SENIOR CAREERS IN RETAILING: AN EXPLORATION OF MALE AND FEMALE EXECUTIVES' CAREER FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS.

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Structured Abstract

Purpose

Retailing as a sector employs many women and serves a female dominated customer base. It also employs proportionately more women in management positions than in other occupational sectors. However, at senior levels, the proportion of women to men diminishes. This article examines the perceived facilitators and problems of senior retail managers' career development in order to see if it offers any insights for others to achieve senior managerial positions.

Design/methodology/approach

The main research instrument was a quantitative questionnaire with 124 UK senior retail managers.

Findings

The findings revealed that apparently more similarities than differences were reported by the men and women senior retail managers. These findings need to be treated with some caution however given that retailing operates in a strong masculine culture. Therefore to assume that men and women encounter similar facilitators and problems ignores that they are being compared against a norm of male characteristics and values.

Practical implications

The senior women may have achieved their positions by ignoring their feminine characteristics and putting their career before their personal lives; they may have adopted the male cultural norms and developed a style top management are more comfortable with, else they may have more characteristics that are closer to the male norms than the average woman. Men further down the hierarchy may also suffer and may not achieve senior positions because they too are not prepared to conform to idealised and outdated male cultural norms.

Originality/value

Keywords: Women, Senior Managers, Retail, Gender

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Introduction

Previous research has shown that social structures are important to managerial career advancement, and that women are more likely to gain initial management jobs and advance to senior positions when the managerial hierarchy is less proportionately male and subordinates are women rather than men (Tharenou, 1997: Cohen *et al*, 1998; Dreher, 2003). One sector where women make up large numbers of employees in certain areas is retailing, and retailing has been identified as an occupation where women are more likely to be found in management positions than in other occupations (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2003), while a large proportion of their customer base is female (Katz and Katz, 1997). Thus, one might hypothesise that the facilitators and barriers facing women's progression generally may be different within the retail sector and that women may face fewer constraints in advancing in retailing than in other occupations. Although the ratio of men to women in the retail hierarchy favoured men at the higher levels of the management hierarchy (Broadbridge, 1996), Singh and Vinnicombe's (2004) research indicated that retailing was increasing its numbers of women board level positions. Thus, now is an apposite time to consider the career issues surrounding men and women retail managers in the 21st century. While much prior research dealing with retail employment issues has concentrated on non managerial employees (cf. Penn and Wirth, 1993; Freathy, 1993; 1997; Marchington and Harrison, 1991; Freathy and Sparks, 1994; Sparks, 1987; 1991; 1992; Jones and Schmidt, 2004; Foster, 2004; Hendrie, 2004; Tiney, 2004) or various managerial levels collectively (Brockbank and Airey, 1994; Traves *et al*, 1997; Broadbridge, 1998; 1999a; 1999b; Maxwell and Ogden,

2006), the contribution of this article is its concentration on the views and experiences of retail managers in senior positions, as these are the ones who have seemingly broken through the glass ceiling. In particular it explores the factors perceived by senior managers as having facilitated and hindered their career progression to date. The current research includes men and women directors and senior managers, some of whom constitutes what Tyson (2003) described as the marzipan layer (those just below main board director level).

Theoretical explanations

 Much prior research has examined a series of variables that might explain men and women's advancement or barriers in their careers. This study is guided by this prior research. Various attempts have been made to categorise these variables within an academic framework, and one approach adopted by several researchers has been to divide the categories into individual, interpersonal and organisational factors (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989; Tharenou, 1997; Metz, 2003). Other theoretical debates have surrounded the issue of women's 'sameness' or 'difference' from men with regard to barriers women face at work (cf. Webb and Liff, 1988; Liff and Wajcman, 1996; Liff and Cameron, 1997; Wajcman, 1998; Liff, 1999). Some research has claimed that women are no different to men in the way they manage (Dipboye, 1987; Morrison *et al*, 1987; Alban-Metcalfe, 1989; Powell, 1990; Colwill and Vinnicombe, 1991; Alban-Metcalfe and West, 1991; Vinnicombe and Colwill, 1996). Others claim that there are gender differences (Loden, 1985; Grant, 1988; Rosener, 1990; Brockbank and Airey, 1994; Daily *et al*, 2000; Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Van Vianen and Fisher, 2002; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Wise and Bond, 2003; Fels, 2004) and that women do bring different qualities to management positions and help organisations maintain a competitive advantage (Broadbridge, 1998; 2007a). As

Wajcman (1998) points out both approaches position women as the problem and accept men's life experiences as the norm. This is because they are based on a comparison point which is a white male (Liff, 1999). So, for example, Liff and Wajcman (1996) argued that the conventional approach where all equal opportunity policies are based on sameness/ equal treatment (techniques to ensure women are assessed in the same way as men) require women to deny, or attempt to minimize, differences between themselves and men. Liff (1999) further argues that a procedural approach to equality focuses on changing behaviour but leaves attitudes and beliefs relatively untouched. The provision of initiatives (such as childcare, single-sex training) to 'help' women be like men have been open to criticism that they provide women with an unfair advantage rather than equal treatment (Wajcman, 1998). Other equal opportunity reforms have been to make job requirements more neutral and thus enabling women to qualify for access to certain jobs. These Wajcman (1998) points out have been criticised by men as lowering of standards, rewriting the rules to suit women, or giving them special help and so she calls for a more radical approach.

The alternative to equal opportunities and promoting 'sameness' is to consider managing diversity strategies and recognise 'difference' between people. This draws on arguments that having a diverse management team brings advantages to the firm, and so it is up to organisations to effectively manage 'difference' between its employees, be inclusive to all, and educate managers about organisational barriers and how they can counter stereotypes. Liff (1996) was concerned that managing diversity, rather than valuing difference, would dissolve it. In so doing she cautioned that by treating everyone as different could result in ignoring gender and that there is no strategy for dealing with how the structure of jobs and the personnel practices that accompany them advantage white men and disadvantage any other groups. Hence we see that the notion of a male standard of characteristics and behaviour against which 'sameness' or

'difference' is judged (Liff and Wajcman, 1996; Wajcman, 1998) potentially disadvantages members of other groups. Wajcman (1998) further argues that we understand male and female characteristics in relation to each other rather than as independent categories and that the construction of women as different from men is one of the mechanisms whereby male power is maintained. Women have also been treated as a unified group facing the same problems in a workplace and expected to benefit from the same solutions. Liff and Wajcman (1996) also argue that a single binary division between men and women both polarizes the difference between them and exaggerates the homogeneity of each category (rather than recognising that there are differences *within* the categories of men and women).

