

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Gender and Competition: A Dynamic for Managers

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DECLARATION

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Jane Dennehy

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality continues to exist in the labour market and this project contributes to discussions on why women are not equally represented in management hierarchies relative to their labour participation rates. Competition is the central lens used to evaluate current debates and add new perspectives to gendered processes in management. As an area of research, competition is largely neglected in the gender and management body of work. This study is important in exploring how as a concept and a practice, competition can operate in organisations and in the individual careers of men and women managers. Informing the thesis is a review of theories including gender performance, individualization, stereotypes and management styles which contribute to building a framework for understanding and engaging with competition and competitive relations.

Adapted from Bradley's (1999) model of gendered power, competition is defined as a series of dimensions which are investigated to research how and in what ways competition is gendered. Qualitative data was collected and analysed with the findings indicating a confused and often contradictory picture demonstrating how managers engage with competition and competitive relations. Within organisations and management hierarchies competition, some managers claim, remains distant from their experiences at work and is not widely discussed. For others external competition located within the marketplace is strongly identified with, whereas other managers cite personal competition and its role in their own self development as the base for their experience. Suggesting competition is a single concept or has a single location for practice has limitations. The model designed and used in this project builds competition as a multidimensional concept which can be explored across a range of activities and attitudes examining how increased visibility and understanding of competitive relations can inform those management practices and policies which sustain gender inequality.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Competition has always been a dirty word for me. As long ago as I can remember, I have never felt comfortable competing with others...Why was it necessary to be pitted against others in order to discover one's potential? I like to think I am no longer as naive as I was at school and after being in the workforce I've come to view competition less simplistically.

Debra Matsumoto: 1987

Continued gender inequality in the labour market, specifically in management, lies at the heart of this study. The high rates of women in part-time work, prevailing pay gaps across industries, on-going occupational segregation and the double burden women carry in terms of care and career apparent across western societies, remains on social science research agendas (McRae: 2003, Brannen: 2005, EOC: 2005, Connelly: 2008). Furthermore the numerical imbalance between those men and women who reach positions of senior management is a continued cause for concern (Coe: 1992, Wajcman: 1998, Powell and Graves: 2003, Schein: 2007). The recent development of a feminised work force is a significant social change and such participation rates can be argued as a measure of equality. But discourses of equality which suggest that access to education and jobs is adequate to achieving parity can be distracting from the on-going requirement to monitor and analyse the reality of women's working conditions and career trajectories as compared with men.

Investigating the barriers for women managers at work and the impact on their careers is an important facet of this investigation. Exploring why men and women managers can experience work and career in different ways motivates questions as to where such differences are located, how they are maintained and why they may go unchallenged. The diversity within management in a context of industry, organisation, hierarchy and gender highlights the importance of continuing to explore the experiences of men and women managers. My thesis

identifies competition as the lens through which to examine the ways in which managers' understand their experiences and perceptions of work and gender.

The central question I address is how and in what ways is competition and competitive relations in management gendered? The competitive relations managers may experience across organisational environments and contexts are difficult to define. This study aims to uncover managers' perceptions of competition at work and to investigate what role competition and competitive relations has (or has had) on the managers' career development and lifestyle decisions using the following five secondary questions:

1. Do men and women in the workplace perceive and experience competition and competitive relations differently?
2. How do competitive relations at work affect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders?
3. What is the relationship between competition and success and/or failure in terms of career development/pathways/trajectories?
4. Is engaging with competition and competitive relations at work mandatory and if it is, what effect does this have on workplace and career choices and the wellbeing of the worker?
5. How do competitive relations at work impact on responsibilities and activities outside of work?

1.1 Context of research

For many people, the world of work is a central component of life as the remuneration allows them to meet the basic economic needs of shelter, food and clothing. How people will work in the future is a subject that invites a multi-disciplinary range of views that predict success for some and failure for others often depending on how as individuals they approach the supply and demand of skills required in the market. Participation rates in the labour market for men and women are now largely equal as singular notions of the male breadwinner and nuclear family have fractured to encompass a multitude of living conditions (Crompton: 1999). Increases in the rates of single households, a higher average childbearing age for women, more tertiary educated men and women and longer

life expectancies have contributed to changing notions of career. The emergence of portfolio careers, knowledge collateral and the growth of small businesses developing alongside linear careers in organisations that can be local, national or global, establishes a working environment that can demand much from workers. Managers across all hierarchies therefore need to be flexible and adapt to constantly changing external and internal markets ensuring the resources they control deliver the results expected. Whether operating in a large business or a small enterprise the demands for repeated optimum performance from managers can be relentless and can have a significant impact on how they manage and construct their career. Making decisions about which skills to develop in order to remain competitive within an organisation and in the wider labour market place have increasingly become the responsibility of the individual (Beck: 1992). In such circumstances the tools which may be advantageous in achieving career goals can be mentors, networks, progressive thinking superiors, good childcare facilities and an organisation which has a culture of inclusivity across functions and hierarchies (Ibarra: 1993, 2007, Hochschild: 1997, Oakley: 2000, Mintzberg: 2004).

How the big picture of the labour market and the changing patterns of employment translate into the everyday reality of managers' lives in terms of career development, cultivation of ambition and notions of success is also addressed. The perceptions and experiences of managers throughout their working history can provide insights into how individual managers reach and maintain their current position. Such information can highlight the positive and negative influences encountered and the outcome of such events exploring how this may affect attitudes and on-going stereotypes. How time and life stages can change outlooks can also contribute to identifying how different influences can distinguish the experiences of one manager from another. Examining the role of gender for managers is crucial to assessing how it can impact on other elements of work and career as they are explored. At the centre of a manager's experiences are the relationships they have with the organisation which includes superiors, peers and subordinates. How cultures at work determine meanings and definitions of competition for example, is important to understanding the parameters within which managers' define their experiences and perceptions of

what they do and how they do it. How relationships change within organisations may be the result, for example, of a promotion, departmental restructuring, career breaks or the employment of new peers or superiors. Identifying and analysing the range of relationships a manager may have over the course of their career and the role of competition in how they develop different relationships is used to observe the interplay with gender.

Competition is a multifaceted dynamic that is ever present, yet often invisible and largely unarticulated amongst managers. For some it is only ever considered as negative, for others it is merely a necessary part of operating in a market economy and for a few it is a motivating and meaningful contribution to their working lives and leisure activities. As an area of research which is generally neglected the challenge for this study is to add to the spectrum of definitions, experiences and perceptions building a picture of competition as a dynamic concept. Re-interpreting Bradley's (1999) model of gendered power, I developed a competition model to unravel the complexities of the concept and its practices.

1.2 Managers in the UK and Australia

Although the UK and Australia have different population totals (approximately 61 and 21 million respectively) they present similar employment sectors. In the period 1996 to 2006 as shown in Table 1.1 and 1.2 the ratios of men to women in different industry sectors remain static in both countries. Of notable interest is the UK construction industry which has over the period gradually increased the employment ratio of men to women which is reported at 8:1 exceeding comparative figures from Australia. While transport, communications, utilities and agriculture industry sectors display ratios of 3:1 men to women and manufacturing reports on the margins at 2.9:1 it is evident that these industries remain dominated by men. The business, finance and service industries are where gender parity is found while women predictably continue to dominate education, health and public administration a scenario also mirrored in Australia.

Table 1.1 Employment by Industry UK			
Gender ratio men to women	1996	2001	2006
Construction	7.5 : 1	8.2 : 1	8.1 : 1
Transport and communications	4.5 : 1	2.9 : 1	3.2 : 1
Agriculture and fishing	3.7 : 1	2.8 : 1	3 : 1
Mining, electricity, gas and water	4.1 : 1	2.5 : 1	3 : 1
Manufacturing	2.3 : 1	2.6 : 1	2.9 : 1
Finance and business services	1 : 1	1.1 : 1	1.2 : 1
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	0.8 : 1	0.9 : 1	0.9 : 1
Other services	0.8 : 1	0.9 : 1	0.9 : 1
Education, health and public administration	0.4 : 1	0.4 : 1	0.4 : 1

Source: UK National Statistics – Industry data 1959 -2008

In Australia the biggest growth industry over the ten year period is for men in construction where a 50% increase is recorded. For women the largest growth is 35% recorded in health and social assistance sector. While the categories in Table 1.2 are more specific than in Table 1.1 the labour market in both countries has gender profiles highlighting similar patterns of occupational segregation.

Table 1.2 Employment by Industry Australia			
Gender ratio men to women	1996	2001	2006
Mining	6.8 : 1	6.3 : 1	5.6 : 1
Construction	6.4 : 1	6.5 : 1	6.3 : 1
Electricity, gas, water and waste	5.2 : 1	2 : 1	3.5 : 1
Transport, postal and warehousing	3.4 : 1	3.2 : 1	3.3 : 1
Manufacturing	2.6 : 1	2.6 : 1	2.8 : 1
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2.2 : 1	2.2 : 1	2.2 : 1
Wholesale Trade	2.1 : 1	2 : 1	1.8 : 1
Public Administration and safety	1.7 : 1	1.5 : 1	1.2 : 1
Other Services	1.5 : 1	1.5 : 1	1.2 : 1
Information, media and telecommunications	1.4 : 1	1.3 : 1	1.3 : 1
Rental, hiring and real estate services	1.2 : 1	1 : 1	1 : 1
Professional, scientific and technical services	1.2 : 1	1.2 : 1	1.2 : 1
Arts and recreation services	1 : 1	1 : 1	1 : 1
Administrative and support services	0.8 : 1	0.9 : 1	0.9 : 1
Retail trade	0.7 : 1	0.8 : 1	0.7 : 1
Accommodation and food services	0.7 : 1	0.7 : 1	0.8 : 1
Financial and insurance services	0.7 : 1	0.5 : 1	0.4 : 1
Education and training	0.5 : 1	0.5 : 1	0.4 : 1
Healthcare and social assistance	0.2 : 1	0.3 : 1	0.2 : 1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics No 2068

Tables 1.3 and 1.4 below show the ratios of male to female managers reported in the UK and Australia. The figures highlight that vertical segregation is prevalent in both geographies. For Australia the ratio is 4.5:1 men to women managers and in the UK across functional and senior managers the ratio is 2.4:1 and 3.2:1 respectively. These numbers are the foundation for demonstrating that gender inequality exists in multiple hierarchical levels and sectors of the both labour markets. The EOC (UK) in 2007 reported from FTSE 100 companies that the average representation of women over chairs, CEO's and board directors was 14% only with the media (which includes publishing) industry showing an increase in the number of national newspaper editors (9.1% in 2003 and 17.4% in 2006) and chief executives of media companies (7.4% in 2003 and 10.5% in 2006) in the FTSE 350 (UK EOC: 2007). In both countries as shown in tables 1.3 and 1.4 the existence of part time managers is marginal and highlights an area which continues to largely operate outside mainstream management debates but is closely aligned with the 'brain drain' which is discussed in chapter five.

Table 1.3		
Managers by Industry 2006 Australia		
Gender ratio men to women	Full Time	Part Time
Construction	29 : 1	2 : 1
Mining	10 : 1	0 : 0
Personal and other services	10 : 1	0 : 0
Transport, postal and warehousing	5 : 1	0 : 0
Manufacturing	5 : 1	1 : 1
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5 : 1	.5 : 1
Arts and recreation services	5 : 1	.5 : 1
Wholesale Trade	4.6 : 1	1 : .1
Information, media and telecoms	4.5 : 1	0 : 0
Healthcare and social assistance	3.3 : 1	0 : .1
Rental, hiring and real estate services	2.7 : 1	.5 : 1
Retail Trade	2.6 : 1	.5 : 1
Electricity, gas, water and waste	2.5 : 1	0 : 0
Financial and insurance services	2.4 : 1	.5 : 1
Professional, scientific, technical services	1.6 : 1	.3 : 1
Accommodation and food services	1.3 : 1	0 : 0
Education and training	1.3 : 1	.5 : 1
Administrative and support services	1 : .01	0 : 03
Public Administration and safety	.5 : 1	0 : 01

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Data Cubes ST E0

Table 1.4		
Managers by Industry and Function UK 2006		
Gender ratio men to women	Full Time	Part Time
Farming	59 : 0	0 : 0
Production Managers	15 : 1	0 : 10
Senior Managers and officials	3.2 : 1	0 : 0
Protective Services	2.5 : 0	0 : 0
Functional Managers	2.4 : 1	.2 : 1
Distribution, storage and retail	2.2 : 1	0 : 18
Quality and customer care	1.8 : 1	0 : 0
Other Services	1.7 : 1	0 : 21
Hospitality and leisure	1.3 : 1	0 : 18
Financial Institutions and office managers	0.8 : 1	0 : 53
Health and social services	0.4 : 1	0 : 27

Source: UK National Statistics - Workforce Jobs SOC April-June 2006

Women managers in Australia slightly increased over the reported five years from 24.3% to 27.9% with education and health the only sectors where women hold management positions over 50% and 69% respectively. The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency - Australia (EOWA) in 2002 commissioned its first annual research measuring the proportion of women in executive positions collecting data from the country's top 200 companies. The 2006 results show women accounting for 2% of chairs, 3% of CEO's and 8.7% of board directors combining for an average representation of 4.6%.

Labour markets in different geographies (UK and Australia) highlight how gender inequality is far reaching and continues to prevent men and women from accessing all industry sectors and hierarchical levels in line with their individual skills and experience. Change continues to be slow in both countries and even regressive as highlighted in the construction industry.

1.3 Overview of thesis

In this thesis I focus on managers as they often occupy positions where the combination of responsibility, authority and power can have positive and negative outcomes on competitive relations. How such a combination manifests in the workplace can depend on where in the hierarchy it emanates from;

superiors, peers or subordinates. Having such multiple experiences can be a rich source of data from which to gain knowledge about perceptions and experiences of competition. The data is drawn from interviews carried out with thirty-two middle and senior managers predominantly from the publishing industry in the UK and Australia. The interviews were conducted face to face and on the telephone, were digitally recorded and transcribed.

My interest in gender and management stems from observations and experiences of talented and skilful women constrained by trying to combine a family and a career and reaching a point where a decision is required to prioritise one over the other. Placing this scenario into the context of why women do not reach senior positions in more than token numbers began raising issues about what dynamics are active in the workplace. Such dynamics if understood more fully could open up the opportunity for change and equality of opportunity. Identifying competition, often perceived as a one dimensional concept, as the centre of this investigation is important for engaging with new ideas and re-engaging with old ones. This process is important to the exploration undertaken as it demands understanding the multiple roles of managers and the vast range of experiences they encounter in learning and practising their craft.

Chapter two defines the three cornerstones of the study, gender, management and competition. Drawing on the work of Hakim (2000) and Beck (1992, 2002) choice, constraint and competition is discussed in relation to the labour market. Butler's (1999) theory of gender performance and Schein's (1975, 1989, and 1992) work on stereotypes contributes to the discussion of how gender relations continues to impact on individuals and the relationship they have with organisations. Throughout this chapter it is argued that the perceptions of competition and its impacts are not well understood and are largely in-articulated by managers validating the purpose of this investigation.

Chapter three begins with a synopsis of current definitions and models of competition. The eight dimensional competition model (external, personal, interpersonal, internal, symbolic, positional, collective and temporal) developed for this study is defined and examined using relevant literature and debates.

Chapter four outlines the methodology for the project discussing the influences informing the process of decisions undertaken. This includes feminist research positions and grounded theory. How and where the fieldwork was conducted and the obstacles and challenges faced are also described and discussed alongside a broad profile of the media industry to locate the study within this industry.

Chapter five begins the data analysis by focusing on temporal competition and how men and women managers perceive and experience this dimension at work and outside work. Issues with time and how this impacts on the behaviours and attitudes of managers is discussed with reference to themes of presenteeism, long hours and how such structures can be manipulated to advantage the organisation. How time is utilised at work is explored including travelling time and meetings highlighting how positional power can be experienced in varying degrees in relation to power over other individuals' time.

Chapter six examines how the managers' expanding levels of engagement with competition and competitive relations develop throughout this study. During this process of sense making three repertoires emerge from the managers to explain and encompass their perceptions and experiences of competition. Firstly my relationship with organisational structures, secondly the story of me and my career so far and thirdly my portfolio of relationships at work. For some managers healthy competition is their baseline frame of reference. This chapter begins by discussing how this ill-defined notion can limit engagement in relationships and activity at work and produce disappointing outputs for individuals by creating a resistance to moving beyond singular notions of competition. The discussion then progresses to analysing how the repertoires can intersect and co-exist to present and understand more dynamic versions of competition.

Chapter seven focuses on analysing formal and informal practices of competition in management. To extend the discussion the competition matrix is developed mapping the managers' experiences of competition at work in a way which generates profiles and illustrates the dynamism of competition at work. The

matrix presents a lens through which to discuss how the gender and competition at work can over time influence managers as they learn and develop the spectrum of roles within their career. Examining the basis of how the attitudes and behaviours of men and women managers are formed, developed and maintained and what influence this has on their success are also discussed.

Chapter eight brings together my findings engaging directly with the main research questions to present conclusions which intend to contribute to the debates on women in management, gender and organisations and competition at work. My thesis highlights how simple models and definitions of competition are inadequate to explain how this dynamic is perceived and experienced at work. Developing the eight dimensional competition model is shown to be instrumental in unpacking and exploring competition to enable greater understanding, insight and scrutiny into different relationships at work. I utilise the context of gender and management to discover what competition is and how this concept in its varied forms of competitive relations can be drawn upon to help explain the differential positioning of women and men in management. Critically discussed are the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis assessing the contribution this study makes to the gender and management body of work and potential research implications which could be developed.

Chapter Two

Gender at Work

The organisational labour market is a dynamic and multifaceted arena where success and failure, advantage and disadvantage, promotion and retrenchment, discrimination and nepotism, competition and collaboration co-exist. These dynamics are fluid, constantly changing in relation to global and local markets, industries, organisations and the individuals that populate them. The majority of individuals who enter the organisational labour market are likely to experience and observe, in positive and negative ways, some of those multi-faceted dynamics listed above during their working life. This study aims to investigate one particular component of the labour market – competition and its relationship with gender and management. I begin by defining my parameters of management, competition and gender to establish a framework for exploring social and labour market theories and debates.

2.1 Defining the thesis parameters

The Australian Institute of Management defines a manager as, ‘a person who leads, organises, delegates, controls, evaluates and budgets in order to achieve an outcome.’¹ In terms of a management hierarchy, senior management is interpreted as controlling which objectives are set, while middle and junior management are assigned the day-to-day responsibility of achieving the desired objectives. Management across the world looks very different in the first decade of the twenty-first century from just twenty years ago when globalisation, technological development and increasingly sophisticated consumers were beginning to claim the attention of management consultants and practitioners, as both key indicators and drivers of future market economies (Karpin: 1995, Mamman and Rees: 2005). In the increasingly fast changing world of work, managers are key to ensuring that staff continue to adapt to new environments and develop business by embracing change whether internally or externally

¹ This definition can be found at www.aim.com.au/about/management.html accessed 27/3/06. Another definition that has informed this study is from the Institute of Management UK, which defines management as ‘The achievement of objectives by working with people.’

motivated (Schaafsma: 1997). Managers are a major labour market group and in terms of their career trajectory, they have seen a widespread change in approach to their discipline. No longer does a management career exist which proceeds systematically over the lifetime of an individual allowing her/him to climb the organisational ladder (Peters: 1997). Notions that portfolio careers, project careers and personal biographies are the future for managers (Bridges: 1992, Reich: 2000) are increasingly overtaking the 'job for life' concept. This literature suggests managers are now required to accept that as contingent workers they must devise skills and strategies to develop and maintain their own career whilst continuing to succeed in the current position they hold.

Management as a sector supports an estimated £4 billion industry which includes studying the discipline and associated publishing, educating, consulting and commentary activities² (Whipp et al: 2002). This alone is testament to the complex and broad nature of this function. It also highlights the importance of managers and management hierarchies in organisations, industries and commercial markets generally. While I seek to investigate managers and competition, I draw more specifically on women in management and more recently gender and management body of work. The contribution of theory, debate and analysis on why women managers do not reach the hierarchical levels that men do, drives this study to explore competition as an additional explanation to be considered within this stream of questioning.

The second key term requiring definition is competition. In its Latin root 'competitus' means to strive together; to seek together. However, competition is often linked with notions of winning and losing. The sporting framework is a popular and comfortable place to begin a discussion of competition as it provides reference points within the scarcity and challenge models which are widely understood and practiced. The challenge model operates in competitions, for example running races, where any number of the contenders can cross the line to win - theoretically this can be one person or everyone. This highlights the point that even in sporting events where a minimum standard of performance is

² This is based on 2001 figures.

required to compete, on race day any number of differences can potentially advantage one person over another. For example weather, training and preparation or even how one slept the night before the race may have an influence on the competitors. In terms of attitude and performance, the more well matched the race the greater the challenge.

The second model of competition also used widely in sport is the zero sum game or scarcity model where there can be only one winner. The competition of the game is structured to continue to the point where one person or team can be declared the winner. Even where at the end of the specified time allocation the position is a tie, many games have mechanics in the rules enlisted to resolve the tie. For example in football there is extra time and if at the end of this period the game remains tied a penalty shootout is held. In tennis, tie breaks are played at the end of a set for four sets and in the fifth and final set two consecutive games must be won to declare a winner. In other areas of the social world outside sport, I argue that competition is not as structured or as well understood and the outcomes are also not as clearly defined. In sport a winner today may be a loser tomorrow with the value of continued participation being the mainstay of on-going competitions, which particularly in professional sport, satisfies sponsors, television and radio broadcasters and, of course, fans.

In the labour market the scarcity and challenge models can operate simultaneously or separately. Miner and Longino (1987) argue that focusing solely on the scarcity model and rejecting competition on the grounds of it being rooted in capitalism, male domination or essentialism can prevent an appreciation of the value of competitive challenge. Conversely, a view that recognises only the challenge model, can be limiting, by failing to recognise that some contests may be unfairly constructed, accentuated by a hierarchical social or organisational structure that does not allow for everyone to have equal access to power and resources or to even enter the competition. These two models broadly outline widely held views of competition and raise the question as to how competition outside the sporting arena - at work and in management - is structured and whether this enables active, equal and open participation.

The third cornerstone of the study is gender. I agree with Butler and her assertion that no one account of gender is sufficient because if gender is singular in form and function it is limited in how it can be understood within different environments and cultures. Butler has been critical of defining gender in a regulated way and her view is that gender as she states is ‘not exactly what one *is* nor is it precisely what one *has*. Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized’ (Butler, 2004: 42). In other words, as Le Feuvre (1999) argues gender is not so much about biological differences but more about social processes and how the relationships which take place in society can incorporate and encourage hierarchies which can favour one individual over another. For this study the relationships at work, in organisations and in management hierarchies are an important lens from which to view gender and competition. Connell (2002) like Butler argues that gender relations and their arrangements are always changing in response to new societal circumstances. Drawing on the work of Butler (2004) Connell (2002) and La Feuvre (1999) I define gender as a social construction which can produce, maintain and use a range of discourses, operating in isolation or in combination across different relationships, locations and cultures.

Martin’s picture of gender suggests a concept which is multifunctional and can include a range of ‘meanings, expectations, actions/behaviours, resources, identities and discourses that are fluid and shifting yet robust and persistent. (Martin, 2003: 344). To use the term gender as merely a replacement for sex is to undervalue the construction of the concept and to assign it potentially stereotypical attributes. Braidotti (2002) and Connell (2002) argue that to view gender as merely having a biological relationship with individuals underpays the importance of recognising social and/or culture practices and that gender cannot ‘simply express bodily difference’ (Connell, 2002: 11). Bruni et al (2004) argues that gender is a ‘social practice, not a biological attribute, and that it must be looked for in everyday interactions, read in relation to broader symbolic-cultural domains and considered as the outcome of mediation and representation in these various domains (Bruni et al, 2004: 410-411). For Braidotti (2002) gender as a concept should be researched on three levels, personal identity, as a principle of

social organisation and as the basis for normative values. The language and social texts which influence the development of normative values are an area of concern for me here. Making the distinction between gender being a social construction and not a biological one provides the basis for dismissing essentialist arguments in terms of attributing competition any biological foundation. At the core of my study is the exploration of practices, both formal and informal of individual managers in relation to gender and competition to discover how they perceive and experience the processes and outcomes.

In management Wajcman (1999) and McDowell (1997) discuss the ways in which men and women's behaviour and attitudes can be influenced by social and professional stereotypes assigned to their gender. For example some women seek to control what they perceive as their gender weakness by embracing the attributes of their male colleagues. Such women are often cited as the group who act, dress and speak like men in order to lessen the visibility of their gender. Another side of this are the men who adhere to the accepted uniform assigned to their profession or trade for example the city banker and their pinstripe suit with the now almost extinct bowler hat. As this study is focused on the management and work environment, work already done on organisational identities, gender norms and practices has influenced the choice of gender definition.

A fourth potential cornerstone might be power but its contribution presents a dilemma for me. In organisations managers can interact with power on multiple levels. This could include power in relation to resources and processes with the potential of a range of influences and outcomes. For example, conflict with other managers to maintain or increase their resources or the instigation of regulations to increase management control over subordinates. Power like competition, could be defined as dynamic, fluid, unstable and bound up in practices, cultures and their associated discourses. To isolate power from competition would be difficult, if not potentially impossible to control. The outcome could be that power, particularly organisational power, may overlap or even overshadow competition diluting the research process and its primary aims. However I do not disregard power as a theme which may emerge during the investigation.

If the work of Foucault on power were to be included a number of issues arise. Power for Foucault is not limited, nor is it zero sum which suggests it cannot be competed for or with, yet Foucault argues that discourses are where power and knowledge combine. At this intersection he suggests is where we must direct our focus to establish whose agenda is being served and why. He states ‘...we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies’ (Foucault, 1979: 100). If power is everywhere then how can it be organised, measured or competed for which underpins why power is a dilemma I agree with Grimshaw (1993) who says that without being able to distinguish between effective and ineffective forms of resistance, how can power which Foucault argues is always shifting and is unstable, generate resistance, sustained or otherwise. Furthermore Ransom (1993) argues that discourses are not only structured ways of knowing but have strands of power within them which can influence and direct institutions and their practices. These issues highlight how power and competition, although potentially an interesting and insightful relationship, will not be the dominant area of exploration for me I would argue that until competition has been researched, theorised and debated to a greater extent when compared with the body of work on power, discussions are likely to remain power led.

