnels élevés : celui de travailler tard, d'accomplir des heures excessives, celui de bien s'intégrer au milieu organisationnel, le tout résultant en un épuisement personnel. Par elle-même, la flexibilité n'apportait pas de solution au conflit travail-famille. Ceci laisse entendre que les employeurs devraient travailler en partenariat avec les salariés pour faire face à la complexité d'équilibrer les exigences du travail et de la famille.