Wajcman (1998) argues that in practice workplace equality initiatives have always involved both sameness and difference, and that the way to emerge from the circularity of sameness and difference approaches is to concentrate on the issue that women workers are disadvantaged: so sometimes women are disadvantaged by being treated differently when they are the same; and other times being treated the same when they are different. Thus, Liff and Wajcman (1996), claim both approaches may be useful and we need to recognise their relevance to *particular* situations. Organisations are gendered (Acker, 1990), they adopt male norms and men have the power within them. As Wajcman (1998) argues, a model of equality in which women have to adapt to pre-existing male norms is fundamentally flawed. Men, she argues, have the authority to define what constitutes occupational success and they monopolise it. In order to succeed, women are expected to deny aspects of themselves and become more like men, yet systematic inequalities between men and women ensure that their experience as managers cannot be the same. Webb and Liff (1988) argue it is very difficult for women to gain equal treatment

because job conditions are constructed around men's skills and patterns of work (full-time uninterrupted).

Wajcman (1998) further argues that contemporary patriarchy is all about the subordination of women within the framework of equality. She concludes that it is not that women are different, but that gender difference is the basis for the unequal distribution of power and resources. She also argues that to achieve position power, women must accommodate themselves to the organisation, not the other way round. This requires them sacrificing major elements of their gender identity and 'manage like a man' (Wajcman, 1998: 160). Managers continue to make decisions on the basis of stereotypes, value people similar to themselves and hold strongly sex-typed views of job requirements and high performance. Furthermore, Liff and Cameron (1997) report that men's exclusionary behaviour includes their tendency to share information predominantly with other men, recruit in their own image, ostracise and undermine women and generally act to perpetuate ways of working and forms of interaction with which they feel comfortable. So one explanation for women's under representation at senior management levels is that organisational cultures are dominated by traditionally masculine values and behaviour (Hopkins, 2000; Jones, 2000; Kimmel, 2004).

Prior research on senior managers

The main prior research with senior managers and CEOs into the facilitators and barriers facing women in senior management in the UK was conducted in 2000 by BITC/Catalyst, and while criticisms can be levied at it, the report does provide a fairly succinct account of senior management's opinions regarding their advancement. Like Broadbridge's (1998; 2007a) and

Singh and Vinnicombe's (2004) respondents, these senior women were highly motivated to reach higher levels in their organisations. In order to do so they had adopted various individual career strategies which are largely grounded in attribution theory (Heider, 1958) and human capital theory (Becker, 1964). Unfortunately no corresponding strategies were provided for men in senior management. The career strategies adopted by the senior women included the need to exceed performance expectations, develop and adhere to their own career goals, gain line management experience and seek highly visible job assignments, network with influential colleagues and develop a style male managers were comfortable with. Moving functional areas, having an influential mentor or sponsor and upgrading educational credentials were also considered to be fairly important factors. The senior women regarded these personal career strategies, rather than the effect of any organisational strategies, as contributing to their success. This might indicate their more protean attitude towards their careers (Hall and Mirvis, 1996), which focuses on the individual, rather than the organisation, to take responsibility for their career advancement. On the contrary, it could point to a realisation that organisational strategies are embedded in male cultural norms and thus are more difficult for women to thrive in, because women are disadvantaged relative to men in the way they are treated.

Senior managers' beliefs

The factors senior women perceived as being barriers to women and men's advancement to senior levels are shown in Table I. Similar to other findings (Coe, 1992; Charlesworth, 1997; Wajcman, 1998; Metz, 2003), many of the barriers senior women believed they faced were attributed to their primary role in the family and discriminatory organisational practices. Many women also reported as barriers, those areas they had identified as personal career strategies. The

issue of family responsibilities and preconceptions of women's roles were identified as key

barriers for women despite the majority of these senior women, like those in other studies

(Lyness and Thompson, 1997; Kirchmeyer, 1998), not conforming to these stereotypes (81 per

cent were in dual career households and a large minority (45 per cent) did not have children).

Career advancement was perceived as dependent on putting career *before* personal or family life,

thus upholding men's life experiences as the norm. Flexible working arrangements were treated

with suspicion as they were not regarded as being valued or respected by employers (they don't

conform to a male model of work), thus many senior women did not take them up for fear of

being labeled as uncommitted to their careers. The prevalence of gendered preconceptions and

stereotypes mean that women are compared against a male norm (Liff and Wajcman, 1996;

Wajcman, 1998; Liff, 1999), and thus are vulnerable to be devalued. The report revealed that

senior women perceived that senior men encountered fewer barriers which is unsurprising given

the male comparison point and the fact that men hold the majority of senior posts in UK

organisations. Moreover, the main barriers for men were perceived to be different from those

reported by the women. This calls into question to what extent men and women senior managers

can be regarded as the 'same' or 'different' in organisations, and the underlying assumptions

about the prevalence of male norms and values which will be less likely to disadvantage men as

they will women.

CEO beliefs

Also included in Table I are the *collective* responses of a sample of 74 men and 43 women CEOs.

In general, the CEOs and senior women were in agreement on the top barriers facing women and

men's advancement. However, other parts of the report indicated that there were some important

differences between the responses of the men and women CEOs, with male CEOs being apparently less aware of the barriers facing senior women managers. For example, the men CEOs were far less likely than the women CEOs to attribute stereotyping of women's roles, the exclusion from informal networks, personal style differences, the lack of mentoring, lack of awareness of organisational politics, lack of professional development opportunities and sexual harassment as being barriers women face in their career advancement.   This is of concern in any attempts we face when trying to gain top level management support to challenge the barriers women face in their career advancement.

Moreover, a large proportion of the CEOs located the barriers to women's advancement as being situated with the women themselves rather than any failing of the organisation. This was explained in various ways by the CEOs. First, is the pipeline theory (cf. Forbes *et al*, 1988; Ragins *et al*, 1998) which states that women simply had not been long enough in the pipeline (and that through time, the problems of women's advancement will be solved, an argument based on acquisition of human capital). This theory ignores the gendered nature of organisations which would overthrow this 'time' argument. The second relates to women's own shortcomings, with the CEOs attributing women's own lack of self confidence and their tendency to be more self critical than men (a finding also found by the work of Singh *et al*, 2006) as hindering their career advancement. This results in women being reluctant to put themselves forward for promotion or call attention to their achievements. So it is clear that CEOs blame women themselves for their relative position to men in the management hierarchy, and attribute it to their own deficits (women have not grasped the opportunities offered to them) rather than look inwards to the organisational structure, gendered nature and cultural climate for the underlying problems. This view mirrors Liff and Cameron's (1997) arguments who criticise approaches that focus on

women as having problems which need to be redressed rather than on changing organisations. It also ignores the way organisations have historically been constructed around cultural norms that uphold male based values (such as definitions of success, commitment, management style) and as a consequence female values and traits are devalued. Against such comparisons it is no wonder women and men progress differently and that women might lack confidence and subsequently accumulate less human and social capital. They are being compared against the life experiences of men, and as long as organisational male cultural norms go unchallenged, so this will continue and the situation will be perpetuated rather than resolved.