Using these three key terms and pursuing them on a limited terrain - publishing - I ask the question, how and in what ways is competition and competitive relations gendered within management? Investigating the answer to this question requires an exploration of work cultures and environments to unravel the attributes of competition as an abstract concept and the practice of competitive relations in management. This discussion will begin by looking at the work of Beck and Hakim to provide a contextual overview of their social theories in relation to the labour market.

2.2 Social theories framing the labour market

The studies of social theorists Beck (1992, 2000 and 2002) and Hakim (2000) provide an overview of the issues of work, gender and competition that inform this study and the questions being addressed. Beck's risk society, reflexive modernisation and individualization theses³ have been used to explain and challenge a broad range of issues. For example, Ekinsmyth (1999) employs these ideas in relation to professional workers in the magazine industry; Fine (2005) on the role of care in society; Brannen and Nilsen (2005) in their research into choice and autonomy in western societies conducted with young people in Europe; Perrons (2000) who explores UK employment policies and Smart and Shipman (2004) in their work on family and marriage. I will use Beck's theories to discuss competition in relation to work and Hakim's Preference Theory as the point from which to explore the role of women in the labour market. These ideas will also lay the basis for outlining some of the texts influencing the discourses around the labour market and management. Beck argues that in society, work has increased its dominant influence on individuals and as he points out 'Wage labour and an occupation have become an axis of living in the industrial age' (Beck, 1992: 139). He presents the labour market as having three key dimensions: education, mobility and competition. These dimensions, he suggests, are interrelated, with the outcomes of each, having a direct effect on the other (Beck: 1992). The resulting symbiosis is of particular interest to my work

2.2.1 Beck and competition

Formal education provides an individual with credentials that are widely understood in the market i.e. a degree in business may be the basis for a job that buys or sells a product or service in a profitable way, whereas a degree in law would imply a direct employment route to a legal practice. Applying Beck's

³ Beck explores the breakdown of the industrial society and the emergence of a new modernity that does not dissolve the classic industrial society but moves beyond it. He says that the ways we think about society (i.e. gender, family, occupation, science and technology) are challenged by the new modernity and alongside new opportunities also come new risks. In a global sense 'modern society has become a risk society as it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it has produced' (Beck: 2002) A good example of this is organisational mergers or buyouts. Risk, Beck says, does not mean catastrophe but the anticipation of it. Individualization describes the structural transformation of social institutions highlighting agency as the dominant feature in the relationship between an individual and society.

ideas to this study suggests an individual on entering the labour market will experience mobility in all its forms from employment and career development to geographical location and social positioning, all of which can change over the course of a career. The individual passing through the employment process must make decisions at each career stage to meet their own objectives for life. Competition is invoked at each decision-making juncture, when in order to achieve the objective the individual must promote his/herself ahead of all other people who may wish to achieve the same or similar objective. As a work history progresses, it becomes increasingly likely that individual will be pitted against similar individuals in terms of education, societal status and aspirations in the desire to achieve their career objectives. Beck asserts that 'Where such a shared background still exists, community is dissolved in the acid bath of competition' (Beck, 1992: 94). In this context, competition could have a range of outcomes including isolation, suspicion of others, a sense of failure or success and the breakdown of existing relationships. While acknowledging the existence of competition Beck does not explore this phenomenon for its effects on individuals or their biographies.

Despite this limitation Beck's individualization thesis and its application to this study, understanding competition and its dynamics is important for giving a context to competition in the social world. Many people in western capitalist societies are tied into a network of systems that are embedded in society for example assessing education requirements and building a current and employable job portfolio. Within these systems resources are limited such as an individual's time, the availability of affordable professional assistance or access to a network of mentors and contacts that can provide reliable advice. In order to exploit available resources to build the best possible set of credentials and manage the modern bureaucratic system, knowing how, when and where to compete is essential. Beck argues that in modern society, more people want to lead a life of their own, which is illustrated in many western cultures by the dominant 'nuclear' family unit, often disconnected from tribe, class and origin. In the labour market deregulation, contract work, and weakening unions are key elements in enforcing a culture of individual workers having to adapt to the destandardisation of working hours and conditions. This is further enforced by

the breakdown of the *job for life* concept as well as the fact that the clear line between work and non-work has blurred and become more fluid and pluralised (Beck: 1992).

Adkins (1998, 2005) in her feminist critique of individualization agrees with Beck that the breakdown of many social categories illustrates their inadequacy in the modern world. But she questions whether gender is such a category suggesting that it may be the point from which inequalities are merely redefined in relation to different perspectives. Beck addresses gender specifically in his work with Beck-Gernsheim (2002) building upon the argument that in the labour market and the individualization process, women often want a life of their own but remain financially dependent on men and the state, especially while raising children. They dominate the part-time work sphere and continue to suffer inequalities in pay and promotion. Women as individuals may also face the risk of divorce, widowhood, redundancy and insufficient education. Confronted with such risks some overcome them adapting successfully to changed circumstances, while others may struggle, eventually becoming another statistic facing poverty. Beck describes the feminisation of poverty as the ‘other side of the coin of “a life of one’s own”’. (Beck et al, 2002: 67). He also admits that with such scenarios evident across western societies it is unclear how women, especially young women, will ‘cope with the disappointment of their decisively expressed vocational wishes’ (Beck, 1992: 120).

2.2.2 Hakim and competition

Hakim (2000) predicts that women will continue to populate the lower tiers of the labour market since only those women who are prepared to work in a similar way to men, and compete with them in the upper tiers of organisations where competition increases, will succeed. She argues with reference to Goldberg (1993) that psycho-physiological sex differences between men and women result in different behaviours. For example, testosterone levels produce behaviours in men that favour motivation, ambition and competitiveness. This essentialist argument presented by Goldberg (1993) and Hakim (2000) for the existence and practices of competition, however, will not be investigated here. As discussed earlier in this chapter when defining gender as a social construct and a lens to

view competition at work, dismissing gender and competition as having essentialist origins is central to this study which argues that competition and competitive relations are learned behaviours and attitudes. Yet Hakim also argues that men are a more homogeneous group than women are, 'attuned to working in environments where it is necessary to be skilled in politics and diplomacy and to perpetuate the game so that there is more than one opportunity to succeed' (Hakim, 2000: 260). This does not suggest that women are not able to develop such skills moving Hakim away from the essentialist argument and towards barriers which prevent such skill developments. Hakim suggests that in the labour market both the scarcity and challenge models operate and like Longino and Miner (1987) argues that it is important to be aware and engage with both models.

2.2.3 Preference theory

To understand the multiple roles of women in the labour market, Hakim (2000) formulates her Preference Theory using four dominant tenets in its elaboration. Firstly, changes in western society during the previous forty years mean that women now operate in a new scenario. These changes include the availability of more effective contraception, women entering the white-collar workforce in numbers and the growth of part-time work and equal opportunities policies. Secondly, there is conflict between a life dominated by paid employment and one centred on child rearing. Women as a group are heterogeneous in their work-lifestyle preferences as well as in how they deal with the issues that arise from them. Thirdly, women will conflict with other women as preferences and interests diverge. Finally, the way in which women respond to social policy will vary according to their individual priorities. Hakim argues that because women have conflicting interests it 'makes it difficult for them to organize around any single set of common aims and women often find themselves in fundamental conflict over which policies genuinely benefit women' (Hakim, 2000: 283). Through applying these four tenets of her Preference Theory, Hakim explains and predicts women's choices and preferences in combining work and family over their lifecycle.

Table 2.1 outlines the tendencies associated with the three classifications that Hakim presents illustrating how women are not a homogenous group at work or at home. Hakim explains that the work-centred classification is not strictly accurate as it includes all women for whom motherhood and family life is not the priority. However, this does not mean that all the women in this group are childless although Hakim suggests that family will be regarded in the same way as work-centred men regard them, as an ‘expression of normality and a weekend hobby’ (Hakim, 2000: 280). For many women in this group work would be the priority, ‘but it may equally well be political activity, religious activity, intellectual activity ...all of which provide channels for competitive achievement and self-expression’ (Hakim, 2000: 164). The largest group is the ‘adaptives’ who seek to combine a work life balance that has two foci - family (including motherhood) and employment. Hakim argues these women opt out of choosing one path, changing priorities according to their changing circumstances. This maybe based on whom they marry or even what industry or professional they choose. Teaching and health professions lend themselves to flexible working arrangements including shift work, locum work and school term-time work.

Hakim’s Preference Theory is clearly an important contribution to the genre of gender and work choice, as women’s participation in the labour market is marked in modern economies by the existence and exercising of all three classifications by women (Hakim, 2000: 170). Within the classifications, it is important to take the generalisations made, see beyond them and unpack them to enable a more in-depth discussion of women in work and particularly for this study those in management. However in the process of initiating such discussions it is important to keep a watchful eye that notions of categorising women as other (de Beauvoir: 1997) and fostering a fix the woman direction (Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland: 2009).

Table 2.1 Work-lifestyle preferences in the 21st century

Home-centred	Adaptive	Work-centred
20% of women - varies 10%-30%	60% of women - varies 40%-80%	20% of women - varies 10%-30%
Family life and children are the main priorities throughout life.	This group is most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and those with unplanned careers.	Childless women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities in the public arena: politics, sport, art etc.
Prefer not to work.	Want to work, but not totally committed to work career.	Committed to work or equivalent activities.
Qualifications obtained for intellectual dowry.	Qualifications obtained with the intention of working.	Large investment in qualifications/training for employment or other activities.
Number of children is affected by government social policy, family wealth etc. Not responsive to employment policy	Very responsive to government social policy, employment policy equal opportunities policy/propaganda, economic cycles.	Responsive to economic opportunity, political opportunity, artistic opportunity Not responsive to social/family policy.

SOURCE: Hakim, 2000: 158

2.2.4 Choices and constraints

The debates around choice and constraint and the feminist critiques in relation to Hakim's Preference Theory (Crompton and Harris: 1998, Padfield and Proctor: 1999, Himmelweit and Sigala: 2001, McRae: 2003, Walters: 2005) will be discussed in reference to how the classifications themselves, are not as problematic as the originating premise - that women choose how they want to interact and at what level in the labour market. For example, not all women can access part time work or flexible employment arrangements. Such a scenario

may result in alternative options being activated including self-employment or only having one child so that a return to work can be achieved within a relatively short period. As more women spend more time in the world of work, a range of issues emerge which affect them at work and outside of work. Preference Theory makes the point that women are not all the same, regardless of how they are classified across the three types outlined in the Table 2.1, the resolution of problems is as varied as the problems themselves. In a study by Still and Timms (2000) of women's participation in small businesses (a growing trend worldwide), they found that the reasons for entry were; the need for flexibility, an escape from the corporate world or having a job over which they had better control. Marshall (1995) found in her study that women managers were leaving their jobs for a number of reasons. Some wanted the time and space to reorient their lives and careers having reached a type of middling plateau, others left for health reasons, some because their position became untenable and career development was blocked and others because the family/work balance was out of kilter.

Constraint and choice appear at different ends of the preference spectrum and map onto the scarcity and challenge models of competition. Choice suggests an open competition where any number of individuals can achieve their objectives. Constraint conversely suggests that the only way an individual can win their selection is by changing the circumstances which negate access to choice. However as Miner (1987) argues choice and constraint are at the centre of what she describes as the 'ideology of competition' which does not take into account how power, control and access to resources are distributed and how this impacts on the choices available. Preference Theory maintains its focus on choice as being free from constraint. Crompton and Harris (1998a) suggest that women have a much more diverse and often complex range of considerations which can change over time when dealing with decisions about work and family. Walters (2005) argues that Hakim's work although important in recognising the agency of women suggests that choice and constraint have an interactionary relationship. Factors such as children and care responsibilities, occupational opportunities, financial pressures and geographical location may contribute to structural constraints limiting the choices available.

Competition from a feminist perspective has been stereotyped in terms of attitude, behaviour and largely a male issue and domain. Miner and Longino (1987) argue that the challenge and scarcity models of competition have not been viewed or analysed in terms of understanding how they work and interact by feminists. This dismissal has meant that women have been slow to identify and understand the dynamic beyond the one dimension of winning and losing. 'Feminists have long been fiercely critical of male power games, yet we have ignored or concealed our own conflicts over money, control, position and recognition' (Miner and Longino, 1987: 1). The reference to hidden conflicts amongst feminists suggests an uneasy relationship between feminism, management and competition. This will be explored in more depth later in this chapter. In building profiles for her classifications Hakim offers no exploration of why women have particular preferences and what influential factors are behind them. Also not discussed in any detail is the structural barriers that women can face in the labour market; for example, a notion that competition and competitive relations maybe accepted as a dynamic, fostered and enjoyed by men but protected as a domain which is largely unavailable for women to participate in. Hakim's Preference Theory also gives little consideration to how women can overcome the obstacles that impede their work and lifestyle goals.

McRae's (2003) study collected empirical evidence to consider the claims of Preference Theory and found that choices and constraints fell into two areas: normative and structural (McRae, 2003: 329). The normative issues relate to the person and their beliefs while the structural issues relate to day-to-day considerations. McRae also found that a major influence on women's choices about combining work and family is grounded in their beliefs about motherhood. She established that some women became family focused after having children, having, prior to this, planned to return to work. McRae argues Hakim's classifications are not new but confirms from her own longitudinal study that employment is the priority for a small number of women. McRae contests that Hakim's premise in Preference Theory (that women have genuine choices in terms of employment) is flawed, as 'she appears to confuse voluntary action with genuine or unconstrained choice' (McRae, 2003: 333). Padfield and Proctor

(1999) undertook empirical research to investigate the effectiveness of Preference Theory as an explanation of women's relationship with the labour market. They interviewed women aged between 18 and 27 years to challenge the notion that 'patterns of work commitment are claimed to be developed by early adulthood' (Padfield and Proctor, 1999: 152). They conclude that to understand women and their role/s in the labour market, broad classifications provide a superficial picture, as over time the classifications become unsustainable as situations and intentions change.

Classifications are by nature general, but they remain helpful by drawing out patterns, challenging concepts and encouraging clarity. Crompton and Lyonette (2005) argue that identities and behaviours in explanations of women's employment are fluid and adapt over time to changing situations and circumstances. In Himmelweit and Sigala's study (2001) of women's choices and constraints in making decisions about work and caring for their pre-school children, they found attitudes linking perceptions of self-identity as a mother conflicting with their identity as a worker. For example, if a woman does not see herself as being someone who would put her child in day care then her ability to work is severely limited. Three key determinants were identified in their study as having major influences on the decision making process; financial need and the cost of working⁴, childcare availability and time. One of the main questions women asked was, whether in taking all the elements into consideration, what is the benefit of working? Over time the answers to this question changed in line with changing attitudes to motherhood and employment as the study found amongst the respondents who were re-interviewed. Resolving internal and external constraints meant adapting behaviours and identities in the hope of achieving a range of aims including working less hours and having greater flexibility. In working environments where these aims were not possible some respondents in the study did reassess how they work and for whom.

Selecting Beck and Hakim and their contributions to social theory supports the developing investigation of the research question is competition gendered?

⁴ The cost of working included travel and childcare costs, which were seen as costs of a women's employment.

Beck's individualization theory highlights how people's relationships with jobs, careers, organisations and the composition of their own life are changing, compounded by the breakdown of some social categories. In this arena Beck argues that for many women their relationships with the labour market are further complicated by the responsibility of family and care often requiring financial dependence. This means that having a life of one's own is not as clear for women because of the considerations which come, particularly with young and pre-school children. Tensions in women's relationship with the labour market and their domestic domains as socially prescribed gender roles collide with employment positions are highlighted in Hakim's Preference Theory. Her classifications of women's preferences raise the question as to whether women perceive and experience preference as a choice, constraint or merely a collision of needs and wants which operate in an identified competition which moves between the scarcity and challenge models.

2.3 Gender in the labour market: the inequality debates

In the broader labour market questions as to why gender inequalities exist has been the focus of much debate over the past thirty years. From patriarchy to essentialism, occupational segregation to equal opportunities for example, research has been undertaken. The women and gender in management⁵ body of work has made significant contributions to the debates looking closely at issues around why clusters of women are found in junior and middle management levels and not at senior levels. Exploring the debates will contribute to unravelling the issues important to seeking resolution of continued inequality in the labour market and management. This includes discussing the provenance of terms such as glass ceilings, glass walls and sticky floors⁶ leading to why I identified

⁵ Women in management as a body of work is now widely referred to as gender in management. For this study the term gender in management will be used to encompass the work of women in management.

⁶ Coining the term 'glass ceiling' has been attributed to Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt who used it in an article on the 24 March 1986 in the Wall Street Journal on the corporate woman. The special report described a corporate world where access to the top for women was blocked by corporate tradition and prejudice. The term is often attributed to mean the invisible barriers based on gender or race rather than on talent, education, ability and record of accomplishment to be promoted or employed at a higher level. (<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/library/research/questionofthemonth/jan05.html> –accessed 28/02/08) 'Sticky floors' and 'glass walls' are terms that refer to vertical and horizontal segregation. Glass cliff is a relatively new addition to this group of terms describing the situation where women who reach senior levels are given precarious roles in organisations potentially becoming scapegoats for poor corporate performances. (See Haslam and Ryan: 2005).

competition, as a critical area of investigation. While not well researched within the context of gender and management I propose that competition could become a useful addition to this body work. The following five sub questions and the framework of organisational structures, behaviours and attitudes an investigation will be instrumental to answering the key research question, is competition gendered?

- Do men and women in the workplace perceive and experience competition and competitive relations differently?
- How do competitive relations at work affect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders?
- What is the relationship between competition and success and/or failure in terms of career development/pathways/trajectories?
- Is engaging with competition and competitive relations at work mandatory and if it is, what effect does this have on workplace and career choices and the wellbeing of the worker?
- How do competitive relations at work impact on responsibilities and activities outside of work?

The gender in management body of work is comprehensive but neglects competition as an area of research. This may be for two reasons. Firstly, the feminist project focuses on women who are visibly disadvantaged in society rather than women managers who as a group can appear to be operating successfully in the labour market. Secondly, it may be uncomfortable for some feminists to explore areas where women and men operate in a similar scenario of work and success. Wajcman argues that women managers who are successful in careers 'have not been feminism's favourite daughters' (Wajcman, 1998: 32). To operate in a male-dominated world requires a degree of privilege in terms of education and opportunity and for the feminist project, women managers may appear self-sufficient and in positions where they are not confronted with issues of oppression and inequality shared by other women.

2.3.1 Patriarchy: influencing organisations

Exploring organisational structures and examining how they may influence managers' perceptions and experiences of gender and competition is important and there is value in starting this area of investigation with a discussion of patriarchy. This theory has been central to the development of debates around the relationship of gender and organisations. Patriarchy as a theory has offered one way to analyse gender relations and as Jane Flax argues, 'A fundamental goal of feminist theory is (ought to be) to analyse gender relations; how gender relations are constituted and experienced and how we think about, or equally, do not think about them' (Flax, 1990: 40). Patriarchy for many analysts continues to provide a sound framework for beginning an analysis of gender inequality (Witz: 1992, Ross: 1995, Segal: 1999). For this study reviewing the development of theories of patriarchy presents a useful point from which to examine social structures generally, building a sound foundation from which to discuss organisational structures and the gender relations which can function within them. Major contributions to this theory focus on trying to define the source and location of women's subordination and I agree with Braidotti's (2002) who states that in researching gender, historical and cultural contexts should be reviewed to better understand how individual identities and normative values can be maintained and fostered.

For Delphy (1984) patriarchy is based on the domestic mode of production and economic dependence of women on men. Hartmann (1997) contends that patriarchy is a set of social relations with a material base, where men form a hierarchy which contributes to the domination of women. Walby (1990) argues that 'patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate oppress and exploit women' (Walby, 1990: 20). Patriarchy has alongside its theoretical development, attracted criticism for being universal and a grand narrative, suggesting men oppress all women in the same way concluding it ineffective as an analytical tool for feminist research (Fraser and Nicholson: 1990, Barrett and Phillips: 1992, Weedon: 1987, Scott: 1986).

Acker (1989) argues that using gender as the focus for understanding society and its processes would generate better answers about the subordination of women.

Nonetheless, she does add the caveat that ‘there is a danger in abandoning the project of patriarchy. In the move to gender, the connections between urgent political issues and theoretical analysis, which made the development of feminist thought possible, may be weakened’ (Acker, 1989: 239). Patriarchy continues to provide a platform of discontent for some analysts of gender relations and attempts to deal with this are on-going. Pollert (1996) remarks on how the survival of patriarchy continues, even when social science has moved towards analysing fragments rather than universal concepts. Patriarchy as an analytical tool Pollert argues is insufficient at explaining gender relations because men and women display varying degrees of power and agency in different relationships. While I agree with Pollert’s analysis it is important to understand the process of theoretical developments and in this case the nuance that is the lingering influence of patriarchy on debates of gender positioning in society and in organisations. The intention in this study is not to use patriarchy as a means of explanation for gender relations in management, but to explore how patriarchy can impact how men and women understand their lives in the labour market and more specifically in the organisations they populate.

Acker (1990) identifies that gender is an integral component of organisations and operates in five ways. Firstly, gender is used as a division that constructs boundaries at work both in terms of physical space and acceptable behaviours. Secondly, it is the use of symbols and images such as dress codes and language. Thirdly, it is the interaction between men and women in the workplace and the devices used both subconsciously and consciously that reinforce gender roles. The fourth way is the manner in which the first three influence the individual into assimilating the messages into their own identity. Finally, how gender is performed at work carries over into the wider society by influencing the social fabric of individuals and all their relationships.

I use patriarchy in a descriptive context accepting that patriarchal attitudes (past and present) may influence working cultures and foster stereotypes about the role of women at work and specifically in management where men are dominant numerically and hierarchically. Crompton and Harris (1998a) in their study of women in banking and medicine found that patriarchy has a value in explaining

how occupational segregation and structuring continue in some professions like medicine where patriarchal practices whether operating or not can continue to have an effect on attitudes, behaviours and working cultures. This point is also taken up by Andrew Ross who states that ‘the reason why patriarchy remains so powerful is due less to its entrenched traditions, than to its versatile capacity to shape, change and morph the contours of masculinity to fit with shifts in social climate’ (Ross, 1995: 172).

For patriarchy as a theory to contribute to understanding the multiple roles of women in society and their different situations Walby’s (1990) argument that patriarchy is located in six sites of society: paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence and the state where men dominate women is useful. In the arena of paid work, where this project is located, three questions remain unresolved: Why do women typically earn less than men do? Why do women engage in less paid work than men do? Why do women do different jobs from men? (Cockburn: 1984, Coe: 1992, Crompton: 1990, Marshall: 1984; Schwartz: 1992). Walby asks these same questions in relation to patriarchy by distinguishing between the private and the public domain arguing how the emphasis of patriarchy has now shifted. In terms of paid work, she explains how women have moved from being excluded to being segregated within organisations and industries. This is seen in the development of vertical and horizontal segregation theory (Hakim: 1979) which is borne out by empirical data showing that women dominate certain sectors like care industries. Connell (2002) argues that segregation in organisations and industries can be attributed to the gender regimes interacting across four areas; power, production, emotional and symbolic relations⁷ and that gender arrangements are a feature of the labour market generally found in both the private and public sector.

⁷ Power operates through institutions and oppression finds one group dominating another and Connell says these two facets are an important part of the structure of gender. The sexual division of labour was one of the first structures of gender to be identified and remains an issue for research and discussion. Emotional relations can be found in the home and at work, can be positive and negative. At work they extend beyond co-workers to customers as Hochschild (1983) found in her research. The importance of symbolic relations attests to society being an amalgamation of meanings and each of those meanings being the outcome of different social processes.

Walby (2004) like Connell (2002) suggests that using the analysis of a gender regime or system with a limited number of elements is the way forward to capturing the transformation of gender relations, particularly in industrialised countries. She argues (2004) that in the past gender theories have focused on one key element to explain gender inequality across a range of variations. She contends this approach has been unable to embrace changes in gender relations because of the continued search and exploration of single simplistic causes. Walby suggests four levels of the gender regime, first is the overall social system, second is a continuum from public to private and the degree of inequality, third is a series of domains – economic, polity and civil society, fourth is a series of social practices. Within the levels of a gender regime how men and women are constructed is not static and understanding how these positions intersect should present a more multidimensional picture of the spectrum of inequalities. As Walby argues ‘Gender relations are constituted by all these levels rather than one privileged level’ (Walby, 2004: 10). I will explore competition in relation to understanding how as a concept and a practice it may impact on gender relations and a gender regime.

How the gender regime is experienced in relation to women in the labour market starts with the organisation and its perceived structure. For example, feminisation of the labour market can produce myths which suggest that women are taking over all the jobs rather than what is actually happening. Bradley et al (2000) argue that this proposition should be broken down into three separate segments to enable myths and realities to be distinguished. Firstly, the proportion of women employed, secondly the trend of women to move into occupations previously populated by men and thirdly the very nature of work and how some tasks and skills are seen as more suitable for women. In relation to management there is a discourse of women having a particular style that incorporates feminine qualities like listening and empathy which will be discussed in chapter three. Wajcman argues that ‘When male and female managers are matched for education and organizational level few differences in performance are in fact found. What is found however is an enduring perception that women are less likely to possess the key qualities required for management (Wajcman, 1998:

36). Similarly Beck's description of an 'acid bath of competition' (Beck, 1992: 94) in relation to the situation of individuals being matched equally in education and mobility suggests the perpetuating perceptions described by Wajcman may be a useful means of making distinctions which favour men over women creating an acid bath of gender relations.

Although patriarchy as discussed is contested as being universal in its approach, the theory and its developments have been instrumental in initiating the process of identifying and exploring gender inequalities in the labour market. The importance of such a theory is acknowledged there as being fundamental to the gender inequality continuum of questions directed to explaining why men retain greater control over power and resources in organisational structures. The next section will discuss how behaviours at work can affect competitive relationships and competition in an organisation.

2.3.2 Embedding a job with a person

To simplify the organisation and the complex range of relationships that operate both inside and out of it, a logical starting point is the actual unit of production - the job. Acker (1990) clearly argues that both jobs and hierarchies are abstract until a worker is appointed to perform the assigned tasks and join the organisational structure. At this stage both the job and the hierarchy in which it operates, is humanised and what is important in this process is being conscious of the behaviours and attitudes which contribute to building and fostering organisational cultures. With an individual comes a personal biography which can include a range of commitments outside of the job, ranging from hobbies and activities to the care of children or other family to activities that are important to the person. Part of this biography includes an individual's past working experiences which may be in other departments, organisations or industries where scripts and behaviours may vary accordingly. A combination of factors may begin to embody the job itself and its position in the organisation so that the job may be defined by not only the tasks involved, but with the personality, attitudes and experiences of the individual who performs them. In turn, this job and occupying worker will require relationships with other workers and their jobs, culminating in hierarchies being embodied. This can result for example in

one organisation being forward thinking in terms of people and production and another slow to adapt to public policy, management trends and the differing needs of workers.