So, many CEOs failed to recognise (or ignored) the diverse ways in which their inhospitable culture manifested itself as a barrier to women's development, else they firmly located any problems as associated with women's own shortcomings (confidence, pipeline, family responsibilities). The report concluded that CEOs were more optimistic than senior women about the progress that has been made in advancing women to leadership roles in UK organisations, which is not surprising and of concern. The CEOs believed they could effect organisational change through top down initiatives. However, organisational initiatives to bring about cultural change were reported as not working; half the senior women considered employment equality policies and practices to have no impact on their own careers. They also spoke of the need to develop a management style male managers were comfortable with. This emphasises a 'sameness' approach and reinforces that it is women who need to change to accommodate themselves to the organisation rather than the other way round (Wajcman, 1998). The fact that so many CEOs believe women have not been in position long enough to achieve advancement (suggesting that time alone will resolve issues) is of particular concern as it appears

to be blind to the issues connected with organisational cultures and resistance to change, as well as the underlying assumption of women's primacy in the family environment.

The arguments show that with few exceptions, upper level managerial positions appear to be characterised in hegemonic masculine terms, that stereotypical male qualities are thought necessary to being a successful executive (Heilman, 2001), and that work is organised and constructed around patriarchal social systems (Powell, 1999). As women aspire to more senior positions they have to consider how their own behaviours and perceptions fit with those associated with successful careers in their organisations (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). Thus there is a perceived lack of fit between women's attributes and the senior job's requirements. With many organisations upholding such hegemonic male values as the cultural norm (Marshall, 1991; Fischer and Gleijm, 1992; Wajcman, 1998) so these cultures can appear alien to many women (as well as some men). Women might find that they have to emulate these masculine characteristics and suppress their feminine ones if they are to advance, thus conforming to a 'sameness' approach rather than one that values difference. Heilman (2001) further claims that the perceived lack of fit is likely to produce expectations of failure which gives rise to a clear bias towards viewing women as ill equipped to perform the job competently. If a woman succeeds, her success is a violation of the prescriptive norms associated with gender stereotypes, so there is a bad fit between what the woman is perceived to be like and conceptions of what she *should* be like and this induces disapproval. Advancement is based on competence and social acceptance and the negativity that can be associated with a competent woman can be lethal in their strive to get ahead (Heilman, 2001).

The findings from the BITC/Catalyst report support a view that organisations have been socially constructed around men's lives (Liff and Cameron, 1997), and management is regarded as a male preserve (Liff and Ward, 2001). Adopting this approach, men and women managers' differences in their career development can be attributed to the subtle gendered processes in organisational cultures that reflect male values and norms (Broadbridge, 1998), and so emphasises 'sameness' rather than value difference. Organisational structures, cultures and processes are essential inputs for career systems (Baruch, 2004) and they can be deeply embedded in male norms and values; they are not gender neutral (Acker, 1990), thus making it more difficult for women to construct their careers on an equal basis. Thus, career progression is less to do with individual preference (a proposition made by Hakim, 1991, 1995, 1996, 2000) but more to do with the issues that might present opportunities and barriers for certain individuals to progress within organisations.

Other research on barriers to management

Despite Cooper and Lewis's (1999) observations that male models of work are giving way to a postmodern pluralism and that men's provider roles are being challenged, there is still evidence that male models of work are upheld in order to achieve the highest positions in companies. So, definitions of career success often encompass measures that are more likely to be identified by men than women as success factors (Sturges, 1999; Vinnicombe and Harris, 2000). Definitions of commitment to work also follow a male model. Thus, visibility and a long hours culture are often still expected in order to openly display one's commitment to the job and progress linearly (Cooper and Lewis, 1999; Lewis, 2002). This disadvantages anyone who wishes to adopt a different pattern of working, and given that women continue to have primary responsibility for

the home and for childcare duties (Gordon and Whelan-Barry, 2004; National Statistics 2004; Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities, 2006; Eurostat, 2006), it makes it particularly difficult for them to compete against men in the managerial environment. Impression management techniques can also help to demonstrate commitment and facilitate career success (e.g. Kilduff and Day, 1994; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2000) and interpersonal communications, such as networking and being visible to those with influence. Women, however, are less likely to use impression management techniques, and be aware of their influence, than are men (Singh *et al,* 2002). Other research has illustrated the importance of networking and visibility in organisations (Kanter, 1977; Brass, 1985; Coe, 1992; Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Rutherford, 2001; Linehan, 2001; Vinnicombe *et al*., 2004) and this is associated with the accumulation of social capital (Lin, 2001; Burt, 2005). Self categorisation theory claims that similar people are more likely to become friends and be a source of information about the workplace (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). It is closely associated with the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne and Neuman, 1992) and can result in managers recruiting in their own image (Liff and Cameron, 1997). Pelled *et al.* (1999) argue that gender dissimilarity in the work unit is a disadvantage in terms of organisational inclusion. Therefore, at management levels, we would expect men to have a better ability to form networking relationships than women do because of the male dominated hierarchy in many organisations. Thus, informal networks can be exclusionary for women managers. As a consequence women are denied contacts, opportunities and excluded from the information networks provide. As information equates to power, and politics and networking systems are bound up with power, so women's exclusion from these networks can result in them being disadvantaged in the workplace and unable to compete on a level playing field. Alternatively, Dreher (2003:556) argued that 'as managerial sex ratios become more balanced, female managers should be able to form coalitions and support networks that enhance

the chances of female career advancement'. Hence, it is interesting to see if this is the case in retailing which has been found to have proportionality more women in management positions than in other occupations.