The work contributed by the gender in management disciplines on behaviour at work is comprehensive, well researched and thoroughly debated. It includes for this discussion Butler's gender performance theory and its applications and the seminal work of Kanter. McDowell (1997) draws on Butler's ideas to explore how men and women operate in London investment bank environments and what influence this has on how they express their gender. She notes that without exception every woman she interviewed made comments about appearance.

For example as one manager explains '*I made a conscious choice on days like today when I have a call and I am very determined to get the client's attention ...I could have done it in my leather skirt but that would have been a silly distraction*' (McDowell, 1997: 146). Other women suggest that trying to appear neutral is a way of avoiding attention. As one administrator comments, '*I wear these men's shirts; I mean they are ladies', they are made for ladies at a men's tailors; and you should wear a jacket, women should wear jackets unless you want to be associated with a secretary, that's one of the rules*' (McDowell 1997: 146).

In terms of language McDowell finds the overuse of 'team player', 'jungle' and 'races' by the respondents suggesting an environment which is fast moving and requires employees to be committed and motivated to be the best they can be for the greater good of the organisation. McDowell's findings illustrate how the banking sphere is gendered as an organisation and how the repetition of acts and gestures fosters this on-going culture which is experienced by the workers as normal or just how it is.

In describing gender as a twin dynamic, Martin (2006) suggests that making a distinction between gendering practices and practising gender at work. She argues that in seeking to understand how well-intentioned people can practice gender in destructive ways shows how the subtleties of these behaviours continue to go unchallenged. Identifying how people at work practice gender can

as Martin argues, be difficult, and in her study she found evidence to suggest that further research would be valuable. For example, a vice-president refused to have dinner alone with women associates as he did not want the meeting to be construed as having sexual connotations and harmful to his reputation. He was however happy to have lunch with women colleagues thus discriminating on the basis of gender. Despite participating in a gender group and recognising his behaviour as 'practising a kind of masculinity that framed women as sexual liabilities' (Martin, 2006: 266) he still continued with his personal policy of not eating alone with women associates.

Hodgson (2005) uses Butler's ideas on gender performance to explore how it relates to the notion of professionalism in the project management industry. He finds that professionalism has a number of interpretations and equally a number of performances. For senior management, professionalism is about standards, procedures and observation of best practice. For the project managers themselves, it is apparent that being a professional means being able to decide and justify why best practice procedures are not strictly adhered to and as a concept there is a noticeable degree of ambivalence about the performance of professionalism. Marshall (1995) asserts that all the women consider themselves professionals but want to see a more integrated environment at work where they could be themselves, merging the private and the public person. They didn't want to have to 'adapt inauthentic public images' in order to fit into the corporate ideal (Marshall, 1995: 100).

The idea of gender performance and repetition is a key tenet of Butler's theory. She says 'As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation' (Butler, 1999: 178). The theory promotes the notion that gender is fluid and experienced differently in a variety of surroundings. For managers the environment is likely to be formed around the level of hierarchy in which they operate with change encountered in response to career developments and promotions. McDowell (1997) in her study of merchant banks found that a number of factors could influence the culture of

the organisation and therefore the response by individuals to that environment. One bank had different dining rooms for different levels of managers creating a physical distinction. Another bank was dominated by employees who came from similar educational backgrounds, fostering a 'type' of environment that reproduces a solid hierarchy filled with people who have similar life experiences and are used to performing their gender in similar ways. This type of insight is at the basis of Kanter's (1977) seminal work on organisations. She finds that men view women managers as tokens and this makes them visible to all other members of the organisation. This type of visibility, based solely on gender, increases the way in which acts and gestures are performed and measured. This can be made even more explicit when superiors suggest that the successes and failures of women managers could affect the prospects of other women in the company. In this context it would be easy to see performance merely in terms of doing a job, but it is notable that the term 'performance' is used. Secondly some managers contend that women managers are 'measured by two yardsticks: how as women they carried out the management role and how as managers they lived up to the images of womanhood' (Kanter, 1977: 214). Much like the banking environment, the organisation Kanter investigated was structured on hierarchies and environments that demanded gender be performed in a certain way by encouraging certain behaviours.

In her study Kanter (1977) presents a key moment in the history of women and the labour market, exploring the issues of how a company can influence not just the employee but also their spouse. She points out that while women are perceived to fall into three socially constructed categories: wives, secretaries or managers, men are considered to be defined by only two: worker or manager. She argues the gender ratio in an organisation can influence how one sees themselves and others. For women managers who are few in number (and referred to by Kanter as 'tokens') it means that it is easy to get noticed for your gender but more difficult to be noticed for what you achieve. She also points out that a token is more likely to face stereotypes that bypass the individual and focus on the perceived general characteristics of the group. In this way, Kanter presents a number of roles that token woman managers are assumed to fill by colleagues including superiors, peers and subordinates: the mother; the

seductress or sexual object; the pet and the iron maiden. As she argues, 'Role encapsulation confirms dominant stereotypes and proves to them how right they were all along. On the other hand, some women try to stay away from the role traps by bending over backwards not to exhibit any characteristics that would enforce stereotypes. This strategy too, is an uneasy one, for it takes continual watchful effort, and it may involve unnatural self-distortion' (Kanter, 1977: 237).

McDowell (1997) in her study of investment bankers in London suggests that the predetermined roles for women in the industry are that of wife, mother, mistress or man. Including the role of man to the list she illustrates how some women have identified, if you can't beat them – join them strategy, to working and succeeding in male dominated work environments. For the women that McDowell interviewed this role of being 'one of the boys' was a tool used by some women, while for others it was deemed a negative strategy. For example as one woman says: *'For most of the time I am an honorary man. They (her male colleagues) do treat me like an honorary man and that's what I prefer. It means that I can see the way they look on women. If I go out for a drink with them, then they will comment on anything that walks past in a short skirt, things that friends wouldn't say if I was there. I guess I'd rather be an honorary man than be on the other side'* (McDowell, 1997: 154). This perspective of 'honorary man' is closely aligned to how Kanter defines 'pet'⁸. What is interesting about the development of terms is how they change as more women enter the labour market but that upon analysis the organisational structures which perpetuate the use of such terms do not. When an organisation is embodied by individuals who emulate behaviours fostered by environments where certain groups of men control the resources, how to compete for some of those resources is not clear (Cockburn: 1991, Blackaby et al 1999, Davidson and Burke: 2000). I wish to understand how managers perceive competition at work to gain insights into how control can possibly be challenged, redistributed and rebalanced.

⁸ Kanter describes the term 'pet' as one who is adopted by the male group as cute, and acts like a mascot. She was expected to admire the male displays but not to enter into them.

2.3.3 The evolution of attitudes

Attitudes can be influenced by any number or combination of experiences and interactions. The degree to which attitudes are embedded can in one aspect be measured by the stereotypes and social practices in organisations which can support and even encourage their perpetuation. In this section management stereotypes will be explored alongside social models which are shown to influence attitudes to work and specifically women at work. This will begin the process of contextualising the environment managers work in and highlights how attitudes against open and equal competition and competitive relations can occur.

Acker states that ‘the closest the disembodied worker doing the abstract job comes to a real worker is the male worker whose life centres on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children’ (Acker, 1990: 149). This is a premise for the breadwinner model which has been embedded in western society with the male providing the financial support while the female is the carer and nurturer. This model and its dominance in society however is increasingly being dismantled by major influencing factors such as the feminisation of the labour market, individualization and the emergence of portfolio careers in what is evolving into a more precarious working environment. In some areas of management particularly as Kanter (1977) reveals, men are often seen as bringing ‘two people’ to the organisation in terms of having a wife and family, and that this is an advantage which continues. Providing for a family translates to commitment to an organisation and having a wife means there is a person offering support to developing a career and a lifestyle that grows alongside it. Wajcman argues that there is no corporate husband in the comparative sense with corporate wife and ‘Career women, especially in the managerial ranks, do not have the advantage of being seen as bringing two people to their jobs. On the contrary, women are seen as bringing less than one full worker’ (Wajcman, 1998: 38). Which roles women choose to embrace and which roles society expects, whether they conflict, and consequently how a balance is drawn, are an on-going questions for this inquiry.

Schein (1989, 1992, and 1996) in her work on management and gender based⁹ stereotypes has made major contributions to ideas on role encapsulation by women managers. She investigates how men and women managers and students of management perceive the skills required to be a good manager. The use of stereotypes is a means for taking generalisations and applying them to broad groups of people. In the labour market and in management, gender based stereotypes inflict strong influences on the scripts and discourses that actively advantage some and disadvantage others. In the 1970's Schein conducted two empirically based research studies into whether there is a relationship between gender based stereotyping and the characteristics perceived as necessary for success as a manager. She found in both studies that men and women middle managers associate the characteristics required by successful managers as being more likely found in men. This suggests that gender based stereotyping can present the idea that men make better managers than women. In 1989 Schein with colleagues Brenner and Tomkiewicz undertook to repeat her two previous studies to explore whether an increase in the number of women in management had changed on the perceived qualities of a manager and whether they were still aligned towards men. Like the two previous studies, the Schein 92 Item Descriptive Index was used.¹⁰ The results showed that men ascribed the attributes of a manager as being more likely to be in a man than a woman, whereas women perceived that a successful middle manager could be a man or a woman. The slow moving changes from men in relation to dissolving the think manager – think male stereotype continue.

In 1992 and 1996 Schein used the 92 Item Descriptive Index to continue the exploration of stereotyping in a cross-cultural study (Schein and Mueller: 1992) of management students in US, Great Britain and Germany and in another international study (Schein, Mueller, Lituchy and Liu: 1996) in China and Japan. In the first study the results continued to confirm that despite the increasing numbers of women in management men persist in the perception of a male model for management and success. However, the women involved in the study

⁹ In the first two studies Schein used the term sex stereotype changing it to gender based stereotype for later studies. I am using just gender-based stereotype.

¹⁰ There are three forms all containing the same descriptive terms, one asks for a description of women, one asks for a description of men and one for a description of successful middle managers.

did not sex type the manager role, 'While females responses can serve as a barometer of change, the similarity in strength of the male perceptions is somewhat disquieting' (Schein and Mueller, 1992: 445). The second study with management students in China and Japan found that both men and women perceived the characteristics required for a successful manager is more commonly found in men. The global phenomenon of management being perceived as male by men is a stereotype that informs the cultures of organisations and as Adler and Izraeli argue 'is probably the single most important hurdle for women in management in all industrialized countries' (Adler and Izraeli, 1993: 63). Schein (2007) reflecting on the studies suggests that thinking beyond the stereotype to the broader structure of management work is required. She states that challenging the whole notion of the way of managers' work is required so that a greater interface between work, career and family can be accommodated. She continues to argue that legal systems need to be used by individuals and groups to highlight inequalities and force issues into the public domain for scrutiny.

In the United States the landmark class action against Wal-Mart is an example of how persistent discrimination can be judged within a legal system. This case alleges that Wal-Mart advances male employees more quickly than females and denies female employees equal job assignments, promotion, training and compensation. Women make up two thirds of employees while men make up only a third. Yet only fifteen per cent of store managers are women.¹¹ For a woman it will take an average 4.3 years to become an assistant manager, for a man 2.8 years. The first action against Wal-Mart was filed in 2001 on behalf of six women. This case was awarded class action status in 2004 which was appealed but upheld in February 2007. The class consists of women employed by Wal-Mart since December 1998 and is estimated to include 1.5 million women. One judge notes that 'plaintiffs present largely uncontested descriptive statistics which show that women working at Wal-Mart stores are paid less than men in every region, that pay disparities exist in most job categories, that the salary gaps widens over time, that women take longer to enter management

¹¹ http://www.walmartclass.com/staticdata/press_releases/wmcc.html , April 2003. Accessed 22.06.07

positions, and that the higher one looks in the organization the lower the percentage of women.’¹² Schein argues that ‘equality of opportunity for women in management may never be achieved fully as long as the current structure is accepted “as it should be” – something into which women, wives and mothers must fit’ (Schein, 2007: 14).

Building on the work of Schein, Catalyst published a report ‘Women "Take Care," Men "Take Charge:" Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed’ (2005) exploring how corporate leaders judge the effectiveness of men and women leaders based on ten behaviours. The results indicate that men and women perceive women leaders as better at the stereotypically feminine areas of leadership – ‘taking care’ and men as better at stereotypically masculine areas – ‘taking charge’. These stereotypes manifest themselves in behaviours which encourage women to reward and support staff and men to delegate and influence up distinguishing gendered styles of management. However, when it comes to problem solving, an essential quality for leaders, women saw women as better at it and men saw men as better at it. On the surface this is an interesting finding and suggests that this stereotype is imploding and could lead to more equality, but as the report points out, men dominate the leadership ranks and so their view also dominates many organisational cultures. Commenting on the study’s findings, Lang, President of Catalyst emphasises that ‘until we break the spell of stereotyping, companies will continue to suboptimize women and lose a vital talent pool – one they frankly, cannot afford to ignore’ (Catalyst: 2005¹³). Gender based stereotyping as shown by these studies is a barrier for women in the labour market and in management. The stereotypes focus on behaviours and characteristics that are perceived to be important in relation to being a successful manager. With this premise it is difficult to see how competition between men and women can be equal.

¹² This quote is taken from a press release June 22, 2004.

http://www.walmartclass.com/staticdata/press_releases/classcertpressrelease06222004.html, this website is set up to support and inform the women involved in the class action. Accessed 21/5/07

¹³ Sourced from press release <http://www.catalyst.org/press-release/119/catalyst-study-exposes-how-gender-based-stereotyping-sabotages-women-in-the-workplace> , accessed 27/05/07

Conclusion

The theories, debates and research I use come from a wide range of research on gender equality issues in employment. However gender, management and competition as the three tenets of this inquiry remain neglected by researchers. This study proposes that by exploring these three cornerstones, their touch points and intersections, insights may contribute to further understanding gender relations. Acknowledging that competition exists beyond the broad framework of market forces and more directly in the lives of individuals is a useful point from which to validate the questions proposed in this study. The theoretical work of Hakim (2000) and Beck (1992, 2002) who both discuss competition in relation to the labour market make useful contributions to this process. Without clear definitions for competition as a dynamic, engagement can be limited and present disadvantages for those who do not understand its function and form. The other side of this scenario is that with information and engagement can come advantage as some managers become more attuned to the diverse nature of competition, its fluidity and integration into working relationships.

The labour market inequality debates bring into sharp focus the contribution of the feminist project, the women and later gender and management body of work over the past three decades. Barriers which exist to prevent or discourage women in management are discussed in relation to theories of patriarchy and gender performance. Butler's work on gender performance helps to bring gender to the centre of the project by presenting ideas about how an individual's experience of gender can be fluid in ways which can change according to their social realities. Martin's (2006) exploration of gender as a twin dynamic at work makes a distinction between the practice and practising of gender and contributes an interesting perspective to questioning why some barriers in management disintegrate and why others remain intact, often in subtle and non-threatening ways. The next chapter will begin the process of unpacking competition as a concept to enable the discussion to expand into making connections across the three cornerstones of my thesis.

Chapter Three

Competition and its Dimensions

Concepts of competition which categorise it as a singular notion, rejecting it as potentially a multidimensional notion, can present limited perspectives for engagement and activity. I am interested in the perceptions managers have of competition, how managers experience competitive relations and whether competitive practices at work are gendered. In the previous chapter the gender in management body of work and its contribution to understanding inequality in the labour market was discussed as being important to exploring management hierarchies and the relationships individuals have within organisations. How individuals understand and practice a range of formal and informal competitive behaviours can influence not only the process and outcome of situations but also the relationships they have with themselves, other competitors and non-competitors.

This chapter will examine currently available definitions of competition drawing on the work already done particularly in the psychology field combined with contributions from management texts. Ackoff (1979) argues that ‘All models are a simplification of reality’ and in this chapter an eight dimensional competition model developed for this study is presented. The aim of this model is two-fold; firstly to broadly to guide my exploration of understanding the realities of competition and competitive relations and secondly to contribute to the limited definitions available within the gender and management body of work.

Margretta argues that ‘Management makes organizations possible; good management makes them work well and management’s real genius is turning complexity and specialization into performance (Margretta, 2002: 5). I am interested in exploring the complexities of competition to highlight how as a multi-dimensional dynamic the concept is fluid and can result in a myriad of experiences for managers. The interactions and touch points between the different dimensions of competition and management is potentially where insights to the question is competition gendered may resonate.

3.1 Defining competition

In many societies competition is recognisable as apparent in education, sport, work and leisure, pervading the behaviour and language of everyday life. Critics of competition argue that it can be detrimental to development of individuals, particularly children (Amabile: 1982) and can result in anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of motivation and increase the potential for a breakdown of relationships because the drive to win can lead to aggressive behaviours and cheating. Deutsch (1949) takes a negative view of competition comparing it unfavourably with co-operation, setting up the two concepts as binary opposites.¹⁴ Kohn (1992) describes competition as an 'inherently undesirable arrangement' arguing that it is no more a 'part of human nature' than any other attitude or behaviour. Anthropologist Margaret Mead in 1936 (2002) studied competition and its destructiveness in primitive societies, defining it as a behaviour oriented toward a goal in which the other competitors are secondary.

Defining competition has been a focus of psychology research for over a century as the following questions continue to be asked: is there a singular definition of competition from which classifications are devised or does every situation have a classification that exists in isolation? The impasse on reaching a consensus on a definition, or series of related definitions (of competition) continues to be a barrier for researchers in this area. Some argue that research methods such as the various paper and pencil instruments used to operationalise competition, have not achieved a situation where results can be assessed against a definition that is broader than merely the desire to win and the binary opposite of co-operation. (Houston et al: 2002, Ross et al: 2003, Stapel et al: 2005). Stanne et al (1999) observe that competition has been defined as a situational variable, a cognitive variable, a trait, a motive or an attitude resulting in over 185 studies being undertaken in the last century to explore the constructs of competition and co-operation and their impact on achievement and productivity. Tjovold, Johnson

¹⁴ Deutsch uses the basic hypothesis that individuals in a group who are exposed to co-operation will perceive themselves to be more interdependent in relation to others than those who are exposed to competition. From this point he proposes a series of more than thirty further hypotheses grouped in the following classifications; organisation, motivation, communication, group productivity and interpersonal relations to test the behaviour of group members. For example Deutsch suggests there will be greater internal conflict and obstructiveness with competition, more helpfulness and greater specialisation of tasks with co-operation.

and Johnson (2003) maintain that focusing on experimental studies in laboratory type settings, often conducted with undergraduate students or education classes, does not allow competition to be researched in a multi-dimensional way arguing that this approach neglects the importance of relationships in how people behave in competitive situations.

3.2 The Eight Dimensional Competition Model

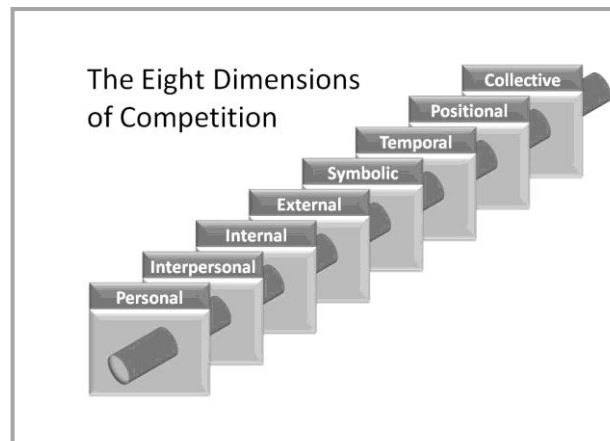


Figure 3.1 Eight Dimensional Competition Model

Engaging and examining gender and management inequality using the lens of competition highlighted the limited work available on competition in this area. Drawing on the work of Bradley (1996) where she suggests that in post-industrial capitalist societies individuals increasingly operate different relationships across social hierarchies which can result in what she refers to as fractured identities which are fluid and can change over time and in response to different situations. Furthermore Bradley is interested in understanding what impacts gender has on different relationships and she builds a case for developing ‘a theory of gendered power which can handle the complexities of post-industrial social relationships and avoid the crude view of women as victims’ (Bradley, 1996: p105). In identifying gendered power as a dynamic which requires theorising, Bradley’s ideas resonate with my own aims to develop and explore the notion that competition is a multidimensional dynamic which may also be gendered.

Subsequently Bradley (1999) continued by exploring gender and power in the workplace. Drawing on her specific ideas which discuss how men and women can have varying access to different forms of power resources which can be both complex and fluid, I found useful parallels with competition. Competition like power is not finite. Competition like power is not the domain of men only and competition like power can operate in different ways depending on the situation and individuals involved. To take this a step further Bradley identified a number of dimensions; (economic, positional, physical, symbolic, collective, personal, sexual and domestic) of gendered power to show that while men monopolise some of these dimensions (economic, positional, technical, collective and physical) women have claimed some of their own power based resources (personal, sexual and domestic). Her approach to using this model of gendered power was to examine what impacts shifts in power balances at work can have on men and women.

In developing the eight dimensional model of competition, my approach differed from Bradley's because my starting point was highlighted by the gap in research and literature on competition. (The body of work on power has breadth and depth across multiple disciplines). For my study, exploring why competition operated but was not generally visible in the workplace was an important consideration. This added weight to not just developing a model but defining and exploring each dimension to offer a grounded account of the interplay between the different dimensions of competition within the management environment. What follows in this chapter is a dimension by dimension definition and exploration using literature primarily from the gender and management body of work.

3.3 External competition

Whether as a manager, a production person or an administrator, all jobs are oriented towards delivering a successful business. Therefore the rationale for external competition in business is to encourage effective performances to meet short-term goals while stimulating strategies for medium and long term development with the overarching purpose to sell goods and services and gain market share from other operators. External competition as a dimension is

interested in the relationship between the individual manager and the organisation addressing the following question: is engaging with external competition at work mandatory and if it is, what effect does this have on workplace and career choices and the wellbeing of the worker?

External competition can take place at a local, national and global level and across all sizes of organisations. The effects of external competition on organisations are well documented particularly in the 1980's and 1990's when an increase in international economic competition resulted in some organisations having to review their economic viability. Restructuring resources and/or merging with other organisations to consolidate a market position with the aim of expanding, became a popular tactic during these decades, and now is widely accepted as an on-going component of organisations as they attempt to remain competitive (Peters: 1997, Wilson et al: 1999, Martin: 2005). Concurrently, with restructuring and the ensuing redundancies came the development of niche and new markets which opened the opportunity for entrepreneurs. As Celente says, 'Many went down, but not many went under. The adaptable, the versatile and the skilled did not end up on the streets or welfare rolls. Confronted by necessity people suddenly had to do something they had been discouraged from doing before: act for themselves, think for themselves, and implement innate creativity' (Celente, 1997: 171).

Information technology as a new industry acted in the early 1980's as a catalyst for a wave of new companies. Some of the companies established in this sector were often run by a generation of young people who did not confine themselves to traditional corporate ways and scripts. This is most visible in their casual dress of wearing jeans and t-shirts in all work situations. For example the founders of Apple and Microsoft Computers, both companies established in the late 1970's highlighted a degree of corporate casualness that was challenging to some. Even now Bill Gates of Microsoft is rarely seen in a suit and tie. Dee Hock, founder of the Visa network, argues that the past ways of managing and thinking about managing needed not only to change but be completely replaced with new ways. He asserts that 'The problem is never how to get new, innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get old ones out' (Dee Hock cited in Peters 1997: 76). In a

free market competition is expected to exist and this is evident by the existence of watchdogs and commissions whose key task it is to ensure that where monopolies exist they do not preclude other contenders from entering the market. The most recent and international example of this is the legal battle outlined below¹⁵ Microsoft faced in America and Europe where Anti-Trust Laws were allegedly broken and claims made that a monopoly was unlawfully maintained by using bullying tactics with rivals that included computer makers and Internet providers. As this example illustrates the impact of external competition is potentially multi-faceted. How accepting and compliant individuals employed by an organisation are of external competition sets a foundation for discussing the other seven dimensions, where contractual employment obligations are less straightforward and individuals have a greater degree of agency. To manage some aspects of competition and competitive relations within a hierarchy and a corporate culture whilst experiencing others directly as an individual is likely to present some tensions. How these tensions manifest is important to exploring the question: is competition in management is gendered?

3.4 Personal competition

Ryckman et al (1997) conceptualise personal development competition using the theory of hypercompetition¹⁶ defined as an indiscriminate need by individuals to compete and win (avoiding losing) at any cost allowing the individual at a minimum to maintain feelings of self-worth. They define personal competition

¹⁵ **February 27, 2008:** EC impose Microsoft with another \$US1.35 billion in fines for failing to comply with its 2004 antitrust order.

Source: <http://digitaldaily.allthingsd.com/20080227/microsoft-eu-2/> accessed 3.3.08

November 4, 2002: The European Commission reaffirms its intention to uphold European Union law in its own separate probe into the company.

November 1, 2002: Judge Kollar-Kotelly rules that a proposed settlement serves the public's interest as required under the Tunney Act, which sets standards of review for antitrust settlements.

June 28, 2001: A federal appeals court reverses the breakup order.

November 5, 1999: Judge Jackson issues his initial findings of fact, finding that Microsoft held monopoly power and used it to harm consumers, rivals, and other companies.

September 21, 1999: The government and Microsoft accuse each other of foul play in their closing arguments.

June 1, 1999: Round two of the antitrust trial begins.

May 18, 1998: The U.S. Justice Department and 20 state attorneys general file an antitrust suit against Microsoft, charging the company with abusing its market power to thwart competition, including Netscape.

<http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2002/11/35212> accessed 3/3/08

¹⁶ The theory of hypercompetition was first proposed by Horney in 1937.

as an attitude, with the primary focus not on winning but on the experience where the process enables an opportunity for self-discovery and learning. This does not mean that success and winning are unimportant but are tempered by what goals can be achieved with the resources available. Ryckman et al (1997) argue that personal development competition and hypercompetition are related as categories endorsing some self-contained individualistic values such as working hard to achieve personal and material success preferably in an exciting and challenging environment. However, the major distinction is in the individual's relationship with people. Hypercompetitors view social power and the domination of others as important whereas personal development competitors find the welfare of others and treating them as equals essential.

Houston et al's study (2002) reaches similar conclusions to Ryckman et al (1997) favourably testing the hypothesis that competition is a multidimensional construct identifying two factors as the basis for understanding. Firstly self-aggrandisement which validates one's own superiority and secondly interpersonal success. In this study the benefits of competition are deemed important but not at the denigration of others. The use of different terminology, for example self-aggrandisement and personal development competition as shown in the Houston (2002) and Ryckman (1997) studies, can be distracting but illustrates the lack of cohesion in the definition of terms. For the purpose of this study, personal competition encompasses the experiences and perceptions of an individual and is defined as the use of an individual's resources and knowledge to set and accept challenges which are important for self-identity development within work and non-work contexts. Personal competition as a dimension is interested in the relationship the individual has with their job, organisation and the wider world focussing on the following question: do men and women perceive personal competition differently?

3.5 Interpersonal competition

Psychologists have also struggled to agree on definitions for personal and interpersonal competition. Stanne, Johnson and Johnson (1999) argue that resolution on definitions is more likely if competition is placed in the context of social interdependence theory; the basic premise of this theory being that the

way goals are structured determines how individuals interact with others and within a situation. For example, goals may be arranged so people need to work co-operatively, against each other or alone. They argue that all competitive conditions are not the same identifying three types; zero sum, unclear and appropriate competition.

1. Zero sum competition is a winner takes all scenario with one person attaining the goal and all others failing.
2. Unclear competition is where the procedures are vague, badly communicated and the rewards are decided subjectively based on perceived contributions.
3. Appropriate competition is when winning is ultimately not important with all participants having a reasonable chance of success. The rules are clear and participants can monitor each other and engage in social comparison.

Interpersonal competition is influenced by social comparison which is one way of learning about ourselves where we can evaluate and verify mental, physical and social attributes in relation to others. Stapel and Koonmen (2005) argue that the impact of upward and downward social comparisons on self-evaluation can have positive and negative effects. For example, an individual's success may be an inspiration to some yet a source of self-doubt to others. What may determine this outcome is whether the situation is competitive or co-operative with the dominant mindset being either one of contrast or assimilation respectively. For this study interpersonal competition is defined as the utilisation of resources available to an individual to enable their progression in an activity, task or project as part of a team. The spectrum of debate associated with defining personal and interpersonal competition highlight how the concept enlists disagreement and illustrates that this in part due to the multidimensional nature of the dynamic.

3.5.1 Constructive competition and management

Tjovold et al (2003) in seeking to combine competition and management make an important contribution to this investigation. Seeking to clarify the nature and

role of constructive competition was prompted by observing a gap in this area, Tjovold et al hypothesise that constructive competition occurs when competition is a positive enjoyable experience. This they propose results in increased efforts to achieve goals, to have more positive personal relationships and maintains psychological health and wellbeing. They use five variables against which to measure the existence of constructive competition; the role of fairness, the low importance of winning, the equal probability of winning, the role of task type and the affect of prior relationships. At a management workshop in China, 68 managers were invited to participate in the study along with a subordinate employee from their organisation. The average age of the 61 men and 30 women participating was 31 to 34 years. Of those, 64 were managers and 28 were subordinates. (One person did not specify gender and the gender ratio of managers was not given). The main procedure used in the study is called the critical incident technique,¹⁷ designed to ask participants to write a full report of a competitive incident before answering questions based on a predefined scale.

The findings support constructive competition as existing in work environments. Numerous incidents reporting enjoyment, learning, strong positive relationships and increased confidence as outcomes. Other variables show contradictions to the proposed hypotheses. The importance of winning was found to increase the constructiveness of a competition. Where there was an advantage this overshadowed the importance of having an equal probability of winning. Distinguishing from past psychology studies, simple motor tasks have been employed to research competition, the study found that using intellectual problem solving was reportedly a positive contribution to greater self efficacy and task effectiveness. However, fairness as predicted is important to facilitating task effectiveness. Tjovold et al (2003) conclude that the role of long term relationships among employees who operate in contexts beyond a singular competitive situation could influence constructive competition. For example organisations need to be profitable may actually provide an overall co-operative

¹⁷ This procedure was originally developed by Flanagan (1954) to study complex interpersonal phenomenon and each participant is asked to describe a specific situation in which they competed with a fellow employee as honestly and accurately as possible. They were asked to describe what led to the situation, who they were working with and what happened. They were then asked to rate on a scale factors that affected the competition and its outcome ranging from personal benefits to enjoyment, strength of relationships and commitment to the organisation.

goal from which task oriented competitions can take place in a constructive way. The role of positive and strong relationships at work contributing productively to constructive competition is a significant finding in this study. Interpersonal competition as one of the eight dimensions in the model will explore the following two questions: do men and women in the workplace perceive and experience interpersonal competition and competitive relations differently? And how do competitive relations at work affect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders?

3.6 Internal competition

Handy's influential text *Understanding Organizations* (1993) offers a comprehensive definition of internal competition. He explores the role of competition in organisations starting with the premise that organisations are communities of people, not machines. Like most communities the individuals that belong to them bring behaviours that are diverse and can both compete and conflict with others. Meeting the personal and professional agendas of any individual will be a catalyst for their individual responses. Handy makes a clear distinction between competition and conflict arguing that 'competition is useful and beneficial, conflict damaging and harmful' (Handy, 1993: 292). For managers he argues, the key is to stop competition becoming conflict. Managers are the focus for this study because of the complex position they can occupy in organisations and how this may translate into the perceptions they have with competition and competitive relations.

Kanter (1987) outlines six main drivers of internal competition:

- Mergers and acquisitions that put external competitors in the same organisation,
- Pressure for limited resources,
- Performance comparisons within an organisation as a means of motivation,
- Flatter management structures that lessen promotional opportunities,
- Decentralisation and the establishment of divisions or business units that are autonomous and can place other units or divisions in competition and

- The natural competition that occurs when groups are defined in terms of other groups and comparisons are made and rated in terms of performance and productivity.

Kanter (1987) and Handy (1993) generally agree that the positive features of internal competition are threefold: firstly, they set standards both in the market and in organisations. Through comparison with competitors, a business can measure their place in the market and set standards to achieve their objectives. This in turn can provide managers with the information they need to guide the day-to-day operations and increase efficiency. Secondly, internal competition can stimulate and motivate groups within an organisation by encouraging them to set common goals and potentially finding that the combined team's efforts are greater than the sum of the individual contributions. The shared sense of purpose and achievement can be positive in terms of building loyalty and support that allows for the possibility of greater innovation and creativity. Thirdly, internal competition can distinguish the excellent from the good from the poor and can be applied to both products and people and enabling organisations to be more effectively externally.

Internal competition is defined in this study as operating within an organisation and can include all departments and divisions in all geographical areas. It can be for power, authority or resources to achieve the goals associated with a department and the manager/s responsible for that department. How competitions are constructed and implemented internally can reflect how an organisation operates as a whole and as the conglomeration of departments. These competitive processes can provide insights into the practices of managers across the hierarchy in terms of how they understand not just the concept of competition, but also its dimensions.

Handy (1993) addresses management and competition by comparing the differences between open and closed¹⁸ (or zero sum) competition. Open competition in a similar way to the challenge model is not a matter of first past

¹⁸ Closed competition is where there is one winner who passes the post first at the expense of all the other competitors.

the post, there can be as many winners as desired providing that each meets the agreed measures for success. Handy is clear that successful open competition depends on how all the competitors engage in the practice suggesting three conditions have to be met:

1. It has to be perceived as genuinely open i.e. everyone can ultimately win.
2. The rules and procedure for arbitration must be seen to be fair and adequate. No one is likely to be collaborative if the umpire is biased or the rules unknown.
3. The major determinants of success in the competition must be under the control of the competitors. They must have only themselves to blame if they fail (Handy, 1993: 295).

3.6.1 Gender and competition

So how does gender fit into the mix of competition and management? It appears as if competition and competitiveness ‘lurks’ in the background of discussions of management and gender often only recognising it exists. As Harold Leavitt observes, ‘Twenty years of Jean Lipman-Blumen’s¹⁹ research on achieving styles with more than 20,000 male and female managers around the world comes up with one consistent difference between the sexes. Men everywhere score higher on competitiveness than women. But women managers score higher on competitiveness than non-managerial women. Managers, that is to say, are competitors, and competitors’ egos ‘want report cards’ (Leavitt, 2005: 3). Like other management commentators Leavitt only goes this far with this acknowledgement of competition and gender rather than developing the discussion further. However emerging from economic perspectives are discussions of gender and competition in relation to the labour market. Booth (2009) uses data from students using psychological based variables to gather data to assess the relationship between gender and risk assessment to explain the impact of competition on the supply side of the labour market. Similarly, Kleinjans (2009) argues that gender differences in an individual’s taste or distaste for competition can contribute to explaining occupational choices. Both

¹⁹ Jean Lipman-Blumen is a professor of organizational behaviour at Claremont Graduate University. She co-wrote ‘Hot Groups’ with Harold Leavitt professor emeritus, Stanford Graduate School of Business. She was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for her 1996 book ‘The Connective Edge: Leading an Interdependent World’.

these studies argue that more research should be conducted in the area of gender, competition and the labour market, a position my thesis proposes and supports. But the lessons drawn from gender, sport and competition translate fairly effectively into gender and management debates as commentators like De Boer (2004) highlight.

At its basic level competitive behaviour DeBoer (2004) argues is about a struggle to achieve. Furthermore she suggests that when gender enters the equation the process of how that struggle to achieve is different for men and women as shown in diagram 3.2 below.

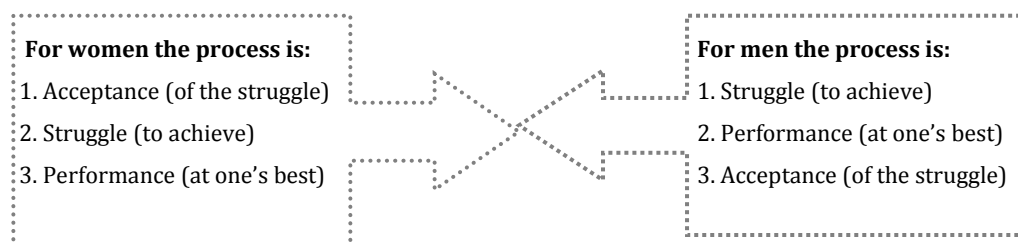


Diagram 3.2 The process of competing for men and women

She gives the example of a person who coached men and women cross country runners. The coach found that when a male had a breakthrough in time his male team-mates had a surge in training finding motivation in the possibilities. Counter to that, when a female runner excelled her team mates teased her by saying she wanted to be a star. The men's response was to aim for better performances, for women it was about the team rebalancing its chemistry with the best performer being encouraging and running only just ahead of the group.

DeBoer is an athlete turned - coach who uses her experience to unravel the different attitudes and resulting behaviours to understanding gender and competition. Sport is an arena where competition is relatively pure, the rules are defined, there is an umpire to enforce the rules and the aim of the game is to win. She argues that the nature of the contest is where the difference between men and women becomes apparent 'males define contests as self-contained events during which normal rules of decorum be momentarily suspended. Females define contests as just another activity and expect all the usual rules of decorum'

(DeBoer, 2004: 55). DeBoer argues for the importance of broadening the concept of competition from being one dimensional to multidimensional and for moving discussions beyond the sporting situation to understand how competition, gender and management intersect.

Coward's (1992) study explores the satisfactions, fears and anxieties which determine women's choices in Britain. Her work contributes to my study as competition is an issue which is raised and discussed. She examines in the 150 interviews the subjective side of obstacles women face at work, at home and as wives and mothers. In relation to work, competition is explored with negative themes dominating the experiences of the women interviewed. For some women this includes confrontations of competition at work and making decisions not to engage in any way and actively withdraw. Coward found this is increasingly likely when the competition was about recognition and was individual versus individual. For other women, recognising they were competitive but were unable to translate that into a work environment resulted in feelings of envy towards those women particularly who could. Women who left jobs to have a family also experienced feelings of envy when they compared themselves to their peers who were succeeding in careers.

Coward argues that women find it difficult to define their attitude to competition because of the bundle of complications influencing both the process and the outcome. In order for women to engage with competition more openly and effectively they need to rationalise that 'what they feel most strongly is not the thrill of the chase, but the destructive spoiling impulses that characterize envy' (Coward, 1992: 43). Identifying a relationship between perceptions of competition at work and in other areas of life is important to understanding how emotions may result in practising competition in a one dimensional way using the scarcity model. Coward's work is interesting and makes a positive contribution to this discussion.

However, Coward's focus on emotional outcomes from competition rather than the dynamic itself dilutes the stronger argument presented by Miner and Longino (1987), who argue that women need to engage with both scarcity and challenge

models. The growing literature on the role of emotions at work is an area of interest to this study and highlights the importance of continued research in this area. Three questions will be examined in the exploration of internal competition. Is engaging with internal competition at work mandatory and if it is, what effect does this have on workplace and career choices and the wellbeing of the worker? Do men and women in the workplace perceive and experience internal competition in the same way? How do competitive relations at work affect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders?

3.7 Symbolic competition

Symbolic competition is defined in this study as the ability to impose one's own definitions, meanings and values on situations or processes. This is likely to be found in the development and practice of a management style which is enlisted to meet the objectives set for a team, department or division. Symbolic competition, the fifth element, is potentially the most fluid dimension as management and personal experience can modify and change an individual's view of the world and the social reality they occupy. In this section management styles will be discussed to illustrate how meanings and values can be interpreted and practiced and how these can be influenced by the interaction of structures, behaviours and attitudes, all of which can change according to different situations and dynamics.

Management styles are often sidelined by discussions of leadership styles which appear to attract more attention. Some argue this has encouraged a situation where no one wants to be a good manager; they all just want to be leaders (Gosling and Mintzberg: 2003). Yet without managers, would there be leaders? And does a leader need to know how to manage? Clarifying answers to such questions when not addressed in literature encourages a situation where the titles of leadership and management become interchangeable. The position this study takes is one that accepts this crossover in the literature recognising that definitions of manager and leader operate along a spectrum that makes distinctions in terms of degrees of responsibility and authority. For example, the title of manager has become all encompassing and does not necessarily mean

heading a team and controlling a budget, in a similar way a leader does not necessarily mean top of an organisation, it may mean the head of a team. How this terminology is portrayed questions whether job titles have generally become too generalised and removed from a position's role and its responsibilities. I will not address these organisational issues and how they relate to hierarchies here but it is my intention to refer to them in the discussion of management styles. Mintzberg (2004) describes the heroic and the engaging manager, Kanter (1989) portrays the cowboy manager, Rosener (1990) describes interactive leadership as a style women have developed and Wajcman (1998) explores whether there are masculine and feminine styles of management. How these different styles link to the role of competition presents a tangible means of engaging with managers to investigate not only how they perceive and experience categories of competition but how this translates into the ways they practice it in their working lives and their organisations. This discussion of symbolic competition addresses the research question: what is the relationship between competition and success and/or failure in terms of career development/pathways/trajectories?

Contextualising a style within the management arena provides a base-line from which to discuss why managers in the same organisation do not necessarily operate in the same way. Belbin (2000) defines the core work of a manager as assigning tasks, responsibilities and contracts to others and highlights how crucial internal relationships are in performing these functions. Mintzberg (1973) identifies a manager's working environment as having several key characteristics including long hours, enjoying action, doing work in short bursts with frequent interruptions and spending most of their time with other people both internally and externally. How an individual processes these conditions alongside the knowledge and experience they have already amassed can be best defined as a management style (Kakabadse et al: 2004). This style includes the values and morals that as individual's they hold and how they interpret and deliver this in relation and response to the needs of the business, their position and their staff.

3.7.1 Heroic and engaging manager

Mintzberg (2004) describes two main management types. Firstly the heroic manager, a person who has self at their centre and works on the philosophy that

managers are important but distinct from those who produce and develop goods and services. These managers advocate pyramidal hierarchies so that it is clear to all workers that strategy comes from the top and everyone else implements those directions. Measuring performance for the heroic manager is important and is considered most tangible in shareholder or stakeholder value. The engaging manager, the second of Mintzberg's management types approaches the structure of the organisation differently. These managers work towards interacting resources and building internal networks where strategies can be devised and implemented. Managing whether heroic or engaging recognises the value of workers as being crucial to the success of a business with the distinction between the two styles based on how leadership is implemented. The engaging manager supports the view that leadership is a trust earned through the respect of others compared to the heroic manager for whom leadership is primarily about thrusting their will upon others.

In her study of leadership, Sinclair (1998) argues that heroic masculinity needs to be separated from the idea that it is an integral requirement for leading an organisation. This link between heroism, masculinity and management is well developed in organisations and forms the base of many structural barriers that impede women's progress particularly in senior management (Jackson: 2001, Olsson: 2000, Collinson and Hearn: 1996, Cockburn: 1993). 'Until we unravel and expose the links between being a leader and enacting a particular form of manliness, then, in gender and racial terms, leadership will remain the domain of a homogeneous elite' (Sinclair, 1998: 175). If the heroic manager is typecast as masculine then is the engaging manager practising a more feminine style of management?

Rosener (1990) makes a distinction between the transactional leader who takes a carrot and stick approach to managing where performance brings rewards for workers and failure brings punishment, and the transformational leader who uses interpersonal skills to encourage workers to see it is in their interest to perform effectively. In her interviews with women leaders Rosener found that transformational leadership was the dominant style and from this devised interactive leadership as a term to describe the particular style these women

practised. Moving away from the traditional command and control style to what Rosener describes as a style of participative management based on the belief that allowing workers to participate, feel included and feel powerful is a win-win situation and categorises this approach. However the study was conducted with women in medium sized fast-changing organisations where adaptation and flexibility was encouraged providing a fertile place for new styles of management to be practised. Rosener observes that success with this style in some organisations does not mean it will work for all and strongly suggests against labelling this as a women's style of management.

3.7.2 Men as managers, women as managers

Categorising masculine and feminine styles can only lead to increased gender tensions rather than identification of the skills needed to be an effective manager and a leader (Marshall: 1995, Due Billing et al: 2000, Sinclair: 2000). Wajcman (1998) investigates how managerial stereotypes have remained central to the development of styles, arguing that women managers have had to embrace masculine traits in order to compete successfully in organisations. She argues that the managerial job is gendered male and therefore styles of management will develop accordingly. Whether there is a feminine style of management is a question repeatedly entered into the body of work on gender in management. Suggesting that women managers bring specific inherent skills to their positional roles, which male managers could incorporate into their spectrum of skills continues to foster gender binaries. Feminine traits such as teamwork, inclusion, delegation and empathy are used by commentators to promote how women are equipped with the skills required for new styles of management that are reportedly the way of the future (Schwartz: 1989, 1992, White et al: 1997). Tom Peters, management consultant suggests that 'Women are better managers than men ...so say men as well as women. Definition of better? Better at relationships. (No surprise, eh?) And better at planning, goal setting and follow through. Obviously, it's not women's soft skills versus men's hard skills' (Peters, 1997: 404). Wajcman (1998) finds in her study that men and women managers work in broadly similar ways with management styles mainly influenced and shaped by the organisation rather than other variables. The organisation is ultimately where judgments are made about the value of a manager and his/her style and its

compatibility with the management team. This Wajcman argues remains the domain of the stereotype - think male, think manager - and many women are succeeding by adopting this as the basis of their style and adapting it where possible. She suggests that as women managers are increasingly able to understand the language and cultures of organisations, they are better equipped to compete more effectively with men.

How competitive a company is externally is visible by the methods and approaches it uses in the market place; however the practice and promotion of competitive relations internally is more likely to be visible only from within. The culture of an organisation can overtly or covertly foster management styles which serve particular business objectives. Kanter (1987) argues that a cowboy style of management is one version which can become detrimental to the organisation and the people in it. This style is characterised by an approach where rules are made to be broken, where being tough and hard is worn with pride and cooperation is deemed soft. These managers use competition as a tool to put teams up against one another as a method to elicit the best performance. This type of approach may not suit every manager and can call into question the relationship a manager has with superiors and the organisation and whether particular competitions and competitive relations are considered mandatory. How does a manager decide where the boundaries are for an organisation in dictating the means of competing? What can a manager do to negotiate a position where both parties can operate within the bounds of what is acceptable to them? Do managers engage in practices they do not agree with in order to pursue their own and/or the organisation's ambitions and what is the trade off? How managers answer these questions are likely to vary according to the style they practice and whether this changes in different situations or over time. Engaging with managers to understand their style and the role of competition and competitive relations could provide insights into how attitudes and behaviours is influenced by the structures, behaviours and attitudes managers work with, both in their past and their present.

3.8 Positional competition

How managers are perceived in their organisational role can be influenced by a range of variables. This includes the relationships he/she initiates and conducts with subordinates, peers and superiors. Relationships formed at work can change over time and in response to both internal and external variables such as mergers, acquisitions, promotions, redundancies, maternity leave, sickness and care responsibilities. How a manager develops the skills required to deal effectively with the spectrum of scenarios that may emerge can be strongly influenced by the experiences and observations they engage with. Drawing on a range of management and organisation literature, I define four factors contributing to the development of a manager. Firstly the current organisational culture, combined with experiences of cultures from previous organisations (Dopson et al: 1998, Halford et al: 2001, Kakabadse et al: 2004). Secondly, the interaction with role models and mentors who can guide an individual manager through the complexities of understanding the organisation, its politics and the manager's role in it (Coe: 1992, Headlam-Wells: 2004, Singh: 2005). Thirdly the ability for an individual to understand and embrace the range of skills required to be a manager (Mintzberg: 2004, Rees: 2003, Linstead et al: 2002, Belbin: 2000) and finally the ambition of an individual to join a management structure and climb the hierarchy to reach the desired position (Fels: 2004).

Positional competition is defined as encompassing the relationships which occur as an individual climbs the management hierarchy. This includes developing relationships with superiors, peers and subordinates to secure promotions, access to authority, power and internal resources. For some managers the value of role models will be important in the early stages of their career, for others a mentor maybe of value which can be influential in how relationships grow during an individual's career. For many managers positional competition can become a major junction for the interaction of different dimensions of competition. This can be found operating for example in activity of conflict which will be discussed later in this section. Conflict can affect a range of outcomes highlighting how positional competition can successfully provide a snapshot of how experiences and attitudes can influence how individual managers develop. I argue using the eight dimensional competition model I have developed offers a

constructive way of simplifying this management reality to enable greater understanding. The research questions explored in this dimension are: what is the relationship between competition and success and/or failure in terms of career development/pathways/trajectories and how do competitive relations at work impact on responsibilities and activities outside of work?

3.8.1 Role models

The blurring of boundaries between role models and mentors in gender and management is evident in the research into mentors being more comprehensive. The relationship between success and role modelling is particularly prevalent in the media where personalities are held up as examples of a good role model, equally individuals in the public arena who fall from grace are labelled bad role models. Gibson defines a role model as ‘a cognitive construction based on attributes of people in social roles an individual perceives to be similar to him or herself to some extent and desires to increase perceived similarity by emulating those attributes’ (Gibson, 2004: 136). He argues that in organisations women have fewer role models in terms of gender and therefore face a difficult challenge of interpreting male role model behaviour and assessing it in terms of acceptable behaviour for them. Role models may be important however at different life stages, for example at a young age it may be aspirations and later comparative realities found in commonly used comments like: ‘if he/she can do it then why can’t I?’ (Rhindfleish: 2000).

Singh and Vinnicombe (2005) suggest that role models are important for young women managers who are constructing their working identities and Ibarra (1999) found in her study that young professionals who use multiple role models are more successful in their early careers. Singh et al (2005) found from the women managers interviewed they used a range of role models ranging from family members to high profile public figures. The global or distant role models were cited as being useful in terms of addressing the often cited lack of confidence in the managers’ careers, identifying with figures who are perceived as being successful, in control and having power. Confidence continues to be a recurring issue raised as a factor in relation to women overcoming barriers to success and access and will be discussed in later chapters.

3.8.2 Mentoring relationships

As a career moves out of its early stages, role models can be replaced with mentors who can become increasingly valuable as aspirations develop and are fine-tuned within the context of a role and organisational compatibility. Two types of mentors are found. The classical mentor is a long term and exclusive individual, providing career development advice and support. The other type of mentor provides shorter term relationships which focus on the current role and often supporting the next stage of development. As careers become more flexible and mobility is expected the second category of mentoring is becoming increasingly used (Whitely et al: 1992). Access to an in/formal mentoring relationship may be important in providing insights into the workings of an organisation, the key personnel and stakeholders enabling a manager for example to network more strategically as Ibarra (2007) suggests. For women the opportunity for same gender mentoring relationships is not as prevalent as it is for men because of the disproportionate number of men to women in senior positions. In addition, women may find mentoring relationships between men and women whether formal or informal can be misinterpreted and associated with sexual innuendo which disadvantages women as senior male managers are reluctant to participate (Ragins and Cotton: 1991, Powell and Graves: 2003).

E-mentoring is a new mechanic available and may be useful for women and other groups who are marginalised in gaining access to such relationships. It is flexible, does not require constant face to face meetings and is not time dependent, removing pressures from mentors to respond immediately to an issue (Headlam-Wells: 2004). Although the value of a mentor is useful, it is not necessary for success and Burke (1997) argues that too much emphasis can be placed on such relationships, distracting managers from inherent organisational barriers to equality. Marshall (1995) found that the flip side of having a mentor is a powerful enemy who can destroy careers and personal confidence, isolating the recipients of these relationships.

3.8.3 The positive and negative outcomes of conflict

Conflict as an element of a management style can be perceived as negative, in a similar way to that of competition as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Yet conflict and the management of it can reflect a pluralistic organisation where there is any number of stakeholders with varying agendas both covert and overt. Arguing that managers are often constrained by conflict Eisenhardt et al (1997) suggests is a necessary, natural and essential part of decision making and brainstorming. However conflict can suggest negative and positive outcomes, so maintaining constructive conflict is a challenge for managers.

Eisenhardt's study observes twelve companies to ascertain what role conflict has in organisational politics, management and strategic decision making. Four organisations had little or no disagreement over major issues, four had high levels of conflict appearing difficult to resolve and four employed a range of tactics to effectively manage interpersonal conflict by making clear distinctions between issues and personalities.²⁰ As Eisenhardt (1997) et al concludes, if conflict cannot contribute positive and effective influences to working relationships and task completion, they conclude it is more likely the conflict is mismanaged and requires better skills to understand its potential positive impact. 'Without conflict, groups lose their effectiveness. Managers often become withdrawn and only superficially harmonious. Indeed, we found the alternative to conflict is usually not agreement but apathy and disengagement' (Eisenhardt et al, 1997: 85). A manager's role often demands a mix of skills which develops through experience and increasing understanding of how their position relates to other positions in the organisation.