The foregoing discussion has illustrated the importance that organisational structures and the values held by those in the most influential positions (CEO and board level) can play in determining the career development of individuals further down the management hierarchy. The perceived relevance of these factors for men and women in senior level retail positions has never been identified. Earlier we pointed out that retailing was a highly feminised industry, thus making it an interesting sector to study. There have been various transformations in the UK retail industry in recent years. For example, we have seen increasing market concentration so that each sector of retailing is dominated by a few very large organisations. At the same time there has been other changes happening within the internal and external environment including, amongst others, rapid technological developments, changes in consumer behaviour, changes in store operations and design, globalization and branding issues. These advances in the industry have brought with them a more professional approach to operations and have opened up the scope for a variety of careers in the industry, both in the UK and internationally. Thus, they have resulted in more dynamic and interesting career opportunities for their employees. These expansions have been accompanied by subsequent training and development opportunities for managerial employees, and the sector is becoming a more attractive graduate career option for men and women. Careers range from the more generalist operational roles at branch levels to highly specialised and functional roles at head offices.

The way that many retail organisational cultures are structured, however, remain embedded in patriarchal social systems and the industry is still recognised as cut throat, fast changing, highly competitive and aggressive. For many managers, career progression is perceived as being connected with openly demonstrating their commitment to the job and so this reinforces and perpetuates a culture of work intensification, long hours and visibility. Many managers are expected to sign a waiver to the 48 Working Time Directive, and many conform as a refusal is perceived as constricting their career. The challenges experienced by many senior retail managers stem from a culture of rapid pace of change, increased time pressures and deadlines, performance pressures, long hours, lack of flexibility and a need for mobility (Broadbridge, 2002). Such issues may act as constraints for those managers who want and/or need to more effectively balance their work and home lives.

This article now turns to explore the factors senior retail managers believe have helped or hindered their careers to date. In particular, it addresses some research questions:

- What factors do men and women senior retail managers attribute to facilitating their career development to date?

- What factors do men and women senior retail managers attribute as being problematic in their career development to date?

- Do men and women senior retail managers experience similar or different facilitators and problems, and how does this contribute to our understanding of the career development process within the retail sector?

Methodology

Exploratory research in the form of biographical / life history interviews were conducted with six women and eleven men holding senior or director level positions within retailing.   This approach was adopted to enable respondents to discuss freely (without having factors that may influence career development superimposed on them) about those factors that *they* perceived had either helped or hindered their career development. A more detailed analysis of these interviews are reported elsewhere (Broadbridge, 2007b), and are used for illustration purposes only in this article. The main themes from the findings of this exploratory phase together with evidence from previous research (e.g. Morrison *et al*, 1987; Gold and Pringle, 1988; Wentling, 1992; Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Charlesworth, 1997; Tharenou, 1997; Broadbridge, 1998; 1999a; Fielden *et al,* 2001) were used to develop a self-completed questionnaire survey that was distributed to UK retail managers. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about the respondents' careers, and within it, it explored the factors that the respondents considered had personally assisted (43 items, Likert scale) and caused problems in their careers to date (45 items). The sampling procedure was based on non-probability sampling methods. A questionnaire for self-completion was devised and posted to members of a retail alumni group, all of whom were managers within UK retailing and comprised a census of this group. In order that the final sample was not atypical of alumni members, each senior manager was asked to complete a questionnaire themselves and also to distribute a questionnaire each to another woman and man senior manager. A response rate of (30.49) per cent was achieved which was considered to be reasonable given the method of questionnaire administration. The achieved questionnaire sample consisted of 124 respondents (50 women and 74 men).

Similar to the findings of the BITC/Catalyst Report (2000), there were some gender differences between the demographic characteristics of the questionnaire sample (Table II). There were slightly more women senior managers in their twenties and slightly more men in their fifties, although no significant gender differences were found between those below and above the age of 40. The men were significantly more likely to have children than the women senior managers and the women were significantly more likely than the men to be in a dual career household where their partner was also in full time employment. Women also reported being significantly more likely to be primarily responsible for household and child care duties where applicable. Thus, it appears that the men are enacting out traditional role patterns in the domestic arena. This follows to some extent with the women although, as previous research suggests (e.g. Liff and Ward, 2001), they appear to have possibly sacrificed having a family in order to progress their career. With regard to work and educational experiences (Table III), no significant differences were found between men and women regarding their managerial level, job location, job function or number of companies worked for. However, the men were found to work significantly beyond a 50 hour week than the women. With regard to the accumulation of human capital via education, no human capital deficit was noticeable between the sexes: there were no significant differences in the men and women's educational attainments or acquisition of professional qualifications. Unfortunately, these types of demographic data are not available industry wide and so it is not possible to compare this sample with industry norms.

Findings

Factors assisting senior managers' careers to date

Similar reasons were posited by the senior men and women as having facilitated their career

(Table IV). In particular, the same top six factors were mentioned by both men and women and

can be attributed to themselves (individual traits such as determination, attitude to work,

performance) and the accumulation of human capital (breadth of experience and interpersonal

skills). These results are not surprising and are grounded in human capital (Becker, 1964) and

attribution theory (Heider, 1958).   They also reflect the BITC/Catalyst Report's (2000) findings

that women's career strategies are associated with individual rather than organisational factors.

Women, however, were more likely to attribute a wider set of factors as helping their careers 'a

great deal' more than the men. Furthermore, reflecting the similarities between men and women,

of the other factors regarded as assisting careers just seven out of a set of 43 were found to be

statistically significant when tested using the non-parametric test, Mann-Whitney U. In six of

these cases, the women were significantly more likely than the men to report the factor as having

assisted their careers. With the exception of one factor (interpersonal skills) the other significant

factors relate to interpersonal factors in the form of the accumulation of social capital (Lin, 2001;

Lin *et al,* 2001; Field, 2003; Burt, 2005), and in particular, attracting support from higher levels

of the management hierarchy, and being offered and having access to high profile assignments.

This was also borne out by the accounts of women in the qualitative research, where the

importance of being given career opportunities to acquire experience, to prove themselves and

become visible was highlighted as influential in their career advancement. Interestingly, other

factors which are also associated with the influence of other people were given less prominence

and were regarded as less likely to have facilitated the men and women's careers to date (most

notably these were internal politics, being mentored and being sponsored). It was noted

elsewhere in the questionnaire, however, that 37 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women had

never been mentored and both rated this as a barrier to their career development.

Although the quantitative research revealed that the men were less likely to regard the

influence of informal networks as assisting their careers, by contrast, the qualitative research

found all the senior men to talk about the importance of networking and visibility (which

demonstrates the value of adopting a multiple methodological approach to research). From the

biographical conversations with men and women senior managers it was apparent that the men

used their networking and impression management techniques more strategically than did the

women (Broadbridge, 2007b), and for some these had proved crucial in their career progression.

Evidence of self categorisation theory (Hogg and Abrams, 1988), the similarity-attraction

paradigm (Byrne and Neuman, 1992) and recruiting in their own image (Liff and Cameron, 1997)

was found. Two male directors also explained that promotional decisions were based not just on

possessing the right credentials (human capital) but also the importance of other people's

opinions of the candidate (see Broadbridge, 2007b for a fuller account).

Problems in senior managers' careers to date

Respondents were provided with a list of 45 factors drawn from previous research that might

cause problems in their career progression, and asked to select those that they had personally

experienced. Table V shows the results. As with the factors assisting careers, various apparent

similarities were found between the men and women's responses with eight of the top ten factors

ranked by the women as the main problems experienced also being similarly ranked by the men.

However, proportionately, women were more likely to report a factor as having caused a problem

to them in their career to date. At least half of the senior women regarded organisational /

internal politics (70 per cent), the absence of mentors (55 per cent) and conflicts between

personal and home life (50 per cent) as having been problematic to them. This latter category

could encompass a variety of issues if we remember that just 40 per cent had children. It is likely

to be connected with their primary responsibility for housework and childcare duties, or else their

dilemma to start or forego having a family in order to pursue their career. Moreover, two of the

three senior women with children from the qualitative research said that various work-home

conflicts caused barriers in their careers. The third woman also spoke about this but had chosen

to put her career first, explaining that there were no facilities to enable her to better combine her

home and work responsibilities (which would appear to echo the findings of the BITC report). A

couple of the senior men from the qualitative research also said that their families had presented a

barrier in their careers, but only from the perspective that it might have curtailed their mobility.

The top three factors that were regarded as most problematic for the senior men were limited

promotional opportunities (59 per cent), organisational/ internal politics (57 per cent) and lack of

feedback on performance (53 per cent). A few of the male senior managers from the qualitative

research also stated issues of networking as acting as barriers in their career, not being known by

the people who matter and trying to get into the right circle of networks (Broadbridge, 2007b)

which is likely to be connected with organisational /internal politics. Upholding attribution

theory (Heider, 1958), while factors assisting careers are credited to themselves and the

accumulation of human capital, most of the barriers are attributed to interpersonal and

organisational factors. Of the 45 factors, just nine were found to be statistically significant when

conducting chi-square ($\chi2$) tests. In eight of these instances, women were significantly more likely to perceive the factor as causing a problem in their career to date and many of these factors can be attributed to interpersonal factors and organisational cultural issues.

Discussion

This article sought to examine the factors perceived as assisting and hindering senior women and men's career progression within the retail sector in an attempt to better understand how senior retail staff, and in particular women, can develop their careers. Many of the main factors perceived as assisting and hindering senior managers' career development to date have been apparently very similar for *both* men and women. Like others, they were highly motivated to achieve high management levels (Broadbridge, 1998; BITC/Catalyst, 2000; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). The perceived main factors that assist retail managers (ambition, ability, performance, work ethic, preparation, results) are similar to the individual factors found elsewhere as linked to promotion (Howard and Bray, 1988; Ferris *et al*, 1992; Ruderman and Ohlott, 1994; Tharenou, 2001; Metz, 2003). Hence, no discernable differences were found as assisting retail managers' career development compared with those in other occupational sectors. Career advancement was chiefly perceived as being related to their knowledge and skills and confirms these managers' protean career strategies (Hall and Mirvis, 1996), in addition to supporting human capital theory (Becker, 1964) and attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973). Given the educational attainment of the sample, the findings also support an assertion that women's increased education may help them to break the glass ceiling (Powell, 1999; Metz, 2003). However, the findings also highlighted the importance of being given career opportunities as a tool to help career advancement (Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Metz, 2003). This was a

particularly important finding for the women senior managers, who reported significant differences from the men over various interpersonal encounters that had been perceived as facilitating their careers. This draws into question the reliance of human capital and attribution theories *alone* as explanatory factors for career development, and additionally points to the influence of social capital in explaining career advancement.   It also highlights that women senior retail managers might be particularly aware of the importance of impression management techniques and being visible to top level management, and to have formed coalitions and networks as proposed by Dreher (2003). In a similar vein, the perceived main factors that hinder the men were also experienced by the women, although the women reported encountering proportionately more problems in their careers than the men.

Although many of the perceived facilitators and problems in the careers of senior women retail managers largely resembled those of their male counterparts, it is relevant to understand these in relation to the preceding literature. So, for example, we might argue that women may be regarded as experiencing some similar facilitators to the men because they deliberately have conformed to hegemonic male characteristics and behaviour. We saw that many women in this study had foregone or postponed having a family, conforming instead to a male model of full-time, uninterrupted work with long hours (Broadbridge, 1998; 2007b; Cooper and Lewis, 1999). So when compared against men's life experiences as a norm (Wajcman, 1998), is it really reasonable to claim that men and women actually report similar facilitators and problems? Moreover, it is perhaps unsurprising that women senior retail managers experienced proportionately more problems in their careers than their male counterparts if they are being compared against a male standard of characteristics and behaviour (Liff and Wajcman, 1996; Wajcman, 1998). Furthermore, as the qualitative research revealed, explanations behind some of

the factors where women and men were perceived to be similar in the problems they had encountered may in fact have been experienced differently by the men and women. This illustrates some caution that is necessary when comparing men and women's responses to the questionnaire survey, and is an area worthy of further research.

Following the argument that accepts men's life experiences as the norm (Wajcman, 1998), and so compares women against these norms (Liff, 1999), Heilman (2001) noted that the characteristics associated with men (aggressive, forceful, independent, decisive) and women (kind, helpful, sympathetic, concerned for others) are not only different but *oppositional*, with members of one sex thought to be lacking what is thought to be most prevalent in members of the other sex. If as Wajcman (1998) claimed, we understand male and female characteristics in relation to each other it is not difficult to see that women will be devalued in comparison to men. Thus, Heilman (2001) further claimed that being competent does not ensure that a woman will advance to the same organisational level as an equivalently performing man (and this draws into question the perceived career facilitators reported by the senior managers in this survey). Retail management has been associated with male cultural norms, and a cut-throat, aggressive, long hours culture (Broadbridge, 2007b). Following Wajcman (1998) and Heilman (2001) then, it would appear that aspiring women need to sacrifice their own gender identity and adopt male characteristics and norms and manage like a man. It is clear that further research is needed to explore whether women have achieved senior positions in retailing by emulating the male characteristics and behaviours and suppressing their feminine ones, or whether those women who achieve senior positions in retailing have characteristics that are closer to the male norms than the average woman.