3.8.4 Gendering conflict and co-operation

Conflict and cooperation in the structures, behaviours and attitudes of other managers can be accentuated for women managers if they have to juggle and dodge the mantles associated with their gender and their position. Attitudes which encourage labels such as 'honorary man', 'seductress', 'iron maiden' and

²⁰ The six tactics identified to work effectively with conflict are; more rather than less information, develop alternatives, shared commonly agreed goals, injection of humour, balance the power structure and not force consensus. The introduction of more than two options was a crucial part of the process as it prevented conflict from becoming personal and destructive.

‘mother’ (Kanter: 1977, McDowell: 1997) exist to describe the perceptions of women managers as previously discussed. Alongside these stereotypes are those which focus on women in management as pioneers. Often charged with being role models and mentors senior women managers particularly can suffer if they do not meet the expectations of younger or junior women managers. Queen bee syndrome²¹ used by Staines et al (1973) and Abramson (1975) continues to pervade language used to criticise women managers who do not subscribe to the solidarity of the ‘sisterhood’. The use of the queen bee can be found in media²² to describe, challenge or refute the allegation underlining its impact as important enough to explain but without acknowledging that no such term exists for men in management. Expecting that women who have overcome barriers and reached positions of power and authority to act as initiators of change highlights the complex nature of the gendered environments they can experience. Mavin (2006) argues that ‘women in management’ literature has diverted attention away from negative discourses such as the queen bee syndrome by opting not to explore its existence and influence. She says a dilemma exists, if ignored queen bee discourses can continue to feed stereotypes of women, keeping them in second place in management and if investigated there is a danger that a ‘blame or fix the women’ position can develop.

In her study of senior women managers in Australia, Rindfleish (2000) found a mixed range of attitudes to whether women face barriers at work. Some (the smallest group) denied the existence of them outright, others conceded they exist but believe each individual controls their destiny. The group labelled ‘reluctant feminists’ suggest that despite barriers being in place, they were unable to specifically identify them and consequently unable to enlist actions to counteract their impact. Definite feminists (the largest group) had personal experiences of discrimination and structural barriers to their career progression and generally believed that legislation is important in addressing equality. However

²¹ Queen bee syndrome refers to women who are actively opposed to changes in traditional gender roles and can deny any systemic discrimination against women. An attitude that ‘if I can do it all without help or a movement, then so can everyone else’ is a major characteristic.

²² September 1991, New York Times – Women Managers Don’t Aim for Queen Bee.

8 August 2006, Personnel Today – Why are women so awful to each other? Do men make better bosses? Nurturer or Queen Bee?

3 April 2004, Sydney Morning Herald, Women bosses take the sting out of queen bee.

organisational cultures need to embrace change including redefining terms like merit to base it on skill and talent rather than the right man for the job. The notion of a female misogyny (Mavin: 2006, 2008) suggests the dynamics of women's relationships at work are not fully understood potentially encouraging suspicions which destabilise hierarchies and can manifest in competitive behaviours as Starr²³ (2001) highlights.

Competition between women may go deeper than professional rivalry to include sub-conscious jealousy and competition based on age or appearance (attractiveness, weight, dress sense). This suggests that at times women may read each other's sexed bodies through men's eyes in sexual competition. At other times the perception of separation and competition is explained in work related terms through factors such as intellectual ability, professional connections, reputations etc. Furthermore, unlike the more open forms of hostility exhibited by men, women observe that competition or opposition from women is more likely to manifest as passive resistance.

How women, as individual manager's deal with the tension of diverse attitudes and behaviours found in both stereotypes and gender based expectations which may follow them through the organisational hierarchy, is fraught with complexities. These tensions which appear at the junction of positional competition and other dimensions of competition will be expanded in the analysis chapters which follow. The influences determining how a manager constructs their management style over time is influenced and guided by their past experiences of working relationships, hierarchies and organisations. The command and control style found in the think manager, think male stereotype continues to be the basis of management styles for some men and women managers.

²³ This quote is cited in Mavin 2006,(27)2 from paper presented at 'Rethinking Gender, Work and Organization Conference', June 2001, Keele University

3.9 Collective competition

In this section the relationship between the manager and other individuals both inside and outside their organisation will be explored to understand how collective competition can have an impact on the attitudes and behaviours of managers. Collective competition is defined as using group resources to gain advantage in terms of achieving goals and aspirations in order to accumulate more power, knowledge and authority through the use of relationships. Networks, mentors and role models are key sites where collective competition is practiced. In measuring success, networks may be a location for social differentiation criteria in terms of providing peers, role models, mentors, superiors and friends with whom comparisons can be made in terms of aspirations, ambitions and career options. The key research questions addressed are: how do competitive relations at work effect relationships between individuals of the same gender and different genders and do men and women in the workplace perceived and experience competition and competitive relations differently?

3.9.1 Formal and informal networks

Networks fall into two categories, formal and informal. Formal networks functioning within an organisation enable prescribed relationships to be formed to achieve a desired outcome. This may be for example a committee, team or group that is set a task loosely connected to their positional roles. This network is likely to include an array of representatives from a range of hierarchical levels. On the simplest level it may be a team selected to organise an event. Formal networks often have a deadline for the assignment or task which marks a formal end to the association. Membership of these groups may be learning platforms providing opportunities to build a profile with colleagues and assist in developing relationships across an organisation. The second category is informal networks which are discretionary and can cross over boundaries of work and social boundaries. The 'old boy network' is probably the most widely recognised and potentially the most difficult to join, especially if you are a woman or belong to a minority group (Ibarra:1993). Oakley's (2000) work on why women CEO's are scarce, suggests that women cite behavioural explanations such as double binds, communication, leadership styles and old boy

networks. In contrast men cite corporate cultures and career development practices. A double bind is defined as a behavioural norm that creates a situation where a person cannot win no matter what they do. It is noted that 'throughout history, double binds have been used by those with power to oppress those without power' (Oakley, 2000: 324) and networks exemplify a potent site of influence where decisions are made about who will or will not be invited into the membership, effectively limited access to those relationships. Networks are well documented as a barrier for women in management with invitations to join often being closed or limited to faces that fit (Schwartz: 1992, Coe: 1992, Edwards et al: 1996, Davidson and Burke: 1994, 2000).

Responding to the exclusion from some informal networks has resulted in alternatives being established to provide links for women and minority groups offering support in terms of personal and professional experience. These networks have flourished, particularly with the growth of the internet which presents easy access, anonymity and a time effective way of communicating and interacting with other users/members. In both Australia and the United Kingdom it is not difficult to find a network that stems from gender and business, business and ethnicity or gender and specific profession. Waldstorm et al (2007) suggest that a generational effect is also apparent in the formation of networks with the development of young women's networks responding to the number of women in the labour market and in management. However, the value of these networks in terms of career development or business growth is difficult to determine. Halford and Leonard (2001) argue that networks offering support to deal with the stresses and strains of being a woman or member of a minority group cannot offer the same degree of career development as an old style network. They suggest such networks do not have members with enough power or influence to change situations to positively impact on a person's progression at work, but there is value in fostering confidence to deal more effectively with work and career. Gender based networks present two scenarios which reinforce issues which women can be confronted by the very nature of them not being men.

3.9.2 Gendering relationships at work

Ibarra (1993) explains the importance when analysing networks to make the distinction between instrumental and expressive ties. An instrumental tie stems from a work role and can include information, expertise, advice, political access and material resources all of which can assist personal and career development. Although a mentoring or coaching relationship falls into this category it is only one element of a range of relationships which offer a wide scope of support and resources. An expressive tie primarily provides friendship and social support and is not as bound to work roles.

In their exploration of friendships²⁴ at work, suggest that interpersonal work relationships are important and whether instrumental or expressive, they present men and women with experiences that can positively or negatively impact on their employment, career decisions and development. The study researched how same gender and gender mixed friendships operate amongst managers, solicitors and technology workers and what impact this has on levels of job satisfaction. The results found that salary tends to be higher as the proportion of men increases in the workflow and friendship networks and that homophily²⁵ characterises these relationships. Also concluded was that close relationships with men indicate a better outcome for women in terms of career success than similar relationships with women. These findings continue to observe women being disadvantaged at work because of their gender based exclusion or partial membership of networks. Do women need to be more strategic in their relationships at work? Do women need to understand better the role of interpersonal competition in these relationships to ensure they are not disadvantaged?

In an increasingly competitive labour market where women too often remain at the lower end of management hierarchies, it is important to question how initiating, developing and managing relationships more effectively could

²⁴ Friendships are defined as a voluntary, reciprocal, equal relationship which is seen as unique and special and which enhances the sense of self (Markiewicz et al; 2000: 161).

²⁵ Homophily refers to the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar in identity or organisational group affiliations. Interpersonal similarity increases ease of communication, improves predictability of behaviour and fosters relationships of trust and reciprocity (Ibarra; 1993:61).

increase the opportunities for advancement. Markiewicz et al suggest that 'Greater competition may lead workers to place more emphasis on making strategic choices about relationships, ones which would make females' lower status even more salient and thus these friendships less desirable' (Markiewicz et al, 1999: 176). How important therefore is networking to advancing women's careers in management? Ibarra and Hunter (2007) identify and define three types of networking they argue are necessary for managers to be successful. Firstly operational, which is primarily about building relationships that enable jobs to be completed; and secondly personal, which involves widening one's circle of contacts based on common interests and finally strategic networking. This is perhaps the most difficult to manage as it involves predicting future issues and identifying stakeholders who may be important in such scenarios. Ibarra suggests that networking is not an easy skill to master and can often be a reason for a manager's slow progress up the hierarchy. Her solution is to seek a role model who is successful at developing networks and learning the skills and practices from them.

3.10 Temporal competition

The tensions surfacing around the concept of time tend to focus on the resource and its perceived restrictions and constraints. Time as a resource is fixed into globally understood segments of minutes, hours, days and weeks. For the general population there are two main streams of activity in a daily period, work and sleep. What time is left is charged with a multitude of other tasks and activities. These can range from domestic care requirements to leisure activities and in this private sphere is where frustrations and conflicts with time often arise. Comments like 'there is never enough time in the day' supports whole work/life balance discourses which have been gaining ground in recent years. It also highlights the importance of looking beyond time as a singular dimension to identify where conflicts and perceptions of a zero sum competition with time originate

Hochschild (1997) found in her study of a large organisation that some people resolved that it was simpler to work longer hours than confront issues and conflicts at home which they perceived to be insurmountable. How work and

home is managed in relation to time is an area which has been attributed with an insightful body of research. Time is perhaps the most identifiable resource organisations claim from individuals, and with this economic trade, time becomes commodified, and has a financial value to both parties.

As an individual, negotiating an acceptable amount of time to a management position is likely to be influenced by comparison with others who may be prepared to commit more (Sirianni et al: 2000, Rutherford: 2001, Blair-Loy et al: 2003). Presenteeism is one mechanic that Simpson (1998) argues male managers often use to reinforce themselves as more effective than women. She also reports the existence of a culture of competitive presenteeism which often passes down through a hierarchy where it is adopted as a norm until it is endemic. This is often apparent in young men whom Simpson argues identify more acutely with career success and development seeking practices where they can be measured easily. For example staying late and working long hours can translate into corporate commitment but can also raise questions of measuring effective performance.

Gerson and Jacobs (2004) argue that social change in America over the past five decades has borne five interconnected dilemmas or time divides: work/family divide, occupational divide, aspiration divide, parenting divide and the gender divide. As a summary this analysis is a sound contribution to the role of time in connection with work, leisure, parenting and gender and outlines how temporal competition can be a useful category of engagement for explaining these divides. How and where individuals perceive they are competing with time can result in a zero sum game where time always wins. However if the terms of perception change, and the competition is viewed differently, then perhaps multiple relationships with time could be subsumed into working and living cultures. I will explore this proposition further in later chapters.

Adam (1995) identifies that part of the problem with time is that people generally do not give it due consideration and yet continue to have days dominated by work. In this way time as a resource is sold by individuals to organisations which is then controlled by the organisation often beyond the

terms of the contract as found in presenteeism. At the extreme end of the time and work spectrum is work addiction where work becomes all embracing. The term 'workaholic' has been widely used for some decades now and as Killinger (2006) explains, the difference between a hard worker and a 'workaholic' is that a hard worker maintains a balance between the private and public spheres of their life. She suggests that 'making a resolution to save 25% of your energy to bring home every night and putting fence around your weekends to protect yourself from temptations are both good ideas' (p62).

A *Fortune Magazine* article (November 28, 2005) featured a number of senior managers from large American companies who addressed their work roles questioning the trade-offs and sacrifices they make to do their jobs. These managers (predominantly men) are reorganising not just the ways they work but the ways their units work to reduce the hours and allow for weekends and holidays. Time and work is a tension filled relationship and suggestions that '24/7' should relate to businesses and not people and the concept of human sized jobs offer some progressive ideas. For example, 20th Century Fox now employ two presidents who are jointly responsible for the company. This position emerged in response to the demands of the organisation, the industry and the realisation that one president could not do the job. The recognition that some roles have become too big for one person suggests that more thinking and research is required on how to accommodate the needs of businesses and the people working in them. Howard Schultz, chairman of Starbucks, points out that 'The problem won't be solved by working smarter or tinkering at the margins to add flexibility. Instead, as the E&Y (Ernst and Young)²⁶ team discovered, delivering better business performance while improving their lives means rethinking the way work gets done and how consuming senior jobs need to be' (Miller: 2005)²⁷. In some cases it is suggested that innovative approaches are

²⁶ Gregg Slager a senior partner in the Mergers and Acquisitions Department at Ernst and Young in New York, aged 45 with two children 4 and 6 years worked on average 80 hours a week and had been doing so for a decade. The young professionals working for him said they were not going to put up with the pace year on year and in conjunction with a similar personal conclusion, Slager set about changing the way he and his department worked. Over a period of six months he and his team rethought every job and reallocated tasks to the point where holidays are now taken and weekend work is not the norm (Miller: 2005 – *Fortune Magazine*, 'Get A Life').

²⁷ http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2005/11/28/8361955/index.htm access 3/3/06

working but in other cases Miller argues the challenge remains to convince corporate leaders that a complete life is both viable and legitimate.

Beck (1992) argues in his individualization theory that individuals, in order to have a life of one's own, need to spend time taking on the responsibility of planning and executing the delivery of their plan. The role of time in is an important element which can have a range of impacts on the outputs of the individualization process with one being the discovery that it takes a commitment of time to have a life of one's own. Hakim's Preference Theory and the classifications she outlines bear out some scenarios of temporal competition from a gender perspective, as she suggests that many women opt for achieving a work/life balance that continues to perpetuate the domestic and caring responsibility to women. Kanter in her 1977 study argues that high level jobs and their ensuing opportunities and responsibilities require large amounts of time. Her model of employment required a man who was usually supported by a 'stay at home wife' meaning an organisation was effectively employing two people and paying a breadwinner wage. The recognition by organisations of the time required to run a career and a family in the breadwinner model has been dramatically diluted as more women have joined the labour market and the family unit has changed shape and form. A renegotiation with these changes as Beck describes has not been fully explored and can accentuate the negative aspects of temporal competition.

Temporal competition is defined here as the ways and means time as a fixed resource and a commodity directly or indirectly becomes a competitor with an individual manager's life at work and at home. Unlike the other dimensions, temporal competition can have touch points with all the other dimensions, yet is probably the most invisible, because of its almost subliminal integration into all aspects of life and work. Temporal competition is important to my study as it is a useful lens through which to investigate its function and form in relation to the other dimensions of competition, and to highlight the points of conflict found in behaviours and attitudes practiced consciously or unconsciously. How managers compete for and with time may present a way of understanding how such competitions could be utilised to transform the organisational relationships

which for many managers, peers and superiors remain fixed in terms of working hours.

Gerson and Jacobs (2004) argue that when cultural messages simultaneously stress both the work ethic and family values people feel torn because it is difficult at a minimum to enact conflicting values at the same time. They say 'competing values cannot serve as a roadmap for action' (Gerson and Jacobs, 2004: 61). Exploring temporal competition will focus on the questions: do men and women in the workplace perceive and experience temporal competition and competitive relations differently and how do temporal based competitive relations at work impact on responsibilities and activities outside of work?

Conclusion

Identifying competition as a multifaceted dynamic is the first stage in defining useful parameters to explore. Categorising competition is the second stage of unravelling its complexities and building a framework from which to analyse its processes and outcomes. The eight dimensional competition model developed for this study provides a framework for exploring how the dimensions operate individually laying the groundwork for investigating how and why they overlap. This approach to examining competition extends the view of competition beyond the scarcity and challenge models which do not easily translate into the working environment.

Personal competition and interpersonal competition have blurred boundaries in terms of definition. This is evident in the psychological research which for the last century has been as diverse as the definitions of competition. Broadening the scope of meaning by introducing terms such as appropriate and constructive competition highlights the limitations of seeking to find one definition.

Investigating competition in organisations and management adds the categories of internal, external, symbolic, positional and collective to the discussion which deal more specifically with work oriented relationships, competitive situations and their outcomes.

Managers can require a wide range of skills and knowledge to competently fulfil the requirements of their positional role and these skills are often only developed through experiencing success and failure. The influence of mentors and networks can increase the knowledge base of managers and allow in some cases faster career progression. How internal and external competition is manifested in terms of a manager's experience is explored in relation to their management style and levels of confidence. Temporal competition is the eighth dimension and has touch points with all the other dimensions grounding time as a resource, which is fixed and commodified. The combination of these eight categories of competition offers a means of uncovering how competition is perceived and experienced and how competitive relations are constructed to investigate how and in what ways competition is gendered at work. The next chapter will discuss the methodology I use in the thesis, and how the research was undertaken, including the obstacles which were encountered and where possible, overcome.

Chapter Four

Discovering the Knowledge of a Manager's Work

Researching the social world is a complex and challenging activity beginning with a single question and developing into a spectrum of issues demanding assessment and reassessment. What questions should be asked and of whom, what methods and methodologies should be employed and why, what role does the researcher play and what influence does this have on the inquiry process? Decisions taken during a project can present both opportunities and diversions to the researcher. How problems, frustrations or revelations are dealt with can enrich the journey, the data and its analysis. This chapter explores the epistemological and methodological approaches employed for this project and the methods enlisted. As a feminist social scientist my position in this research is located in my career background as a manager in the media publishing industry. Alongside being a feminist researcher I have other roles including mother and marketing consultant that are equally important. Bringing my experiences to this project, I examine managers' perceptions and experiences of competition at work.

4.1 Discovering knowledge

The engagement by feminists with epistemological debates critiquing positivism as androcentric and 'bad science' (Harding: 1987, Stanley and Wise: 1983) led to a view that removing bias (e.g. sexism and/or racism) from the research process combined with rigorous adherence to methodologies would result in value-free and objective outcomes. However, simply adding women into the social science equation did not change knowledge and did not challenge the relationship between epistemology and methodologies. Challenging the universal nature of women as a category feminists argue that different women have different experiences based on not just their gender, but also race, class and sexual orientation (Stanley and Wise: 1993; Hill-Collins: 1991, Mohanty: 1988). In my thesis men and women are identified as important sources of knowledge in terms of themselves as individuals and as managers in relation to understanding

the perceptions of competition and competitive relations in their working environments.

Hill-Collins states that ‘epistemology is the study of the philosophical problems in concepts of knowledge and truth’ (Hill Collins, 1997: 198). Truth as an ideal for researchers can, I propose serves more as a distraction than as a useful aim in explorations of the social world. What is believed as a truth or knowledge about one’s life today, may change tomorrow or into the future resulting in ‘knowledges’ ‘truths’ and ‘experiences’ co-existing or being replaced over and over in an individual’s social reality. In this study the individual accounts of managers will build a spectrum of competitive realities to be drawn allowing for similarities and differences to emerge and definitions to be devised.

Acknowledging that the social world is fluid locates not just this inquiry but my position as a researcher with the aim of adding knowledge to the body of work on gender equality and management.

4.1.1 Standpoint theory – the position of managers

Working with the premise that truth is both partial and located in the world an individual occupies, leads to the influence of standpoint theory on this study. Standpoint theory argues that a position is achieved through understanding the location or locations from which a person’s life is experienced. Standpoint also rejects ‘universal and essentialised woman’ as a category which is important and underpins the framework of this project. Focusing on understanding how competition and competitive relations can influence and determine the experiences of managers at work is central to the main research question: is competition gendered? As Hartstock explains ‘A standpoint, however, carries with it the contention that there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible’ (Hartstock, 1997: 153). I argue that competition and competitive relations are largely invisible, which increases the value of standpoint theory in making sense of the managers’ accounts. Management hierarchies may vary from one organisation to another, from one industry to another. In climbing the corporate ladder it is anticipated that some individuals may experience isolation, marginalisation and discrimination. They

may also experience promotion, fast track career development and mentoring (Blackaby et al: 1999, Davidson and Burke: 2000, Fels: 2004, Headlam-Wells: 2004). How a career develops could present insights into the structures that advantage some and disadvantage others. This can contribute to informing bigger questions about how the practice of competitive systems can disadvantage one person over another (Olesen: 2000). Understanding the tunnel vision of an individual who has glided up the rungs with little experience of barriers is as valuable as those who have encountered discriminatory practices. This enables a wider view of how organisational cultures are constructed and the mechanics which maintain them.

The acknowledgement of different standpoints also brings with it the awareness that research will never provide all the answers and that those answers can change over time. Harding argues that ‘the starting point of standpoint theory – and its claim that is most often misread – is that in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or some other such politics shaping the very structure of a society, the activities of those at the top both organize and set limits on what persons who perform such activities can understand about themselves and the world around them’ (Harding, 2004: 43). Unravelling how a manager’s current and previous positions in an organisational hierarchy can be influenced by the relationships encountered with superiors, peers and subordinates aims to inform what transformational measures can be initiated in the gender equality project.

4.1.2 Reflexivity - the position of the researcher

My journey with reflexivity began with the feminist body of work which challenged the traditional orthodox role of the researcher as objective and value free. My approach to this project was to be self-reflexive acknowledging that in revealing my own values and attitudes I could be transparent about my role in the construction of knowledge generated from my project (Reinharz: 1992, Finch:1993, Oakley: 2000). In developing my position as the researcher I agree with Finlay (2002) who argues that as researchers ‘We recognize that research is co-constituted, a joint product of the participants, researcher and their relationship. We understand that meanings are negotiated within particular social contexts so that another researcher will unfold a different story. We no

longer seek to eradicate the researcher's presence – instead subjectivity in research researcher is transformed from a problem to an opportunity.' (Finlay, 2002: 212). In this project I would argue that my subjectivity has been a catalyst for wanting to explore new and different questions about managers and in so doing create an opportunity to contribute to the gender and management body of work.

So where does my subjectivity originate? Drawing on my own career experiences in the publishing industry, the environment where I was gathering data for this project, I felt that my own observations and experiences could contribute to telling a story about gender, management and competition. During the 1990's when I was working in the newspaper sector a major rationalisation of ownership across the UK was undertaken transforming the landscape. Throughout this time I struggled alongside my peers to understand why some experienced managers were made redundant while other managers were promoted. Changes in ownership in organisations were quickly followed with changes in management and often new senior management teams were dropped into place overnight creating conflicts between existing and new organisational cultures. These transitions and people's responses to them were unpredictable and at times difficult to explain. From my position I witnessed a myriad of management scenarios unfolding and began to formulate questions about managers, what made a good manager and what made a successful manager and why is the answer not the same?

Drawing on the work of Martin (2003) and practicing gender which I refer to in later chapters and extending it to management, her proposition that 'non-reflexivity can reveal how and why well-intentioned, 'good people' practise gender in ways that do harm' (Martin, 2003: 255) was useful to thinking about management practices and why they are not always productive or positive. Making sense of the difficult role managers can have in managing both up and down a hierarchy which is in a state of flux due to transformations of ownership for example highlighted a number of issues which had crossovers with the work on women managers and consequently had a bearing on constructing my research questions. Firstly isolation often attributed to being a woman manager I witnessed amongst men and women managers during the upheaval in the publishing industry. Secondly powerlessness as a result of limited information and thirdly exclusion (often temporary) from networks were also witnessed as a result of new incoming management teams. After change comes the period of settling in and

what I observed during this process was how non-reflexivity appears to the default setting for many. Martin's work certainly resonated with my observations and experiences and reinforced the value of becoming part of the reflexive process for this project.

Early in my career I discovered that corporate hierarchies were restrictive and entrenched in a prevailing attitude that the one way to proceed is slowly and at the discretion of line managers. At this point I decided that self-employment as a contractor was a suitable alternative. This meant working for different organisations and being able to opt out of some dimensions of competition. Often perceived as 'neutral' in the organisations I worked, I found myself privy to management processes and decision making that would not have been available to me as an employee at the hierarchical level I was working. However, I also never experienced personally the positive and negative sides of being a fully functioning part of an organisation and in hindsight I may have done things differently.

What becomes important for my research is the discovery that my experiences can contribute to understanding the language, politics, relationships and the overall landscape that the research participants operate in which can offer the opportunity for insights beyond my original position. With my focus on gender and management it was useful to draw on the discussions of reflexivity by management researchers who in recent years as Johnson and Duberley (2003) suggest are increasingly becoming engaged with the process of assessing the impact of their own attitudes and perspectives on how research projects are constructed. The use of reflexivity as a positioning practice which Alvesson et al (2008) explore has particular resonance with my research project. As explained earlier my career in publishing happened against the backdrop of a major ownership reconstruction of the newspaper industry in the UK. Alvesson et al argue that 'reflexivity is not primarily an end in itself but a means to improve research in some way' (Alvesson et al, 2008: 495). For this project the challenge as a researcher has been to allow my own experiences to sit alongside the stories of the managers and to cultivate the curiosity to keep asking questions and to keep listening to the answers.

4.2 Methodology - grounded theory and beyond

Fonow and Cook (2005) argue that feminist methodology should explain and justify the techniques used locating them within the discipline being practiced which I apply to analysing the methodological strengths and weakness encountered in this project. To this end, competition as a body of work is limited in its integration into current social and gender theories presenting both challenges and opportunities for this study. Whilst the theoretical influences for this project are based in gender and management as discussed in the previous chapters, to enable the process of inquiry to proceed efficiently, grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss: 1967; Strauss and Corbin: 1998) as the methodology was decided upon. Competition in gender and management is undeveloped as a topic and grounded theory became the main thrust for directing the data collection and the analysis. To examine the research question, is competition gendered? - required breaking new ground because of the limited empirical work available. The research outputs and themes discussed in the following chapters are based on the strengths of grounded theory as a methodology which enables a dynamic such as competition to be unravelled, enabling the generation of definitions, explanations and further questions that could direct future research opportunities.

Coding data to allow themes to emerge and further questions to be asked and discussed as the interviewing process continues was a key factor in deciding on this methodology. After each interview was partially or fully transcribed the first round of coding was undertaken using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) '*Basics of Qualitative Research*' as the starting point. The managers' accounts are taken section by section coding them according to the subjects raised. During this process the coding procedure was at times static and moved at a very slow pace. Seeking to move beyond this obstacle and apparent methodological weakness I discovered Charmaz's (2000) interpretation of grounded theory. This interpretation allows a more active approach to the data analysis by showing how the codes begin to have relationships with other codes. 'Like other forms of qualitative research, grounded theories can only portray moments in time. However, the grounded theory quest for the study of basic social processes fosters the identification of connections between these events. The social world

is always in process and the lives of the research subject's shift and change as do their circumstances and they themselves change' (Charmaz, 2000: 522). This direction was important to the study as comparisons in terms of situation and time can highlight how experiences and perceptions of competition can change showing how as a dynamic it can be multidimensional.

At the first stage of analysis a wide range of topics emerge from the managers interviews. To develop the data further I employed situational analysis and mapping procedures influenced by the work of Clarke (2005). She proposes that situational analysis can supplement grounded theory using a situation-centred approach in the data analysis. It became increasingly obvious that mapping the codes was an efficient means of visualising the data which in the case of competition is multidimensional and largely ill-defined in the context of gender. As Clark explains '*The situation per se becomes the ultimate unit of analysis, and understanding its elements and their relations is the primary goal. Thus situational analysis can deeply situate research projects individually, collectively, organizationally, institutionally, temporally, geographically, materially, discursively, culturally, symbolically, visually and historically*' (Clarke, 2005: 97). The influence of situational analysis was important in keeping control of the project and all the strands of the data and coding especially as the data was collected in two countries, the UK and Australia and over several years. The weaknesses or limitations that Clark (2005) and Charmaz (2000) identify in using grounded theory were similar to those which I experienced and drawing on their work and interpretations ensured that the challenges made throughout the research process were unpacked and resolved.

Parry (1998) in his study of leadership found grounded theory useful for generating theory in a discipline other than psychology, where as a subject of investigation it was dominant. However he argues that there are two approaches, full and partial grounded theory. The partial approach does not use the full range of tools and the outcome can be described as theory derived from data but not through the repeated levels of analysis that full grounded theory proposes. He admits that constraints in any project can impact on implementing the full process particularly in relation to the time required to step back from the research

and reflect on the data. Although Parry wants researchers to differentiate between full and partial theory, I think his argument suggesting that multiple approaches to grounded theory applied on a project by project basis rather than a singular universal theory is an important contribution. As illustrated in the work of Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2000), continuing to develop the methodologies in research opens the way for continual debate about how the social world can be explored and reported on. Publishing is the focus for this study and a brief outline of how this industry operates follows.

4.3 The publishing context

Within a publishing company there are four sectors or 'work cultures' - editorial, marketing, advertising and production - and my participants are from all of the sectors. Before addressing the reasons for focusing on publishing it is important to define it, beginning with traditional publishing which is the production and dissemination of printed works such as books, magazines, journals and newspapers. With the advent of digital systems, publishing has expanded to include electronic versions of traditional products along new products for example websites and blogs. Publishing also belongs to the wider industry of media (the plural of medium) which is defined as term referring to those organised means of dissemination of fact, opinion, entertainment and other information. Apart from publishing this includes television, radio, film, internet, DVDs and CDs. So with the many and diverse forms of media available defining not just what media is but what it does is important. As Engwall (1978) explains, a medium is what transforms experience into knowledge. Media he says provide signs which give meaning to the events of everyday life and a medium is any instrument of communication that carries or mediates a message. He also highlights why the media industry is unique from other industries stating three reasons. Firstly a media business operates a dual product, selling two different products to two different sets of buyers. For example a newspaper will sell itself to readers/consumers and secondly they sell the relationship they have with those readers/consumers to a third party – the advertiser. The collateral of a media business is the advertiser and the audience who are intrinsically linked to the success of that organisation. The second reason media is unique is because it can access the mass market and this has traditionally come with a public service

responsibility. It can play an important role by informing citizens about what they need to know in terms of their social and political life. Thirdly, the role of media is a strong indicator of the democratic process operating in a country. The notion of ‘free press’ is generally understood to be a key element of a democracy.

In terms of the structural trends in the media industry it is notable that mergers and buyouts of media companies have made some corporations bigger than ever before and media has become a global industry. For example²⁸ News Corporation owns television stations, newspapers, magazines, book publishers, radio stations and film companies in United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Denmark and Germany. Time Warner own television stations, book publishers, magazines, online websites including AOL, theme parks, film and production studios and sports teams with interests in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe. The size and value of the media market is substantial and advertising revenue is a sound indicator of how this market has grown. Chart 4.1 below shows the growth in advertising over thirty years in the United States with growth evident in all sectors stabilising in 2000 except for cable television which between 1995 and 2005 quadrupled in size.

Table 4.1 Advertising Revenues by Media (in US \$ millions)

Year	Newspapers	Television	Cable TV	Radio	Magazines
1975	8442	5263	n/a	1980	1465
1980	15615	11330	72	3690	3225
1985	25170	20003	989	6490	5155
1990	32281	26616	2631	8726	6803
1995	36317	32720	6166	11338	8580
2000	49050	44802	15455	19295	12370
2005	47335	44293	23654	19640	12847

Source: Robert J Coen, Universal McCann

Accessed on website <http://www.mediainfocenter.org/compare/adrevenue> 29/05/07

²⁸ This information has been accessed from <http://www.cjr.org/resources> (Columbia School of Journalism 29/5/07)

Behind these figures is undoubtedly the 'power of the media' and this picture continues to be replicated in most western societies. Kitzinger (2000) argues that certain key events in mass media societies both nationally and internationally become reference points for social issues and carry powerful associations. For example, the Boxing Day Tsunami, the death of Princess Diana and the capture of Saddam Hussein - 'These episodes come to be more than simply key events and operate differently from 'news icons'. They become media templates. Routinely used to highlight one perspective with great clarity... They are instrumental in shaping narratives around particular social problems' (Kitzinger, 2000: 61).

4.4 Methods – the time and the place

Feminist social researchers continue to debate on-going issues around the research process continuing a tradition that began in early second wave feminism. The arguments feminists presented to orthodox research traditions began by challenging dominant androcentric approaches. The central argument being that in the social world women have views and experiences that require investigation, consideration and inclusion in research. (Fonow and Cook: 1991, Reinharz: 1992, Hesse-Biber et al: 2004, Maynard and Purvis: 1994, Stanley and Wise: 1993). From this body of work emerged the debate - is there a feminist method? This is the point from which I began my own formulation of beliefs as to what research position I wanted to follow, concluding that it is as a feminist social scientist and finding wisdom in Cook and Fonow's (2003) direction. They state the 'The interplay between theory as defining one's research and theory being defined by one's research suggests that researchers must become more aware of the rationale for the selection of methods and of those methods' strengths and weaknesses in studying specific settings and topics. Thus, there is no one correct method for feminist research.'

Having examined a variety of perspectives I decided to use Harding (1987) and her definitions as the frame of reference which presents a set of criteria which aids navigating the complexities in developing a project. They are 'a research method as a technique (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence, a methodology as a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed

and epistemology as a theory of knowledge' (Harding, 1987: 2). As cornerstones they enable a solid starting point from which to explore the continuing critiques and development of research methods and methodologies and how they interact.

The work of feminist researchers in the social science field has been instrumental in bringing attention to new ways of approaching and practising research methods. As Olesen states 'Feminist qualitative research enters the new millennium in a stronger position than it began the "second wave" because both theorists and researchers have critically examined the foundations even as they have tried new research approaches, experimental and traditional... What is important for concerned feminists is that new topics, issues of concern and matters for feminist inquiry are continually produced and given attention to yield more nuanced understandings of action on critical issues' (Olesen, 2000: 238). The rigour that feminist research advocates is a positive contribution to social sciences generally and is an objective which this project seeks to emulate in the design and implementation of data collection and analysis.

4.4.1 The questions

Choosing the methods that will give the greatest access to rich data based on the research questions is important. In this rationalisation process should also come the recognition that the type of methods used can influence the results (Jayaratne: 1993, Maynard and Purvis: 1994). For example if the question was - how many women reach middle management over a given period to prove or disprove the benefits of positive discrimination? - then a statistical method would be the likely procedure. This would provide the answers to age, ethnicity, education, marital status, dependent children and how long they had held their current position. However it would not uncover who those women were and if they encountered barriers how these were overcome. Whereas if the question asked was - why do only a small number of women reach middle management and even less senior management and how do they do it? - then interviews, observations and statistics would be more productive in offering answers and uncovering further issues to consider.

The time spent devising and rationalising methods and selecting questions with a naive belief that people will want to talk to you and share their experiences quickly becomes a reality of questioning whether any data will ever be gathered. O'Connell Davidson et al (1994) recalls how 'good fortune' in a project is something that is never mentioned and yet as she describes is critical for progress. This study has been confronted by limited good fortune in terms of accessing participants. Dealing with this issue has presented an opportunity to engage with why access is difficult. This leads to the question of how research is perceived. During the process of finding interviewees I realised that for some people 'academic research' has become merely a sub-category of 'market research' an activity that is regarded by some as invasive, inconsiderate and yet continues to dominate many corporate marketing strategies. For example in the daily life of most people in the western world with a telephone, some experience of market researchers is likely. With email the problem continues but has been minimised by software that reduces SPAM. The post box also continues to be a site of unwanted requests for feedback.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format combined with some statistical questions about age, marital status, children, hours worked in a week and holiday entitlement redemption.

The themes are as follows:

- Organisational Culture
- Management Style
- Relationships
- Career Development
- Competition

4.4.2 Considering classifications

This study accepts that the impact of race, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation on an individual's experience of competition and competitive relations will vary from one individual to another. For example Black (2003) and Arabsheibani (2005) identify pay gaps between heterosexuals and homosexuals in favour of heterosexual men. And in a conversation between a black woman and a white woman in the United States, the black woman reflects

on her status and position in society based on race and gender compared to the white woman who views herself simply as a woman.

“When you wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, what do you see?” she asked. “I see a woman,” replied the white woman. “That’s precisely the issue” replied the black woman. ‘I see a black woman. For me, race is visible every day, because it is how I am not privileged in this culture. Race is invisible to you, which is why our alliance will always seem somewhat false to me”

(Hess-Biber et al, 2004: 102)

In conducting this study pursuing gender as the focus, I am aware that minority groups are not well represented in management in Australia²⁹ and to a lesser extent in the UK. What influence race would have on the question is competition gendered, cannot therefore be considered except to acknowledge that there is likely to be an impact. Muse (1987) in her study finds that young black women in America have to compete on an array of levels in society to gain status and recognition especially in the labour market. As this inquiry is framed by work and management, I considered asking participants about their race and sexual orientation but decided that it was beyond the scope of this project as gender was the core focus - but could be an opportunity for future consideration.

4.5 The fieldwork

The research interview has the purpose to obtain descriptions of the life and world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996: 6). In many ways an interview could be described as an extension of a conversation which is the basis of communicating experiences in the social world. However, this is too simplistic and I argue the questions who can know, what can be known and how we come to know. As Reinharz explains ‘Interviewing offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the

²⁹ Indigenous people in the 2001 census were 410,000 with 54% of people aged between 15-64 years active in the labour force. 60% were employed in low skill jobs, 21% in medium skill and 15% in high skill jobs. Source http://www.hreoc.gov.au/Social_justice/statistics/index.html accessed 14/04/08

researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is the antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women' (Reinharz, 1992: 19). I would extend this argument saying that men and women speaking for only themselves, is identified in terms of this project as the way to gain understanding and insight into how competition is gendered.

For feminists, the activity of interviewing has been critiqued as a potential site of exploitation potentially involving hierarchical power relationships. Oakley (1982) was explicit that in the interview process the maintenance of a non-hierarchical, reciprocal intention towards respondents should be rigorously pursued and maintained. Advocating rapport building with participants is an important part of feminist research and with shared backgrounds interacting; this can in some situations provide some advantages. Finch (1993) found that being married to a clergyman³⁰ and interviewing the wives of clergymen afforded her an advantage gaining trust and a rapport very quickly with her participants. In contrast to that research project, her experience of examining play groups produced rich and useful data and yet at the time she was single and had no children.

Whilst a researcher's biography can increase the ability to build rapport it is not necessary to have a similar background to participants as this limits the curiosity of the researcher. O'Connell Davidson states that from her experience of researching the sex industry, 'there are parts of the social world which are invisible to men simply because they are men, just as there are certain experiences which no woman is ever likely to have first hand' (O'Connell Davidson et al, 1994: 220). Understanding the social world often requires stepping outside of one's own and into those which appear foreign. In doing this the potential for new revelations on unresolved issues may result. Scully, a feminist researcher in 'Understanding Sexual Violence' interviews convicted rapists and states 'While not diminishing the continuing responsibility to illuminate women's subordinate condition, the debunking of patriarchy is not

³⁰ Finch states that as a graduate student she did not reveal that she was married to a clergyman in this study introducing herself as a researcher. This was an attempt to attain a degree of unbiased interviewing.

accomplished by focusing exclusively on the lives and experiences of women' (Scully, 1990: 3). For this study interviewing men and women managers is important to enable a greater understanding of different perceptions of competition and to explore how gender is a factor.

4.5.1 The selection of interviewees

The first challenge in starting the fieldwork is the recruitment of participants. With a background in publishing I believed that the contacts I had would assist in negotiating access. However from the time I enrolled in my research degree to the time I started the pilot (18 months) a number of the key people identified as gatekeepers had changed companies, had children, been made redundant or were simply no longer interested. Through word of mouth an initial group of women from outside the publishing industry (finance and health) who were interested in speaking to me and with them I conducted pilot interviews. These interviews were comprehensive and with the difficult situation of access, I did consider whether an industry focus was essential as I was seeking managers' experiences and perceptions. The conclusion I reached was that I would continue with publishing but if a group of two or more people from outside publishing came to me then I would interview them. This happened in Australia where again through word of mouth I was approached by two individuals who worked in government, in communications working daily with the national and local media.

The inclusion of men was an important criteria for the sample as discussed above and the initial target of 50/50 ratio was not reached, reducing to 75/25. Snowballing failed to eventuate in making contacts through participants despite requests. I suspect this is a direct response to the 'research saturation' experienced by individuals from the wide ranging bundle of social and commercial research demands. As an academic researcher I was potentially offering a valuable service to managers who may find the discussion insightful in relation to their own positions. I posted advertisements on different networking websites aimed primarily at women, but the response from them was poor. I also contacted a number of companies who although professing interest had other priorities. I followed up with a number of individuals who expressed an interest in being interviewed and in introducing me to colleagues and friends, but only

one of these eventuated into anything tangible. Granted this contact did provide three very interesting participants who were enjoyable and interesting to interview. It is always possible to continue seeking participants and trying to build relationships but this has to be balanced with meeting deadlines to complete the project and this is the decision I took in finalising the selection of participants.

4.5.2 Sample size

The selection outlined in the research proposal was 35 interviews with men and women managers aged between 28 and 50 years. The criteria used for a manager was responsibility for staff and/or budget. The final sample was 32 interviews with a gender ratio split of 3/1 women to men. The interviews were done in two batches with the pilot (4) and some interviews (8) carried out in the United Kingdom during 2004/5 and the remaining sample (20) in Australia during 2006/7. In Table 4.2 below the demographic profile of the participants is outlined including age, time in position, education and children. The demographics are referred to and discussed in detail in the following chapters where the data examined and analysed.

The number of participants for this project takes into account that qualitative research usually has smaller numbers than quantitative research projects and that the data collected using qualitative methods will produce intense and rich information. I did not aim to produce generalisations due to the size of the final sample (32) but to offer descriptions of human behaviour that influence a sector of the labour market - management (Ward Schofield: 1993).

Representativeness has been addressed with the aim of conducting fieldwork that provides for the spectrum of criteria that have been assigned to this thesis in terms of gender, age and position. O'Connell Davidson et al states 'the size of the sample is thus of secondary importance to the quality of the information that is elicited from it' (O'Connell Davidson et al, 1994: 173). Given that grounded theory was the methodological approach for this study, after completing 32 interviews I considered that some points of theoretical saturation were reached providing useful insights which overall met the research objectives.

Table 4.2 Demographics of Managers Interviewed

Name	Age	Gender	Status	Education	Children	Industry	Position	Years in Current Role
Angela	35-39	F	LWP*	Tert**	No	Publishing	Manager	2.5
Beth	46-50	F	LWP	Tert	Yes	Service	MD	10
Clem	35-39	F	Married	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	2
Lois	35-39	F	LWP	Tert	No	Service	Manager	4
Sandra	45-50	F	Divorced	Tert	Yes	Publishing	MD	1
Ella	40-44	F	Married	Tert	Yes***	Publishing	Director	3
Sarah	40-44	F	Divorced	Post Grad	No	Publishing	Manager	4
Pat	40-44	F	Divorced	Post Grad	No	Service	Manager	6
Liz	40-44	F	LWP	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	4
Holly	35-39	F	Married	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	3
James	40-44	M	Married	Post Grad	Yes	Publishing	CEO	1.5
Esther	30-34	F	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	2
Fran	40-44	F	Married	Post Grad	Yes	Service	Manager	3
Susan	30-34	F	LWP	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	4
Kirsty	46-50	F	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Director	2
Grace	40-44	F	LWP	Post Grad	Yes	Publishing	Manager	3
Julia	30-34	F	Single	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	6
Elaine	30-34	F	Single	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	1
Amy	40-44	F	Married	Tert	No	Publishing	MD	2
David	46-50	M	Married	Post Grad	Yes	Service	CFO	7.5
Eve	40-44	F	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	1
Martha	35-39	F	Divorced	Secondary	Yes	Publishing	Manager	4
Steve	40-44	M	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	MD	10
Matt	35-39	M	Married	Post Grad	Yes	Publishing	Manager	3.5
Mark	40-44	M	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	2.5
Zoe	30-34	F	Married	Post Grad	Yes	Publishing	Manager	1.5
Felicity	40-44	F	Married	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	0.5
John	40-44	M	LWP	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	0.5
Bernie	40-44	M	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	1
Kim	28-34	F	Single	Tert	No	Publishing	Manager	1
Peter	46-50	M	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	1
Amelia	40-44	F	Married	Tert	Yes	Publishing	Manager	5

Key:

*LWP Living with partner
 **Tert Educated to degree level
 *****Yes** children Pre-school children

4.5.3 The interviews

The interviews were advertised as likely to take approximately 35-45 minutes. This was a deliberate attempt to avoid issues about time. I was well aware throughout the fieldwork that I was dealing with a time poor group of people but surprisingly those people that did participate in the study did not mention time in relation to the interview, whereas the time was the most frequently used apology for non-participation. On average the interviews took 40 minutes with six going over an hour. All the interviews were recorded digitally with the permission of the participants as well as notes being taken to aid the process. The interviews held in the UK were face to face, in Australia they were by telephone.

Telephone interviewing in the Australian was chosen primarily because of the vast distance between cities, incurring time and financial costs which were beyond the parameters of my thesis. The telephone as a mechanism for interviewing removes geographical restrictions and limitations and therefore this was employed as the preferred means for data collection (Stephens: 2007). The telephone interviews were negotiated by phone and email and the majority of interviews were held during office hours. The appointments made, were rescheduled on only two occasions. As a researcher I was apprehensive about the telephone interviews, conscious of the need to build rapport quickly. However as the interviews proceeded I found that because managers are used to doing business by phone and email it was easier to get through 'the niceties' quickly because there were no outside distractions that come with face to face interviews. I would also found that interacting with the voice as the representative of the person allowed the relationship to develop in a relatively non-biased way with no judgments able to be made on physical attributes. I did have reservations that without body language the telephone interviews would be less expressive. What I did find though is that the voice is an expressive tool and when listened to exclusively can provide the researcher with rich data. However, it should be noted that the value of telephone interviews is dominated by how articulate the person speaking is and fortunately I did not have to deal with mumbling or other voice tones that can be better understood face to face.

In the UK all the interviews were with managers based in London and were held outside of the office environment in cafes and bars which the participants chose, all within the office locality and often referred to as 'our other office'. These took place either at lunchtime or after work and on average were an hour long. Like Puwar (1997) experienced, there were distractions, colleagues were using the same cafe or bar and at times stopped to make work related comments. This allowed me to see some interaction between the participants and their co-workers which initiated the opportunity for explanation of their relationship and at times examples that were relevant to our discussion. As England describes 'The openness and culturally constructed nature of the social world, peppered with contradictions and complexities, needs to be embraced not dismissed' (England, 1994: 81). Employing this direction is as much about enjoying the journey as it is about continuing to challenge it within the framework of the inquiry. The opportunity to use two methods has enhanced the data collection and subsequent analysis by challenging the researcher to engage with interviews in different ways.

4.5.4 Transcription

This project uses a combination of full and partial transcriptions in conjunction with interview recordings for number of reasons. Firstly, this encourages a blurring of the boundaries between pages of words and voices. Secondly listening to how the participants answer the questions has been interesting. For example to hear erudite men and women articulate about their job and career yet stumble over questions about competition has been an insightful contribution to this inquiry and one that could only become apparent by listening to individual audio. In contrast some enunciate responses that illustrate the degree to which they have engaged with the subject as part of their life's experience and this is equally prudent. Thirdly because the interviews have been predominantly conducted by telephone the voice for me as the researcher, is the person, there are no other physical influences. McDowell (1997) uses a similar combination of data analysis in her study of bankers following a process described by Marshall (1984) as 'immersion' and Brown (2001) as the 'listening guide'. This is a voice centred approach where the researcher is a listener 'taking in the voice of respondents and developing an interpretation of their experiences' (McDowell,

1997: 215). The challenge for any research project is to remain confident that engaging with the data and subsequent levels of analysis is a flexible process that can push the chosen methodologies in new directions.

4.5.5 Power relations

The participant's knowledge of their social reality is always going to be greater than that of the researcher as it is 'their' knowledge. How to collect that knowledge and treat it with respect and tolerance requires addressing the issue of power relations in the interview process. I did not consider the power of the researcher over the interviewee a major issue as all managers interviewed held a variety of senior positions in their respective companies. It was therefore unlikely they were going to feel intimidated or exploited by me, the researcher. Although it is important to acknowledge that the site of power is not just in the relationship that forms over the course of an interview, it is also in the origination of the study, the questions asked and the interpretation and presentation of data (Harding et al: 2005). Puwar (1997) in her study of women MP's discovered that the interviewer can experience an imbalance of power in favour of the interviewee which has had little attention from feminist researchers, with the debate usually orientated towards empowerment. Desmond (2004) found in her study of scientists in the biotechnology industry that interviewing up presented issues in terms of accepting a subordinate role, expecting to be dismissed and often being denied the opportunity to record interviews.

Defining elite as those exercising the major share of authority or control within society, organisations and institutions, Desmond suggests that hybrid elite more accurately describes her subjects distinguishing them as 'anything but a cleanly bounded homogeneous group' (Desmond, 2004: 264). This approach for the managers in this study is a more inclusive description as across the sample are junior, middle and senior managers. These insightful contributions presented me with frames of reference for the similar issues I experienced with this group of managers in terms of access, time and control of the interview. In one interview the participant was not interested in answering any of my questions and proceeded to impart a history of her time in management, some of this

information was relevant but in overall it was a disempowering experience for me as the researcher. I had this interview transcribed because of my inability to engage with this individual's voice; interestingly the transcription is pages upon pages of words that reads like a soliloquy. Another manager was dismissive when I was unable to provide research findings at the end of the interview, followed by an assessment of how inadequate my questions were in relation to the subject of competition. Feminist methodologies have not adequately redressed the imbalance in interview situations where the participants hold the power. Further consideration of this would be a positive contribution to methodology discussions.

4.5.6 Ethics

Ethical issues dominated the initial period of negotiating access. At the point of agreement of an interview a 'participant information sheet' was supplied to the individual by email agreeing the time of the interview and allowing an opportunity for any issues to be raised. The information addressed issues of confidentiality and the non-use of real names or organisations; it also informed them of the intention to record all the conversations. Consent was then agreed prior to the interview taking place and questions were invited at the beginning and the end of the interview. In every case, there were questions only about the study itself and none in relation to the ethical issues. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were invited to join the list to receive a brief summary of the findings and a full copy of the thesis on request. All the interviewees except two stated that they would welcome the information which was considered by the researcher as a positive outcome.

4.5.7 Validity and objectivity

Ramazanglou (2002) argues that feminist research seeks to 'understand actual power relations and the nature of persistent inequalities so that people can work to transform these effectively' (57). The argument that quantitative methods did not enable an in-depth exploration of women's experiences, emotions and stifled their voices was countered by advocates of quantitative methods saying that qualitative methods have limited safeguards and this may lead to bias from the researcher which could undermine the objectivity of the research itself (Mies:

1993, De Vault: 1996). The development of this debate has led social scientist researchers including feminists to conclude that all methods can offer a value to researchers. Oakley describes how she began 'by singing the praises of qualitative research, of in-depth interviewing and observation as ultimately more truthful ways of knowing, and I ended up advocating the use of quantitative and experimental methods as providing what is often a sounder basis for claiming that we know anything' (Oakley, 2000: 14).

With limited empirical work in the gender and management literature on competition available, uncertainty about what data would be gathered was an on-going concern. The approach therefore to knowledge discovery is based on the assumption that the majority of managers may have some experiences or perceptions of competition and competitive relations. This inquiry sought to find out what managers know and what they are prepared to talk about. Producing a coherent and reliable social reality of managers' experiences of gender and competition was an important objective for my thesis. Ward Schofield (1993) argues that traditionally 'at the heart of external validity is replicability.' (Ward Schofield, 1993: 202) The accuracy of managers' accounts in this study are checked by triangulating them with accounts in other similar studies primarily in the gender and management literature. In the following chapters discussion of similarities and differences which emerge in reference to data collected in this study is examined.