While some women reported interpersonal factors as significantly helping their careers, there were equally some women who were significantly more likely than the men to perceive the support of male colleagues and bosses, organisational attitudes towards women and access to networks as problematic in their careers. This points to an additional obvious area for further research. Exclusion from old boy networks can help to perpetuate male customs, and traditional and negative attitudes towards women in organisations (Travers and Pemberton, 2000). The findings also supported a view of women's primacy in a familial role, and despite many of the senior women not conforming to the traditional family roles, they were significantly more likely than the men to be negatively affected by inflexible working hours and social pressures from their families. Adopting the 'sameness' approach, Wajcman (1998) argued that ignoring women's relationship to the private sphere conceals the way women are penalised for their difference. Unless difference is recognised and taken account of women will not be able to compete equally. Whether these stereotypical views are also related to their significant lack of training provision than the men (on the basis that their organisations believe they are not worth investing in this human capital) needs to be investigated further.

Overall, we might construe that the findings indicate that organisational social structures and cultural issues have been more problematic for women than they have for men in reaching and performing at senior management levels and this is witnessed by the disproportionate number of women in senior retail management positions (Broadbridge, 1996; Thomas, 2001; Singh and Vinnicombe, 2004). Men were aware of some of the issues women retail managers potentially face in ascending to senior management positions (Broadbridge, 2008). To enhance women's representation at senior levels these issues need to be tackled and changed to embrace an inclusive culture rather than a masculine one – an arguably difficult task to tackle when most

executive positions in retailing are dominated by men. Furthermore, as Wajcman (1998) recognised, many men find themselves constrained by idealised male constructs; not all of them aspire to the dominant male model and some are alienated from the macho culture of corporate power. In recommending that masculine cultures be broken down to encourage a more inclusive culture that allows more women to move in to senior management, additionally enables other men (with subordinate masculinities) to move into these positions and dilute the hegemonic cultural power at the top even further. A problem with this approach, of course, is gaining the support of top management (who perpetuate these masculinist cultures) to do this, an issue raised earlier in the discussion of the findings of the BITC/Catalyst report. Without the awareness and support of CEOs so the existing inhospitable cultures are inclined to be perpetuated and little genuine change will be achieved. For example, Liff and Cameron (1997) claimed that most organisations have shown little interest in considering how they can organise work differently, while Liff and Wajcman (1996) argue that full-time work represents the dominance of the male model and part-time work is consequently regarded as inferior and not a realistic option for the career minded manager. Within retailing, while the flexibility of working practices are upheld as exemplary in non-managerial positions, there appears to be an apparent reluctance to accommodate these working practices at managerial levels; instead a long hours male based culture persists and is perpetuated which clearly disadvantages those unable or unwilling to conform to it.

In thinking about what advice might be given to junior and middle retail managers who want to progress their careers vertically, it would appear initially from the findings that it is critical to have an attitude of mind and the determination to get you that position. While this might help to some extent as it provides a focus for the individual concerned, this approach might

be criticised for being an over-simplistic view. Individuals also need to gain the support of

significant others further up the managerial hierarchy. When this management hierarchy operates

within a social structure that upholds a masculinist hegemonic culture, it is not difficult to

understand that men and women do not have the same access to senior positions. As has been

found elsewhere, the dominant culture can be perpetuated through male definitions of

commitment, impression management, exposure and visibility and the appointment of like with

like (Cooper and Lewis, 1999; Lewis, 2002; Byrne and Neuman, 1992; Liff and Cameron, 1997;

Pelled *et al*, 1999). Those who succeed will emulate this position.   Unsupportive organisational

cultures, in turn, can lead to a lack of confidence for those disadvantaged by the dominant culture

and so they do not apply for promotion apparently 'choosing' or preferring (Hakim, 2000) not to

progress thus leaving these positions open to those able and /or prepared to emulate the required

characteristics. Coupled with a lack of female role models and continued outdated attitudes

towards women so it is clear that women and men do not start off with equal chances to progress

their careers. Furthermore, the continued primacy of women's roles in the household and for

childcare holds back career women. It is difficult for those who want to combine their career

with raising a family, and retailing as a sector does not appear to accommodate the fusion of the

home-work interface very easily at senior levels.

Concluding remarks and future research directions

Retailing is a feminised sector, employing many women and serving a predominately female

customer base. It additionally employs proportionately more women in management positions

than in other occupational sectors. However, at senior levels, the proportion of women to men

lessens. This article contributes to our understanding of career progression generally, by its

specific examination of the perceived facilitators and problems encountered by retail managers already occupying senior positions. At the beginning of this article we speculated whether women faced less constraints in progressing their careers in retailing than in other industrial sectors and whether the facilitators and barriers facing women's progression in retailing was different from their experiences elsewhere in employment. The findings along with those of other research studies would appear to indicate that this is not necessarily the case. The findings revealed that the men and women senior retail managers reported more apparent similarities than differences in the facilitators and problems encountered their careers to date. These findings need to be treated with some caution however given that retailing operates in a strong masculine culture. Therefore to assume that men and women encounter similar facilitators and problems ignores that they are being compared against a norm of male characteristics and values. The senior women may have achieved their positions by suppressing their feminine characteristics and putting their career before their personal lives; they may have adopted the male cultural norms and thus developed a style top management are more comfortable with (cf. BITC/Catalyst, 2000), else they may have more characteristics that are closer to the male norms than the average woman. Men further down the management hierarchy may also encounter difficulties and may not achieve senior positions because they too are not prepared to conform to idealised and outdated male cultural norms. While at one level, one may call for a review of company policies within retailing, these will only result in superficial changes unless a more fundamental re-examination of organisational cultures that questions the norms that dominate senior retail management takes place. This is particularly difficult to do as it requires the very men who have benefited from these cultural norms to now engage in debates of how to challenge and change them.

There are several possibilities to extend this research. Further in-depth research is needed that looks specifically at the relative experiences of men and women managers in retailing. This might call for a longitudinal qualitative approach that, through a gender lens, tracks the factors perceived to help and hinder career development for retail managers over a period of time and at various stages of their careers, optimally from entry level positions. This would also enable the significance of interpersonal variables as factors helping or hindering the careers of retail managers to be examined in more detail. Supplementary research with those women who have achieved executive level positions is required to explore in more depth their career patterns and the factors that have contributed to their success stories and any sacrifices they might have had to make along the way. This might provide practical advice to other women on how they can best ascend the retail management hierarchy. Drawing on Singh and Vinnicombe's (2004) conclusions there is an opportunity to conduct comparative research between women executives across different occupational sectors to ascertain the relative importance of the facilitators and barriers to advancement for women managers in retailing with women in similar positions in other sectors. Additional research on the 'sacrificing' of family for career is also recommended. It is necessary to unpick whether women's apparent sacrifice or postponement of children is indeed a generational move, and represents a genuine liberation of women who are able to make their own choices and enables them to pursue their careers over family. The alternative view is that a more complicated issue of the continued structural norms of organisations that make it difficult to effectively combine childcare issues and career progression remains. These questions are important to raise with those (men and women) at the beginning of their careers today. This generation of individuals do hold differing views from previous generations and so some further research into their whole life concerns (Las Heras and Hall, 2007; Piderit, 2007) is warranted.

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Table I: Barriers to women and men's advancement to senior levels (perceptions of senior women) [N=1188] and all (men and women) CEOs [N=117]

Factor	Barriers facing Women (%)	Barriers facing Men (%)	CEO re women (%)	CEO re men (%)
Commitment to family responsibilities	**83**	20	**76**	11
Stereotyping and preconceptions of women's (men's) roles	**81**	8	**65**	6
Lack of senior visibly successful female (male) role models	**70**	4	**69**	3
Inhospitable organisational culture	**69**	15	**60**	8
Exclusion from informal networks of communication	66	16	46	7
Failure of senior management to assume responsibility for women's (men's) advancement	65	9	65	11
Lack of significant general or line management experience	63	**53**	53	**48**
Personal style differences	61	**39**	26	**36**
Lack of mentoring	58	**38**	58	**49**
Lack of awareness of organisational politics	57	**43**	35	**26**
Lack of professional development opportunities	54	26	44	25
Lack of opportunities for visibility	52	23	40	12
Lack of opportunities to work on challenging assignments	45	10	32	8
Sexual harassment	40	5	27	0
Few women (men) can/want to do what it takes to get to the top	30	11	23	11
Not having been long in the pipeline	28	1	40	2

Source: BITC/Catalyst (2000)

Table II: Demographic Characteristics of the Questionnaire Senior Retail Management Sample

	Women	Men
Sex	50 (40%)	74 (60%)
Age (years)		
20-29	4 (8%)	0 (0%)
30-39	25 (51%)	39 (53%)
40-49	19 (38%)	26 (36%)
50-59	1 (2%)	8 (11%)
Average age (years)	38.22	40.29
Marital Status		
Single	4 (8%)	5 (7%)
Married/Cohabiting	38 (76%)	64 (87%)
Divorced/Separated	5 (10%)	3 (4%)
Other Partner	3 (6%)	2 (3%)
Whether Children?* (χ2 =13.481; df=1; p<0.001)		
Yes	20 (40%)	54 (73%)
No	30 (60%)	20 (27%)
Number of Children		
One	7 (37%)	12 (22%)
Two	9 (47%)	28 (52%)
Three	3 (16%)	12 (22%)
Four or more	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
Having children has restricted my career (% agreeing, where appropriate)* (U=226; p=0.001)	11 (57%)	11 (9%)
Ages of Children		
All Pre-School	4 (21%)	6 (11%)
Pre-School and School Age	4 (21%)	11 (20%)
All School Age	8 (42%)	23 (43%)
School & Post School Age	2 (11%)	2 (4%)
All Post-School Age	1 (5%)	12 (22%)
Whether other dependents* (χ2 =5.007; df=1; p=025)		
Yes	2 (4%)	13 (18%)
No	47 (96%)	61 (82%)
Caring responsibilities has restricted my career (% agreeing) (U=301.5; p=0.005).	7 (37%)	3 (6%)
Working Status of Partner* (χ2 =28.263; df=2; p=0.001)		
Full-Time	36 (88%)	24 (38%)
Part-Time	0 (0%)	23 (36%)
No Paid Employment	5 (12%)	17 (27%)
I am primarily responsible for housework responsiblities (% agreeing) * (U=944; p=0.001)	29 (59%)	10 (14%)
I am primarily responsible for child care responsiblities (% agreeing, where appropriate) * (U=281; P=0.004)	10 (53%)	8 (15%)

Table III: Work and Educational Experiences of Retail Senior Management Sample

	Women	Men
Total years of work experience (average)	18.79	21.34
Total years of managerial experience (average)	12.20	15.63
Years with present employer	9.41	10.51
Years in present position	2.53	3.44
Management Level		
Senior	44 (88%)	55 (74%)
Director	6 (12%)	19 (26%)
Job Location		
Store	9 (18%)	10 (14%)
Head office, distribution	38 (78%)	49 (66%)
Area/ Field Management	1 (2%)	9 (12%)
Other	1 (2%)	5 (7%)
Job Function		
Functional Specialist	22 (45%)	23 (31%)
Generalist	27 (55%)	50 (68%)
Number of Companies Worked For		
One	7 (14%)	12 (16%)
Two	11 (22%)	17 (23%)
Three	11 (22%)	13 (18%)
Four or more	20 (40%)	32 (43%)
Average (number)	3.53	3.49
Hours Worked* ($\chi2$ =7.007; df=1; p=0.3008)		
13- 39 hours	3 (6%)	1 (1%)
40 - 49 hours	21 (42%)	16 (23%)
50 - 59 hours	14 (28%)	28 (41%)
60 - 70 hours	12 (24%)	24 (35%)
Average hours worked per week	49.45	53.07
% full-time	98%	100%
I take work home most evenings (% agreeing)	16 (32%)	21 (29%)
I would welcome more flexible working arrangements* (U=1161.5; p=0.001)	31 (63%)	26 (36%)
I like working long hours (% agreeing) (U=1438.5; p=0.029)	6 (12%)	13 (18%)
Educational Attainment		
None	0 (0%)	3 (4%)
GCSE/ O'Level	2 (4%)	7 (10%)
A Level or Equivalent	11 (22%)	15 (21%)
First Degree	15 (31%)	14 (19%)
Post-Graduate Diploma	12 (25%)	5 (8%)
Higher Degree	9 (18%)	29 (40%)
Have Additional Professional Qualification		
Yes	22 (46%)	27 (38%)