Maynard and Purvis (1994) argue that what constitutes valid and reliable feminist knowledge continues to concern researchers. In the process of interpretation they suggest it is important to accept that any number of influences including political, social and environmental can make validation a challenge. Glucksmann (1994) suggests that individuals do not necessarily possess sufficient knowledge to explain everything about their lives and this aspect needs to be incorporated into researchers' critique of their analysis, interpretation and its validation. Committing as a researcher to self-reflexivity as discussed earlier in this chapter is a strand of validation which ensures my presence is acknowledged across all the research processes. To add an additional level of validation, two interviewees, one in the UK and one in Australia have checked

their accounts periodically through the interpretation process to ensure accuracy of their experiences. During the course of this validation process additional conversations about gender and competition have been held with both respondents. The insights communicated since being first interviewed highlight how these two managers have extended their engagement with competition and competitive relations. This outcome reinforces how interpretation is as Glucksmann (1994) describes an unstable activity and can continue beyond the life of the research project.

4.6 Project motivations

The motivation for this project stems from the unequal rates of women's participation in the labour market compared to their participation in management hierarchies. Countless references to women as a talent pool that organisations will ignore at their peril has repeatedly pointed to the need to address why women are not treated equally (Schwartz: 1989, 1992). Pay equity is still not achieved and the reasons why women leave jobs is usually assumed and not investigated (Kingsmill: 2001). Women dominate the part time labour market often in roles where talent and past experience is disregarded in favour of having a job, in a suitable location, for an acceptable number of hours, enabling other responsibilities to be fulfilled.

In the findings of UK EOC (2005) report into flexible working a 'hidden brain drain' identifies 5.6 million part-timers working below their potential reporting some sectors and higher level jobs where options for part-time are simply out of the question. The number of women reaching levels of corporate and political power remains minimal and if achieved is often followed by an opting out. The inability for motherhood and active labour market participation to interact in a positive and productive way appears to remain a site of tension. Myths which maintain a belief that women can 'have it all' continue to remain the exception and achieving such a situation usually comes with a lot of help and support, much of which is paid for (Horlick: 1997). The financial burden of 'having it all' is often the point where the myth begins to unravel and the reality of being mother and manager becomes an insurmountable conflict.

Influenced by Marshall's work (1995) in women and management and her approach of sense making this study seeks to understand what is happening in relationship between gender, competition and management and why it is happening that way. This is a challenging perspective that fits well with my own motivation to understand why women continue to experience inequality in the labour market based on gender and whether understanding competition is a catalyst to some new thinking. Also influential is McKenna's (1997) study of women, work and identity. She met an editor who at 45 years of age had developed a solid career and yet found that with increasing layers of hierarchy came less authority and more responsibility. For example she was responsible for firing staff but could not solve simple problems without having to go through several rungs of approval. 'Corporate consolidation, more responsibility, lessened authority, all added up to more work with less quality in a dehumanized atmosphere' (McKenna, 1997: 37).

It has taken some time to conceptualise a number of related issues at the basis of this thesis' development. Exploring relationships at work are a key element of this project as hierarchies are investigated to gain insights into how competition manifests in the lives of managers at work. On each rung of the ladder competitive issues will be present in terms of external and internal demands. Examining how those pressures impact on the processes and outcomes of management is important to defining and understanding competition as a multi-functioning dynamic. As Hesse-Biber explains 'There is no universal truth in a hierarchical society but rather partial and context-bound truths that can be accessed through relationships with our research participants (Hesse-Biber et al, 2004: 14).

4.7 Challenges and outcomes

A generalised interpretation that all research is the same has clouded the research landscape and has made 'the field' a more challenging place to be. Also in reading the body of work 'women and management' the assumption that women want to talk about their experiences could be believed. However, in my experience this is not so simple. Once identified and on agreement of an interview women do want to talk, but getting to this point is difficult. This does

raise the question as to whether gender is still on the agenda, and whether society has accepted that the level of equality currently achieved is adequate. If this is the case, it may also contribute to an explanation of why women managers were so difficult to access and why networks appear to facilitate business rather than resolving wider social issues.

Working through a number of business networks I anticipated a better response. Repeatedly meeting with a general lack of interest I began to question if my endeavour was to make contacts for business would the response be different. It is difficult to assess why women managers are reluctant research participants and I question whether there is a fear of uncovering sensitivities that show that barriers still exist. Perhaps disturbing a comfort zone for women managers is too difficult. In relation to the fieldwork, it is only possible to report what is experienced and discussed are my findings. The work of Mavin (2006, 2008) as discussed in chapter three is pertinent on this point. Seeking to understand and explore the relationships women managers have with other women from a range of positions may provide insights into how these relationships operate. Accepting that this would undoubtedly include negative reactions could be progressive in examining how this affects wider social issues. Do women managers exist in a social bubble that Hochschild (1997) accuses white senior managers of locating themselves in and is this fostered by women's networks?

Conclusion

An examination of the theories and influences guiding this research is an important contribution to locating both the researcher and the inquiry itself. How my thesis developed from inception, to fieldwork, analysis and eventual conclusions is a fluid journey that with critical consideration can contribute to a project that is rigorous. This study has been challenging at each stage of the process and negotiating solutions to meet the on-going overall objectives has presented an opportunity to embrace new ideas and perspectives on theories and methods being used. This was most evident in the interpretation of grounded theory and situational analysis that proved useful in enabling the development of the primary data. The eight dimensional competition model explored in chapter

three provides a useful framework for the analysis and discussion over the following chapters which begins with looking at temporal competition.

Chapter 5

Temporal Competition

At a time when women can offer almost everything that men can in terms of ability, skills and experience, time becomes an important differential feature which makes men more suitable than women.

Rutherford, 2001

Time or more specifically clock time has historically been an important element in measuring productivity, with images of men in white coats with clipboards and stopwatches often used to depict the value of utilising this resource. The fixed nature of time presents a definable problem for individuals who are unable to create more of it, contain it or even stop it from moving. This situation can exacerbate the value of time in terms of the different meanings it has to managers, particularly women with dependent children. New images of time and productivity now pervade western societies depicting people juggling balls representing a variety of responsibilities with a clock continuing to tick in the background. For women managers this image is more pertinent than for men as they continue to largely embrace the reality of intersecting domestic and professional roles. How managers understand their responsibilities can influence the decisions they take in terms of work, career progression, marriage, immediate and extended family, geographical mobility and other interests.

For some managers temporal competition in relation to organisational demands is zero sum with the organisation winning. For others the balance between the challenge and scarcity model swings back and forth across a pendulum. In this chapter temporal competition is explored in the managers' individual experiences at work, outside of work and at points of intersection. The research questions examined in this chapter are:

1. Do men and women in the workplace perceive and experience temporal competition differently?

2. How does temporal competition affect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders?
3. How does temporal competition at work impact on responsibilities and activities outside of work?

Utilising time as a measure of performance, a device for stating intentions in regard to authority and power and as a means of making it difficult for some groups to carry out all their responsibilities are examples of how temporal competition can be manipulated and exploited to gain advantage over others. This chapter will discuss temporal competition, perhaps the most visible dimension of the eight dimensional competition model after external competition. How temporal competition influences a manager's relationship with time and how this emerges in their relationships with work, family, career and the gender differences will be explored.

5.1 Gender, work and time

The manifestations of work and time can, as this study finds, present a number of scenarios where too often prevailing male dominated norms of organisational structures, behaviours and attitudes dominate the labour market landscape. The assimilation of women in large numbers into the labour market, particularly women with dependent children in dual or single earning families has not generally been supported by changes in temporal structures (Himmelweit and Sigala: 2001, McRae: 2003). For example an average working day remains static in terms of the time demanded by organisations i.e. 9am to 5pm - Monday to Friday. This type of working week presents two major conflicts for working mother managers particularly, but indicates similar issues for other workers who have care responsibilities. Firstly, childcare and education facilities generally offer pre-defined daily schedules of up to twelve hours 6.30am to 6.30pm. However, the homogenous approach by childcare and schools to a manager's day being 9 to 5 does not often meet the organisation's approach to a working day which is often arguably longer. Secondly, although we are reportedly told by media that we live in a 24/7 society, this is not strictly true. Many services like doctors and dentists are not available outside of working hours except in emergencies and this can increase the pressure on time to fulfil the needs of children and extended family.

The gendering of time for many women highlights how women managers with children is complex and a site of tension as they juggle between the two spheres of care and career (Blackaby et al: 1999, Siriani: 2000). However to focus on women managers with children does not suggest that this group are unique in their experiences of temporal competition and this chapter explores a spectrum of experiences. In this study two-thirds of the managers worked on average between 41 and 50 hours per week. Of this group half the women and all the men had children, with two men and three women having pre-schoolers. The two

Table 5.1			
Average Hours Per Week	Men	Women	Total
25-40 hours	0	3	3
41-50	5	19	24
51-60	1	0	2
60+	2	2	4

male managers who worked more than sixty hours had children and of the women managers, one was childless and the other had two independent children.

5.1.1 Working long hours

Citing a culture of long hours in organisations continues as a means of creating barriers to some women managers who for a variety of reasons do not or cannot offer the same degree of visible commitment to their positions as their male counterparts can. Accepting that overtime is demanded by many organisations is for managers simply a necessity of the role. However managing a balance between organisational and positional demands is not always as simple. For a variety of reasons including career progression, job enjoyment and job insecurity some managers use presenteeism as a tactic to demonstrate almost unconditional commitment to their work (Blair-Loy: 2003, Simpson: 1998, Massey: 1995). Presenteeism is defined as the extent to which managers remain at work when the demands of their job do not require it. Simpson's study found that men are more likely to subscribe to this activity. She argues that as a competitive element presenteeism is practiced and developed down an organisational hierarchy

embedding itself in the culture. Rutherford (2001) observes that some organisations use long hours as a fear tactic to motivate managers, potentially leading to internal competitions between managers to see who can work the most hours.

In my thesis the managers who were most keenly aware of the long hour's cultures which pervade organisations were predominantly women. They generally agreed the relationship between time and power was an illusion created by men to use as a tactic against their peers and subordinates. Lois, a manager in her mid-thirties, lives with her partner and has no children although she is very open about the fact that she wants to start a family soon. She has been with her current organisation for five years and in her current senior management position for a year. She finds the compulsion to present a working persona based on always being at or available for work very sad. The situation Lois cites demonstrates an example of a person using an intentional working practice to meet a real or perceived expectation by an organisation of being available at all times.

Lois: I know one guy who writes all his emails and then sends them from home at 11.30 at night to make people think he is working late – that is very sad.

Lois in her comments and actions suggests she does not agree with being available on an unlimited basis to her organisation. Her attitude to work and time does not appear to have disadvantaged her career progression as she illustrated in her recent promotion to a senior management position. While the managers in this study largely accept the culture of long hours, they do not accept as Powell and Graves (2003) argue that non-compliance would result in career suicide. However, as discussed later in this chapter, when motherhood is the reason for increased adherence to regular hours a different set of rules and responses appears to emerge. This implies that organisations can operate multiple practices in regard to time and temporal competition by perpetuating the importance of presenteeism while accepting that not all managers will adhere to such attitudes. This also suggests that men more than women maybe the target of this culture.

However, this doesn't mean that women are not being targeted as outsiders by such practices making isolation a potential outcome.

Julia is in her early thirties and is a middle manager in a publishing company, is single with no children and like Lois sees long hours as a tactic to lever potential progression at work impressing superiors by committing time to the job.

However, Julia also suggests that men, particularly, use long hours as a tactic to get support at home from wives. The scenario Julia describes conforms to a notion of maintaining a management model where senior managers have non-working or part time working wives at home supporting their career. As Wajcman (1998) describes the dependence of men on women to provide their domestic and caring functions is predicated on the norm of men being managers. Julia in identifying the scenario and the gendered nature of time has like Lois and the women manager's in Simpson's (1998) study made a clear association between the organisational attitudes and time and the men's behavioural outputs.

Julia: I think with long hours it's a power thing, trying to impress the bosses and also men are using work as a way making their position seem important to their wives or whatever, making out they have had a hard day when they get home.

The proposal that some men use long hours as means of avoiding domestic and caring responsibilities and activities may presuppose that within some family units the man's working status is considered more important than that of a woman. Hochschild (1997) found in her study that both men and women use work as a refuge from the chaos of home life complicated by an inability to see how to resolve work and non-work conflicts and simply choosing to avoid them. As Elaine suggests she is not convinced by the idea that men work harder than women having seen her father project as she describes a façade of long hours. Elaine is a relative newcomer to middle management having been in her current role for less than a year. She is single with no children and works on average 41-50 hours per week which she considers the norm for her position. It is not clear how many hours Elaine's father worked but in comparison she now has her own experience of working to draw upon. Her anger with the image and portrayal of

her father and his work as inaccurate is apparent and reflected mostly obviously by her reference to harder days being the norm rather than the exception.

Elaine: I remember when we were kids and Dad worked all hours and we were made to think that he was having a harder day than anyone else. Now I am in the business world myself I know that it was a lot of times just a façade.

The projection of men's work and women's work being different and valued differently continues to breakdown as more women become managers and these illusions are dispelled.

5.1.2 Juggling commitments

The suggestion that the relationship between long hours and the organisation is like a marriage, is one which indicates how strong the cultural bind may be for some managers. Susan observes how some women, she does not mention men, have found the responsibility of long hours beyond what they can commit to and so they have left organisations to find other alternatives. Susan is a middle manager in her early thirties, living with her partner, has no children, and has been in her current position for four years. She describes the relationship like as a marriage between the organisation and the manager suggesting a level of commitment that goes beyond merely a set of tasks to be delivered in return for a fixed financial reward. The discourses which surround work and time are filled with emotive language like marriage and commitment, work to live and career suicide. The impact of such terms may make it difficult to find a way of balancing time in a way which satisfies the varying components of a manager's life.

Susan: I know some women who have left because they found the responsibility of long hours and being married to the company too much to deal with.

5.1.3 Working practices

This study indicates that as more women enter the management hierarchies, some of the male centred behaviours around work time are being dispelled as illusory. Within the spectrum of practices some managers operate in the dimension of temporal competition using tools such as meetings to exercise degrees of authority over other people by placing specific demands on their time. How time for an individual manager is structured within an organisation during a working day or week is influenced not only by the tasks they are required to complete but by those which involve interacting with other colleagues (Belbin: 2000, Margretta: 2002, Adam: 2003). For managers time is a resource over which they can have limited control as the impact of superiors, peers and subordinates can dominate daily schedules. A manager may be required to attend a meeting but have little or no control over the agenda or manner in which meetings are conducted. As Lois describes, she had in the week interviewed for this study, spent the majority of a day in a single meeting. She found herself powerless because of her position and gender to do anything but wait until the meeting concluded. With a sense of frustration at this scenario the outcome is compounded by the realisation that she will be required to repeat the experience of these meetings until the project in question is over.

Lois: I was in a meeting the other day and it went on for five hours. The guy who was running it would just not even look at me because I was a woman and I am managing the project he is ringing me all the time and I know it's going to be a nightmare. Meetings are so often unnecessary and just a power trip for men.

Although Lois suggests the use of meetings as a source of power for men, John takes a view that meetings should be structured from the outset to prevent anyone having power over everyone else's time. Liff and Ward (2001) found in their study that senior managers reportedly enjoyed the opportunity to manage their own time using their position to make meeting times that suited their diary having previously been dictated to by superiors. John is a senior manager in a division of a global publishing company, in his mid-forties, living with his partner and their two children, one of which is a pre-schooler. He comments that

he has never worked with senior women managers as in his experience they very rarely get past middle management. He raises the point that meetings are often run by senior managers who are not necessarily skilled in the practice and because of their position no one challenges the process and merely submits to the situation. John has the opposite experience to Lois using his position to actively taken on the role of his superior replacing him and his meeting style with a more efficient and effective practice. Although John has made a change internally to one aspect of meetings i.e. making them no more forty-five minutes he does not profess to this extending beyond his division. Unlike Lois, John was in a position to make changes and actively decided to do so although it did take him some months to achieve this new approach.

John: I have 45 minute meetings now and in the last month we have not run over this time limit. People are arriving better prepared to contribute and they are arguably more productive. We have a GM who is prone to meetings without agendas or time limits and some of them went on for hours and people didn't contribute and generally got bored and then had to work late to meet our deadlines. Over some months I have persuaded him that it is more effective for me to run the meetings which he is now pleased to not be responsible for.

Meetings are a good example where the differing meanings of time can collide to present some managers with an opportunity to effectively communicate with their colleagues while others are beholden to an atmosphere dominated by the power of some and their own frustration at the apparent waste of time. Making the connection between time, and the power to demand it from others, reinforces meetings as a platform where potentially gender and positional inequalities can accentuate and where the battle for time can become a zero sum competition.

For Eve the number of meetings she was required to attend whether one on one with staff or with other managers created a major barrier to being able to do her job and resulted in her leaving the position. She was responsible for a team and became the point of contact for all problems within the group. Eve appears to have found herself in a situation where managing people can place demands on

time which can result in long hours. This can be compounded by the need as Eve describes to do the thinking for other people before completing her own work. In a similar way to the meetings Lois describes and the power being held by the person conducting the meeting, Eve found herself in a position where her subordinates were holding some power over her by dictating and controlling her time and by default her position. The practice of managing staff like other management skills is often learnt by through experience. Without guidance such functional responsibilities can be mismanaged resulting in detrimental outcomes as Eve found in her management role.

Eve: In my last job I left because of the people managing – do you know how sick and tired I got of managing people and thinking for them. You know I would get one staff member coming to me with an issue and then I'd have the whole bloody lot of them lining up outside my office so all day all I did was solve their problems.

Embedding time and its devices in the culture of organisations can make it difficult as Lois describes to do anything but comply with their practices. For managers the challenge of time management is perhaps the most demanding, accentuated at different levels of the hierarchy and as shown in this study acute for middle managers.

5.2 The blurred lines of work and non-work time

The debates on work and non-work conflicts are comprehensive in the literature on work-life balance, family friendly workplaces and flexible working. There is a widely accepted view that time as a finite resource can impact severely on workers who have family and care responsibilities. It is also widely accepted that all work and no play is not physically or mentally healthy for people even if the level of work satisfaction is extremely high (Massey: 1995). Temporal competition has its roots in the working culture whose premise is time is money. This presupposes a major link between efficiency and profitability and instils an economic relationship which operates across all organisational functions. The logical conclusion to this discourse is that time which has no economic base creates a conflict, establishing family, care, holidays and leisure time as

examples of potential tension as Gerson and Jacobs (2004) argue in their development of time divides as discussed in chapter three. Time as a catalyst has led to debates over the gendered nature of time and the barriers this places on individuals, particularly women who have a family. Dex (2005) identifies 48 hours of work per week as the marker over which stress dramatically increases and that women aged between 36 and 45 years are the group which on average which are the most time poor. The discourses around work and life balance gain ground in academic and media circles as the key terms highlight how a manager's competitive relations at work combined with temporal competition result in different experiences for men and women.

5.2.1 Travel time

With the majority of managers in this study working up to a 50-hour week, the question of travelling time is a consideration explored in terms of whether it is considered work time or non-work time. If an average working day is nine hours with an additional one hour round trip, this can negatively impact on perceptions of long hours at work. Defining travelling time as work time rather than non-work time is a murky boundary as for some it may be a time to relax and read the newspaper or listen to music and be a time to move comfortably between the sectors of work and home. John is in mid-forties, married with two children, and has been in publishing for the majority of his career having recently returned following a three-year stint in professional services. John was the only manager who discussed commuting to work, describing it as a necessary evil. He defines the time as his own time using it for his own pleasure within the confines of travelling on a train.

John: I catch a train everyday and I am committed to timetables especially in the morning but once I walk out my front door I do enjoy the prospect of having an hour to do the crossword and read my paper. Like most of my commuter friends we rarely do work using the time for ourselves. There has to be some perk to this necessary evil.

Unless working from home which none of the managers in this study do - travelling to work by whatever means is necessary and depending on the mode

can impact on how that time is used and viewed. Sitting in traffic or an overcrowded bus can reduce the quality travelling time as John shows. Whether travelling times contributes to longer hours at work, tactics to minimise situations like avoiding peak hour rushes is not discussed by the managers interviewed. Perhaps travel time between work and home is accepted by managers as intrinsic in the commodification of work time.

5.2.2 Leisure and holidays

This question in relation to leisure time and holidays proved for the managers to be separate issues. All of the respondents reported that they took their full holiday entitlement although this did not mean a total shutting down of communications with work. As for working on weekends, this is for some, like Amy, the norm although she has through trial and error found a way of achieving this without it being a cause of conflict at home. Her reference to stolen time indicates there are limits to long hours and levels of commitment to the organisation which go beyond what is deemed acceptable at home. Juggling home and work time by intentionally identifying practices which can enable both zones to co-exist illustrates the often dominating nature of organisational time over leisure time. Recognising that boundaries no matter how loose between the personal and the public space are important to maintain has as Amy admits taken some time to achieve.

Amy: I tend to work on Sundays rather than Saturdays and my husband will watch the football while I work. Then he doesn't feel like I've stolen quality time off him. I've thought about it and not just ignored it because otherwise it does kind of build up and it's taken a bit of trial and error that's for sure.

Balancing working time and the impact on personal relationships is for some managers limited by the intentional practices their partners and families enlist. Having achieved some success on managing working in the weekends, Amy and her husband have translated this into the ten-minute rule on holiday which has been initiated by Amy's husband. The situation where technology makes managers available 24/7 is as much about curbing a perception of being

invaluable to enforcing disciplines which limits the invasion on non-working time.

Amy: On holiday I have ten minute rule started by my husband which is I'm allowed ten minutes a day to check my Blackberry so I have some time management techniques around to restrain myself.

The competition between time for work and time for family is often a battleground for managers and can present different perceptions of an individual's reality. Mark suggests the answer to how many hours a week he works would differ between himself and his wife and he admits to more than sixty hours placing him in the top bracket of managers in this study. Mark is in his late forties and came out of early retirement a year ago to take on his current role focusing on business acquisitions. However, he admits that with his return to the work force he now is better at taking holidays and enforcing this for his staff even if it is referred to as grabbing two weeks which suggests a rushed or last minute approach to taking time away from work. Mark's relationship with time remains dominated by work and like Amy relies on his partner to encourage and enforce the requirement for holidays and leisure time.

Int: How many hours on average do you work?

Mark: There's the answer I'd give and there's the answer my wife would give you. But it's 60 to 70.

Int: Do you take your full holiday entitlement?

Mark: Actually I've got pretty good at it in this life; I was terrible at it in a former life but on the whole yes. Mostly we're pretty rigorous about trying to enforce staff taking holidays. Over Christmas and New Year it's pretty slow so it's comparatively easy to take time of them and grab two weeks.

David admits that working time and leisure time have a blurry line especially when it comes to the pre-occupation of thinking about work when you are doing something classed as leisure. In his late forties David is married with one child and is a senior manager with a large organisation based in Australia. He is American and emigrated to Australia eight years ago to take up the position he

now holds. As the least definable aspect of time, thinking about work cannot be confined to prescribed hours. For the managers who already work long hours even thinking about work can increase the likelihood of conflicts in relationships including as David points out, with himself.

David: When does the work stop and start and do I include the thinking. For me finding the balance of self time is hard. I was swimming this morning and all I was thinking about was work, it's hard to shut that off sometimes.

How does a manager escape from work when it can intrude in all areas of life? For some the answer would be holidays where distance and distractions are frequent enough to encourage some limitations. David is adamant that a company policy for taking holidays is important not just for the person but for the business. He suggests that creating an environment where someone else is responsible for another person's job while they are away can be an important element of holiday time. This he says can allow colleagues and managers to get direct experience of the task involved in the position which could enable a more insightful discussion of the constraints which may reduce productivity.

David: If you can't take your holiday then someone isn't doing their job. It's important for staff to get a fresh perspective on their job by having others do it while they are away. It is a useful management tool for assessing a role and how it can be improved.

Holidays and leisure time are a key element of achieving a work and non-work balance and yet what takes place in this arena is often overlooked as a source of information and differentiation between managers. Bittman and Wajcman (2000) argue that leisure time has become more fragmented with unpaid work being a dominant feature. She argues that although men have more pure leisure time than women, the difference between parents and non-parents is as marked as that of gender. For women and men with children leisure time can be a combination of domestic and care work and entertainment with holidays similarly composed. The value of this break away from work can have different results for managers as they have to spend the majority of time in what is often only a part time

identity as compared with their dominant management identity. In some cases the clash of identities and this aspect of competitive relations can be difficult to resolve.

5.3 Managing time

The comment 'I'm so busy' is part of a discourse popular for many managers but especially the most time poor, who as Dex (2005) argues, are 35-45 year old women. The discourses of double burdens, double shifts and double days mark time for women and particularly those who work and have children as a reality of modern western society. For the managers who regularly use the response 'I'm so busy', it is impossible to know what their definition of busy is and whether it is the same for everyone. How individuals experience time may be part of the performance they believe society demands of them emerging as a conflict between work and non-work time. Zoe is honest that the 'I'm so busy' discourse has been a tool with which to navigate certain areas of her life using the widely understood lack of time as an excuse to justify decisions and behaviours. This underpins her position as a part time working manager with three young children. Zoe also indicates that she struggles to resolve the conflict between work and motherhood accepting that finding a balance is difficult. Perhaps for some women it is easier to focus on time as the cause supporting the use of the 'I'm so busy' discourse.

Zoe: I think I like the persona of being busy or frantic. What I do is I complain about it to try and use it...you know what it's like. Oh sorry I couldn't see you I was so busy and it's like an excuse to try and justify what I haven't spent time with people. And then everybody thinks I hate my life because I'm always justifying ...I'm saying, I'm sorry for whatever. I'm always busy. But I don't actually hate it. I mean I do hate it but I don't want to be totally a mother and I don't want to totally be a worker and I just don't know how you get that balance.

Fran is a middle manager, married with two school age children in her mid-forties. She has been in her current position for three years returning to full time work when her youngest child started school. Like Zoe, Fran would be

categorised as falling into the time poor group of working mothers yet she admits to being frustrated by the 'I'm so busy' discourse which Zoe uses and supports the tendencies Hakim's (2000) describes in the 'adaptives' classification of Preference Theory examined in chapter two. Accepting that time, or the right time, is not readily available is likely to create tensions. Fran in contrast to Zoe suggests that people generally should relax and stop trying to compete with clock time. The competitive element of this battle with time has created a distraction from wider social issues of women working while retaining the main responsibility as primary carers. The myth of having it all may have changed to a reality of doing it all with women competing against the clock to see how many activities they can fit into a 24-hour day. This is skewed however by women like Zoe, who use the discourse to alleviate some lifestyle pressures.