Table IV: Factors Facilitating Senior Women and Men's Careers To Date

	Women		Men	
	Mean	**Rank Order**	**Mean**	**Rank Order**
Determination	1.30	(1)	1.48	(2)
Attitude to work (conscientious, hard working)	1.44	(2)	1.44	(1)
Interpersonal skills* (U=1476; p=0.48)	1.54	(3)	1.79	(6)
Breadth of experience	1.54	(4)	1.55	(3)
Concern for results	1.74	(5)	1.66	(4)
Past and present performance	1.76	(6)	1.74	(5)
Support from a line/senior manager* (U=1310; p=007)	1.78	(7)	2.19	(15)
Demonstrating critical skills for effective job performance	1.80	(8)	1.97	(9)
Attracting top level support* (U=1178; p=0.001)	1.82	(9)	2.41	(25)
Relevant skills	1.82	(10)	2.05	(11)
Being offered visible assignments* (U=1330; p=0.007)	1.86	(11)	2.22	(16)
Being offered challenging work	1.88	(12)	2.00	(10)
Ambition	1.90	(13)	1.96	(8)
Being accepted by the organisation	1.96	(14)	2.18	(13)
High visibility	2.04	(15)	2.32	(20)
Access to high profile/challenging assignments* (U=1361.5; p=0.034)	2.10	(16)	2.43	(27)
Broadening general management experience	2.10	(17)	2.18	(13)
Assistance or coaching by others	2.14	(18)	2.12	(12)
Receiving support and encouragement	2.14	(19)	2.36	(23)
Self esteem	2.14	(20)	2.37	(24)
Being valued	2.16	(21)	2.35	(22)
Certain job moves	2.16	(22)	2.27	(19)
Support from home or partner	2.17	(23)	1.87	(7)
Willingness to take risks	2.28	(24)	2.32	(20)
Loyalty	2.29	(25)	2.26	(17)
Knowing and influencing the right people	2.38	(26)	2.68	(29)
Displaying entrepreneurial initiative	2.43	(27)	2.42	(26)
Training	2.46	(28)	2.26	(17)
Accurately identifying the company values	2.50	(29)	2.74	(31)
Willingness to be mobile	2.55	(30)	2.46	(28)
Educational credentials/ qualifications	2.71	(31)	2.90	(34)
Luck – being in the right place at the right time	2.72	(32)	2.74	(31)
Networks/contacts* (U=1079; p=0.003)	2.75	(33)	3.31	(38)
Willingness to 'play the game'	2.92	(34)	2.73	(30)
Role models	2.98	(35)	2.86	(33)
Access to appropriate networks* (U=865; p=0.002)	3.07	(36)	2.67	(42)
Impersonal decisions made at a higher level	3.08	(37)	2.93	(35)
Being mentored	3.14	(38)	3.19	(36)
Having a career plan	3.17	(39)	3.25	(37)
Performance management and appraisal schemes	3.25	(40)	3.33	(39)
Internal politics	3.33	(41)	3.41	(40)
Off the job experiences/ interests outside work	3.39	(42)	3.49	(41)
Being sponsored	3.42	(43)	3.68	(43)

(1= A Great Deal; 2= Quite A Lot; 3= Moderate; 4=Little; 5=Not At All)

Table V: <u>Problems in Senior Women and Men's Careers To Date</u>

	Women		Men	
	%	**Rank Order**	**%**	**Rank Order**
Organisational/internal politics	70.0	(1)	56.8	(2)
Absence of mentors	55.1	(2)	43.8	(7)
Conflicts between personal and work life	50.0	(3)	39.7	(10)
Lack of training provision* ($\chi2$ =4.044; df=1; χ^2=0.044)	48.0	(4)	30.1	(16)
Lack of feedback on performance	46.0	(5)	53.4	(3)
Limited promotion opportunities	46.0	(6)	58.9	(1)
Personal factors (e.g. being too blunt, outspoken)	44.9	(7)	30.1	(16)
Personality clash with line manager	44.0	(8)	49.3	(4)
Lack of career guidance	44.0	(9)	45.2	(5)
Double standards for evaluating performance	42.9	(10)	40.5	(8)
Competition from peers	42.0	(11)	44.4	(6)
Prejudice of colleagues	42.0	(12)	41.1	(9)
Lack of own career strategies	42.0	(13)	37.0	(11)
Lack of support from male bosses* ($\chi2$ =3.941; df=1; χ^2=0.047)	40.0	(14)	23.3	(22)
Lack of support from male colleagues* ($\chi2$ =4.073; df=1; χ^2=0.044)	38.8	(15)	21.9	(24)
Social pressures (eg from friends/family) * ($\chi2$ =5.355; df=1; p=0.021)	38.0	(16)	19.2	(27)
Pay inequalities	36.7	(17)	33.3	(12)
Men's club network* ($\chi2$ =30.785; df=1; χ^2=0.001)	36.0	(18)	Nil	(45)
Lack of confidence	36.0	(19)	32.9	(14)
Organisational attitudes towards women*($\chi2$ =23.926; df=1; χ^2=0.001)	32.7	(20)	1.4	(42)
Hitting the glass ceiling (blocked career progress)	32.0	(21)	32.9	(13)
Inflexible working practices* ($\chi2$ =3.969; df=1; χ^2=0.046)	30.0	(22)	15.1	(33)
Family commitments	30.0	(23)	31.9	(15)
Lack of female role models	30.0	(24)	18.1	(30)
Lack of assertiveness	28.6	(25)	20.5	(25)
Exclusion from informal networks* ($\chi2$ =3.865; df=1; χ^2=0.049)	28.0	(26)	13.7	(34)
Organisational culture	28.0	(27)	23.3	(23)
Not being sponsored	28.0	(28)	28.8	(18)
Lack of challenging, high profile assignments	26.0	(29)	26.0	(19)
Lack of significant general management and line experience	22.0	(30)	17.8	(31)
Prejudice of colleagues	22.0	(31)	12.3	(37)
Lack of support from female colleagues	20.4	(32)	19.2	(28)
Difficulty with child care arrangements	20.0	(33)	11.0	(38)
Feelings of marginalization	20.0	(34)	15.3	(32)
Lack of political awareness	18.0	(35)	24.7	(20)
Lack of support from female bosses	17.4	(36)	18.3	(29)
Inability to shift function	16.0	(37)	24.7	(20)
Bullying/harassment	16.0	(38)	13.7	(34)
No barrier	14.6	(39)	12.7	(36)
Lack of mobility	14.0	(40)	8.3	(40)
Sexual discrimination	10.4	(41)	4.1	(41)
Age discrimination	10.0	(42)	9.6	(39)
Sexual orientation discrimination	6.0	(43)	1.4	(42)
Insufficient education* ($\chi2$ =6.822; df=1; χ^2=0.009)	4.0	(44)	20.5	(26)
Race discrimination	Nil	(45)	Nil	(45)