Fran: I get really tired of people saying they are so busy it is such a cop out. I work and have children and sure I don't get everything done but then it does come down to priorities and time management which I think has lost favour as a skill at work and at home. I certainly think that people should just relax a bit more about trying to be the busiest or whatever it has just become so repetitive and makes me feel like I am in a competition or something which is just futile. I say put your feet up when you can and don't be afraid to admit you spent the evening watching TV and not spring cleaning the pantry before writing a strategy document for work.

Felicity has discovered how her perception of time continues to be influenced by the attitudes and behaviour of people who dominate her working environment. Throughout her career, working over and above the hours of 9 to 5 was regarded by Felicity as normal and relative in terms of how busyness was defined. In her current role she has discovered that busy is defined differently by the people in the organisational and in her opinion is markedly less frantic now than compared with her experiences of other organisations. She is quick however to comment positively to this new idea of busy and the prevailing culture of leaving on time and not taking even a moment to feel guilty about working only the prescribed hours.

Felicity: In this job busy is just not busy, I am horrified by what they think busy is – but I do like their version. Unless there is something on, people down tools at 5.25 ready to walk out the door at 5.30 and no one appears to feel guilty, in fact it is more like their right to do so.

A prevailing theme in this study and others (Hochschild: 1997) is that time is a constraint for managers. Matt subscribes to this proposition commenting that he feels he is a part of a large group of people for whom not having enough hours in the day is the norm. A manager's relationship with time can be encouraged by practices and attitudes which as shown in this study can advocate long hours and a constrained sense of time reinforcing temporal competition rather than considering different approaches to work time and non-work time. Felicity does not suggest that in the working day tasks are not completed and that productivity is unsatisfactory. Arguably, if this was the case the organisation itself would falter in an external competitive market. As seen in the example in chapter three and the senior manager at Ernst and Young who had a change in attitude to temporal competition enabled the implementation of changed attitudes and behaviours to work and non-work time because of his position. Adam (2002) argues that change in how working time is understood and experienced is unlikely to see transformation in organisations until time is considered by senior managers beyond merely outputs and impacts.

Matt: Probably like lots of people time is one of my biggest constraints there are just never enough hours in the day to get everything done.

Not challenging discourses which prevail and can gain momentum by intersecting with others continues to deflect conflict away from the organisation and place it firmly at the feet of managers. How an organisation promotes discourses such as time and work and non-work balance can offer insights into dominant working cultures. Negotiating change in respect of time and work may take root with some managers and their teams but does not necessarily result in widespread application. Is there a paradox that in order to think about work and time, time is what is needed? If time and its associated discourses become an issue for organisations to confront is there an inherent fear that other discourses

like healthy competition and the needs working mothers will demand similar treatments?

5.4 Conflict between work and family time

The discourses of work and non-work can converge to cause tension and conflict which is not easily resolved. Work-life balance, married to the company, greedy organisations and quality family time are examples of discourses which for managers can be difficult to address adequately. Whether it is from a personal perspective of juggling work and home or managing the various demands of subordinates and their changing situations hard choices may need to be made to ultimately meet the demands of the organisation. For some managers as Hochschild (1997) found in her study working long hours was considered a viable way of escaping the chaos of home which was perceived to be beyond their control. The often intense situations which managers may face can be further complicated by the on-going changes which come with different life stages.

Starting a family may personalise the shortcomings of family friendly policies and attitudes to maternity and paternity leave. Deciding not to have children may also change a manager's view on how the demands of working parents should be met. Retirement plans, outside interests and other care responsibilities beyond children can all impact on how the attitudes towards policies are held and implemented by managers. Do junior member of staff see the way their superiors are treated and question how their work and home needs will be accommodated in the future? Organisations which profess to welcome policies which enable and support workers to fulfil a number of roles across their lives do not always meet the demands required for complete implementation. In this section, the discourses which can work across the private and public sphere will be explored to analyse how they interact and what outcomes may ensue.

How time and gender overlap in organisational structures as discussed earlier in this chapter can as I show play a role in extending the impact for example, of working hours. As some organisations demand a more emotion attachment described by managers as being like a marriage, the demand for organisational

commitment is high and the implication is for loyalty through good times and bad. Although there is, as the managers discuss, trouble with this marriage as they perceive and experience how the relationship is not necessarily equal between the individual and the organisation.

5.4.1 Gender, management and children

Table 5.2			
Mangers with children	Men	Women	Total
Children	8	11	19
Childless	0	13	13

In this study, all of the men had children and yet there was no mention of a conflict between work and family, similarly for the women who did not have children (See Table 5.2). Fran has two children and shares a positive experience of being a manager and mother. With the support of the organisation she worked for, she was able to carry out her spectrum of responsibilities at work and at home to her satisfaction. She also shares how the additional support she received when she separated from her husband allowed her to continue working and looking after her children without additional disruption. The outcome that she was also able to be a role model to a younger woman demonstrates how organisations which recognise the changing circumstances of managers and workers can play a key role in alleviating stress from what are often already stressful situations. Liff and Ward (2001) found that junior managers - especially women - found it difficult to rationalise how they could combine a family and a career and cited that a lack of role models in senior management did seem to make it less likely. The combination of career and motherhood is fraught with issues highlighted by the lack of women generally in senior roles. In this study, the number of women in senior management and with dependent children was minimal which highlights the difficulties women continue to have with balancing motherhood and management. For this study, dependent children are those under the age of sixteen who rely on parental guidance and support. Independent

children are sixteen years and over in the process of leaving home or have already left home.

Fran: The last company I worked for were very supportive of me having children especially when I separated from my husband – the younger women with children were very generous in their admiration and said they found me a role model. One woman especially found herself pregnant and single and told me that seeing me organise my life meant she felt she could too and returned to work after the baby was born.

Ella is a senior manager in a European publishing company where she has worked for ten years and in her current role of three years. She is in her mid-forties, married with a preschool child and comments on the positive experience maternity leave. However now she is back at work fulltime she suggests that her options are governed by organisational attitudes to commitment. She cites the example of a colleague who left after having a baby as the culture did not support her new life package of early motherhood and management. Like Susan who spoke of being married to the company, Ella talks about being fully committed like a family. The use of terms like marriage and family to underpin how much an organisation demands of one person may be a useful tactic to ensure that employees are continually reminded of their status and responsibility at work. But the danger is in organisations not accepting the changing lives of managers and as shared in the experience of Ella, the potential loss to the business of valuable skills and contributions by continuing to be myopic in terms of demanding one-sided commitment and loyalty.

Ella: There was recently a woman who had been with the company for years and she was responsible for revenue generation of £100 million and she went off to have a baby. When she returned life was not easy and she left two months later. Although they stay well within the law there is an attitude at the top that you must be fully committed to the company, it's like a family, you work and you socialise together. You live to work is the philosophy and women need to keep children in the background. Work must come first.

5.4.2 Choices and constraints

The decision to choose a career instead of a family is a sensitive issue and although this subject was not a specific line of questioning with the managers, the women managers who wanted to have children repeatedly raised this theme during the interviews. Comparatively the women managers who had independent children or no children did not mention this part of their life except to answer the demographic questions. The men who all had children also did not mention them beyond answering the demographic questions. Having to sacrifice motherhood to have a career does not make sense in terms of business letting go the talented pool of women managers they have invested in. Hewlett (2002) argues that women who want to combine career and family need to be presented with the 'gift of time' by employers. Without this gift of time women compromise their skills and experience in the labour market described as the 'hidden brain drain'³¹. This is a further aspect of this issue as women return to work part time and in positions well below their skills and experience. Connelly et al (2008) argue that managers are the highest group of people³² who on moving from full time to part time downgrade their position by giving up managerial and supervisory aspects.

Grace's experience of a change in the relationship she had with her boss after she become pregnant suggests how sacrificing a career for motherhood can be presented as a *fait accompli* by superiors who cannot consider a subordinate having more than one major priority. Grace is a manager in early forties with two children one of which is a pre-schooler. She has worked in the publishing industry for the majority of her career and has been in her current role for three years. She has spent some time being self-employed as consultant allowing her to have children and work at a pace she set for herself. Her current role allows her to work flexible hours which she comments does impact financially as she accepts that currently she is not a strong negotiating position.

³¹ The hidden brain drain has been identified by EOC in a study of flexible work. The research shows 5.6 million part timers in Britain working below their potential (EOC Britain's Hidden Brain Drain: 2005).

³² 29% of corporate managers downgrade mainly to clerical positions and 47% of other managers usually in smaller businesses downgrade usually staying in the same sector but in lesser roles. For example a salon manager goes back to being a hairdresser. (Connelly and Gregory, 2008: 71-72)

Grace: In terms of my career I did have a job where the boss saw me as a younger version of herself and was helpful in building my career. But once she found out I was pregnant the relationship changed completely – I actually resigned prior to giving birth.

Fran who earlier described the positive support she received from her organisation also observed an incident exposing her experience as unique or at least not practised across the organisation. A managerial colleague returned to work after having a baby and was openly penalised for not being readily available to the organisation. Not only was her new role as a mother regarded as unacceptable it was openly tested in a way which isolated her from her peers, showing her to be a token, not just as a woman manager, but as a mother.

Fran: I worked with one woman who had a baby and came back to work and her boss changed all the management meetings to breakfast meetings in order to make life difficult for her as he knew she had to take the baby to childcare in the morning.

Himmelweit and Siagla (2004) identified matching childcare and working hours as a constraint faced by mothers arguing that attitudes of employers and government need to change to acknowledge this crucial area of tension. The competition to control the time resource of others is demonstrated in this example where a senior manager is using their power to reinforce their own position. This type of response to a perceived change of priorities could be based on stereotypes of working mothers being unable to commit fully to their jobs. Using time as the mechanic to test commitment makes it almost impossible for the woman manager in question to counter as she is constrained by the combination of childcare hours and employer attitude.

5.5 Flexible working for all or just family friendly for some

The introduction of policies and legislation that seek to address the needs of pregnancy, birth and preschool children but not older children or extended family are referred to as family friendly.³³ How well such policies are embedded into organisations remains an issue with monitors suggesting that take up is not uniform and that pregnant women are often targeted with redundancy (EOC: 2004). Temporal competition is particularly acute on this issue as shown in the accounts shared by some managers in this study. Sarah is a manager who works on average 50 hours a week, is divorced and does not have children. She views the focus on supporting parents as a burden which she and her colleagues without children, rather than the organisation, carry. This can make it particularly difficult for managers without children to implement and support policies which they have personal issues with as Sarah vocalises.

Concluding that those workers without children should work longer hours to cover those with children is difficult and contentious. However, discourses around flexible working and family friendly policies contribute to opinions which suggest the needs of only some people are considered. Although this may be true, the difference in how organisations deal with parents as shown in Fran and Sarah's stories show the glaringly opposite effects on managers. It would be interesting to present Sarah with the issues Fran was facing and ask how she would deal with the situation. It is impossible to predict if the outcome would be same as what transpired or whether Fran would remain in her position. This question is at the heart of why some managers are more proactive in terms of understanding the needs of their workers and responding in progressive ways. Demonising parents and particularly mothers and the time they commit to their jobs and their family is a good example of how the issue of temporal competition can operate covertly. Accepting time as an invisible but constant presence can distract managers from considering time in any other way than work time or clock time. One of Hochschild's (1997) respondents describes a 'clay layer of middle management' (p 31), this is where policies often remain unimplemented and Sarah perhaps is an example of how this is embodied in a hierarchy.

³³ Family friendly is defined as a 'formal or informal set of terms and conditions which are designed to enable an employee to combine family responsibilities with employment' (Callan :2007).

Sarah: They force the burden too much on those seen as not having families i.e. children. We lose leave entitlement and have to work longer hours.

Liz is a manager who has been in her current position for four years. She is in her early forties, lives with her partner and has no children but does have a number of horses which are an important part of her life. She takes a broader view of family friendly practices removing herself from the equation and discussing what she describes as a dilemma for women. She sees a no win situation for mothers who want or need to work since as she says society criticises mothers for whatever option is taken. Liz makes the connection between getting policy and practice right for working mothers as being the key to getting work and life practices right for workers generally. The observations that women managers particularly make in relation to other women acknowledges their differences. Whether it does or does not affect them directly it can take a temperature on how policies, discourses and practices are operating within an organisation.

Liz: I think that although much has changed that drives society, society has also created a dilemma for women. If they don't work they are criticised, if they do work and have kids they have to manage and not be seen neglecting their kids. It's difficult and I don't see much changing on this issues which does seem to be important to all the other issues about work and life.

The approach Martha takes to managing a work life balance for her team is people oriented. She presents scenarios where staff are able to work flexibly to encompass activities outside of work including those associated with children. Her suggestion that she has experiences of individuals calling in sick to avoid asking for time off does reflect the pressure that some organisations, managers and peers can place on judging these situations as unacceptable. Although Martha does suggest the association between family and flexible work she does not suggest that family is just about children.

Martha: We very much promote if you need time off for something with your family to let us know so I can plan it rather than ring me at six in the morning to say you're sick when I know you're not. I have one member of staff who has a son with a disability and she has to attend progress meetings and I have another who has a really sporty daughter and so she wants to go off to some of her events. We factor this in and each of the staff cover others to get that flexible environment and I really think it works. I would be concerned if somebody was here and was so work focused because it shows their life is out of balance.

How a manager defines their style in relation to flexible working arrangements is a key area in assessing why some organisations are more progressive than others, and why some departments have distinctly different views and actions on implementation. Martha in her account shows that she has given the issue consideration and has taken the approach of fostering the positive outcome of workers having a balance between work and non-work. Callan (2007) found that organisations predominantly left the application of policies to managers, who in turn felt constrained by them anticipating that full implementation would leave them under resourced to fulfil the objectives of the organisation. In Callan's study, it was primarily the women managers with dependent children or were thinking about starting a family that discussed this issue. They suggest there were few instances of seeing family friendly policies work to enable family and work to be combined to the satisfaction of all parties. Managers who themselves maybe in conflict with work and non-work responsibilities are likely to assume that if the policies are not going to work for their team it is unlikely that they themselves will be able to use them successfully. This is a double edged sword which is fuelled by management stereotypes which set the ideal worker as male.

Liz is an exception in this study. She says that she does not have or intend to have children. Her insights into the changes occurring in the workplace, openly describing herself as a feminist, adds weight to the work that has been achieved in terms of equality. She shares how she has seen the dynamics amongst women in management change as policies and practices have enabled choices to be made by women to have a career and a family subscribing to a notion of possibly being

able to have it all. As a discourse as Hewlett (2002) found, many women have been cheated out of that choice by leaving having a family too late, thinking that technology would solve any biological problems surrounding conception. Sadly, this scenario is a trade-off which can leave women feeling like their career is all there is and as Liz says this can feel like a monumental sacrifice. Senior women managers as Liff and Ward (2001) found describe the downside of their roles as trying to maintain two roles of manager and mother, whereas their male counterparts merely express regret at not having as much family time as they would like. However, for the women who have chosen career over family their reality is likely to be dominated by work, like men, having no experience of living in a double shift of work and care.

Liz: There seems to be a noticeable change with women particularly in senior management as you get older. These are women who have sacrificed their ovaries for the company and I don't know whether you would call it jealousy or envy but they seem to be very negative about women who supposedly have it all. It's almost like they worked for women to have better working conditions and opportunities but they don't want progress to be right under their nose.

Unfortunately Liz appears to be in a minority group contrasting with senior managers in this study and in Hochschild's (1997) study where she observes how they often exist in a 'social bubble' sheltered from the realities of work and family by wives at home who take care of everything. With women managers it is rare to find them being supported by full time house husbands and in this study no one in the sample presented this situation. The erratic nature of organisations and their approaches to temporal competition is evident in the experiences presented by the managers in this study. The situations they witness or are directly involved in, show how it is not enough to simply examine the organisation and its policies, but to assess how they are implemented and by whom.

Conclusion

Men and women as this study highlights have widespread experiences of engaging with temporal competition. Using the eight dimensional competition model as a catalyst to examine themes around time and intersections with other dimensions highlights a number of key themes. Firstly, how organisational structures and particularly static temporal structures collide with different managers' attitudes and behaviours demonstrates how tensions between work time and non-work time are fluid and not easily resolved.

The organisational structures which perpetuate work time and clock time as a fixed resource, too often present temporal competition as a zero sum game where the organisation embodies winning and individuals embody not winning. This study highlights how temporal competition has many touch points across a manager's life. The experiences of the managers in this thesis and other studies cited in this chapter show how excessive demands on time can be propagated by some organisations as normal. However, some of the women managers in the sample suggest that attitudes to long hours are often aligned with dominant groups of men who readily accept long hours as the norm. Furthermore some of the women managers' in this study shared how they had found a level of work time commitment which fits with their position and their non-work time suggesting that not only is this possible, but also acceptable.

For the group of women managers with dependent children and care responsibilities their stories explore how work time and non-work time can be a site of tension and highlight how they are often passive participants in what can be described as very active temporal competitions. Fran and Zoe share their scenarios which highlight how in using the discourse, 'I'm too busy' can result in reinforcing often unattainable expectations of women being able to *have it all* and *do it all* while also providing an acceptable excuse means of avoiding temporal competitions which are too confronting.

Temporal competition is an area which as discussed in this chapter filters into the lives of managers at work and at home. The role of time in competitive relations at work is fundamental to how outside responsibilities and activities are

structured and experienced. For managers, negotiating with time generally, and the relationship between working time and the organisation is possibly the most visible and widely experienced competitive relationship at work. Temporal competition is an active dimension of eight dimensional competition model which resonates in the attitudes and behaviours managers practice and experience in other dimensions of competition. The next chapter will focus particularly on unpacking the dimensions of personal, interpersonal, positional, symbolic, external and collective drawing on the stories of the managers interviewed for my study.

Chapter 6

Competitive Relations at Work

Every woman entering the business world soon finds that, contrary to her academic experience, how well she performs actually, is only one factor in creating a future for herself. Instead, an unwritten set of rules directs her fate – a Darwinian system that weeds out those with no stomach for politics, competition or monofocused ambition.

McKenna: 1997

How managers engage in relationships at work can reflect how they understand competition as a dynamic. The popularity of using the healthy competition discourse highlights how some managers engage with competition beyond winning and losing but often remain stuck in a binary of good and bad competition. The healthy competition discourse as used by some managers in this study, demonstrate how it dominates their initial descriptions of the practice of competition and competitive relations. This chapter begins by unravelling healthy competition, identifying the strands managers use in its framework, and exposing the limitations of using discourse for engaging with competition.

The chapter will then examine further the perceptions and experiences used and observed by managers to make sense of competition in their working environment. The discussion will draw on the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) who explain that individuals face ‘an ever changing kaleidoscope of situations’ in life and need to draw on different repertoires to construct and understand their social realities. I found three repertoires emerging from the managers’ stories as they shared the journey of thoughts, feelings and observations of their experiences and perceptions of competition.

The first repertoire - my relationship with organisational structures - explores managers’ struggles and successes in making sense of their loyalty, commitment, progress and positioning within the organisation. The second repertoire - the

story of me and my career so far - begins with managers sharing how they understand their career as something that is fluid, changing according to what they experience and what confronts them at different life and career stages. How individuals measure success, plan for the future and understand their environments are themes also present.

The third repertoire - my portfolio of relationships at work - explores how at different times during a career a variety of relationships can have positive and negative influences from role models to mentors. Developing this repertoire examines how relationships can invert, with the mentee becoming the mentor, the subordinate becoming the manager and how positive experiences combine with negative experiences and observations to inform individual attitudes. The next stage of this repertoire is the development of management styles which are discussed in chapter seven.

Using the eight dimensional competition model the three repertoires emerging from the data enable an exploration of personal, interpersonal, positional, symbolic, external and collective competition. Also opened up is the opportunity to explore how and where different dimensions intersect and what outcomes are experienced. The research questions central to the discussion in this chapter are: Do men and women perceive and experience competition and competitive relations differently? Is engaging with competition at work mandatory? And how do competitive relations at work effect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders?

Each of these questions highlights the importance of analysing the breadth and depth of managers' encounters with superiors, peers and subordinates at work and externally with the clients and other organisations. The use of sexually loaded language and imagery for example which objectifies women is often found in male dominated sectors and highlights how accepted organisational cultures can determine how relationships at work are constructed. Women who are confronted by such behaviour appear to either accept the situation and remain isolated or seek to become honorary male members (Ely: 1994, Karsten: 1994, Rindfleish: 2000). Whichever course a women takes it does not allow the full

development of their professional identity and can subject women managers to criticism from other women across all hierarchical levels. In this chapter the managers share an array of relationships they have or have had at work. For many managers, good managers and mentors have been influential in offering positive learning outcomes which have been beneficial to building confidence and ultimately career development and success.

6.1 Healthy competition - is it really good for you?

Taking different dimensions of competition and analysing them in relation to day to day experiences at work, provides insights into how competition is rationalised by individual managers as both a behaviour and an attitude. During my field-work one repertoire, healthy competition repeatedly emerged when discussions of competition were initiated. Healthy competition appears to articulate for some managers an acceptable means of interacting with competition and also presents a gateway to understanding the managers' perceptions and experiences of personal and interpersonal competition.

The discourse appears to rationalise a widely accepted means of making sense of experiences and perceptions of competition. But how and why does using the prefix 'healthy' construct competition as acceptable or good? For example often used in governmental reports, business and market analyses, sporting commentary, child psychology and education healthy competition is used without specific clarification or agreed definition. Researching the term's usage a foundation was identified aptly named the Healthy Competition Foundation. It was established in 1999 following media stories of Olympic doping by Blue Cross and Blue Shield the two main sponsors of the American Olympic team who wanted to bring to the public's attention the issue of educating young people on the use and misuse of sport and drugs. In the following section healthy competition will be unravelled to show the array of how individual managers understand healthy competition in their working reality. In the managers stories different dimensions of competition come to the fore highlighting the dynamics complexities and assisting in the development of the competition matrix which is discussed in the next chapter.

6.1.1 Benchmarking and winning

A love of competition is for Pat an important element of her approach to work and management, seeing the role of competition as a means of motivation to be better than before. Pat is in her forties, divorced with no children and has been living in Australia for the past six years having moved from New York. Her change of country and career direction from the ‘cut-throat’ world of media advertising to publishing and communications was a strategy to find more personal time accepting the financial implications of less money as the trade-off. She is a senior manager and recently completed her Masters Degree in Business. Pat’s perceptions of healthy competition illustrate the interplay between the dimensions of personal and interpersonal competition.

Pat: I love competition. I think it’s important and whether that competition is even just with myself to try and get more articles out than last year. So I like those little kinds of targets, you know, bets to win or one up someone as long as it’s what is considered to be healthy competition.

Pat admits to enjoying winning and shares how this fuels the desire to be best or first although this is tempered by the reference to little targets within the boundaries of what is considered to be healthy competition, using the term without further clarification. The initial passion Pat exhibits in relation to competition is increasingly diluted as she moves from discussing just herself to the involvement of other people. Other managers in this study also found discussing interpersonal competition more difficult than personal or external competition. The discomfort highlighted by Pat and other managers around the different dimensions of competition will be examined in more detail throughout this and the following chapters.

6.1.2 Money, money, money

For Sandra, a niche magazine publisher in her late forties, divorced with four school age children, healthy competition is a discourse she also uses. Sandra admits that being competitive is something she is working on resolving within herself. She suggests that for her healthy competition generally is not well defined and that perhaps this limits her engagement. Sandra explains how she

struggles with her perceptions of competition and making money, suggesting that in the past she has viewed money making as a negative aspect of competition. She suggests that making money can make women 'feel guilty' and she comments that this experience is shared by other women in business and management who she has met in the course of her work.

Sandra's version of healthy competition involves accepting the concept and renegotiating her existing negative relationship with earning money and success. This contrasts starkly with Pat's view of money as being an important measure of success. Sandra's perception of competition can offer an insight to explaining why some women managers find negotiating their salary difficult. Bowles et al (2007) in their investigation into whether women encounter more social resistance than men in negotiating contracts, salaries and bonuses found that male evaluators penalise women more than men for wanting more money. They argue that if men are more welcome at the negotiation table for resources in organisations then an advantage exists which may contribute to explaining the continuation of gender pay gaps.

Sandra: Healthy competition that's one of the internal things that I've got that I'm working on with myself, that it's OK to be competitive. I think a lot of women you know, I talk to a lot of women and when you come out with it they say the same thing, some of us feel guilty if we make money, you know what I mean or we think of that money as the negative side of competitiveness or whatever.

The role of money in competition is not a theme that is raised repeatedly by the managers in this study which could mean a number of things. Firstly, equal pay could be viewed as an issue separate from competition by both men and women managers. Secondly, money may not be a key motivator or driver for managers with salaries negotiated periodically and accepted as the commodification of time and skills.

6.1.3 The rules of healthy competition

Often mentioned by managers in this study when discussing healthy competition, is a reference to rules. Eve is one such manager. In her forties, Eve has been in her current managerial role for a year. She is married with independent children and works over sixty hours a week. Eve outlines below her requirements of respect, responsibility and accountability as the three key tenets of healthy competition. However, alongside this Eve admits that whenever there is competition she is suspicious of other people's motives. This suggests she expects her definition is generally accepted without discussion or agreement with others prior to entering a competitive situation. The interaction of interpersonal and positional dimensions of competition as Eve highlights in her experience is not mirrored by all her colleagues. The description of one person rising over another suggests Eve has witnessed the opposite enactment of her version of healthy competition. This may be an influential factor in how she constructs her version of the term.

Eve: I think competition is good as long as it's kept healthy and it makes everybody accountable and responsible. Now there's always a motive behind competition to me and it's about who is initiating that. If it's good and healthy, everyone is respected and is clear about what has to be done. I think it's not healthy if you are lifting someone up by putting someone else down, I don't believe you have to do that.

How competition is experienced by an individual or observed in others at work can have important contributions to how it is practiced. Eve highlights how when her expectations of competitive relations are often not met she does nothing more than passively accept the outcome. This passivity perhaps exposes the lack of engagement with competition and all its dimensions and continues to keep it invisible in management hierarchies. Communicating healthy competition as good or positive seeks to distinguish the concept from competition which is bad or negative. Accepting these two concepts are binary opposites presupposes only two dimensions. As a framework for understanding competition, healthy competition can be limiting as illustrated by Eve's story. Not discussing the dimensions and actions of competition can disable its dynamism allowing only

those who see beyond the generic understanding to benefit from the potential multidimensional elements.

6.1.4 Competition: just a necessary evil

Felicity is a senior communications manager in a large organisation and has worked in this area for the majority of her career, she is married without children. Felicity shares her story of how she is an exception in the labour market because she has already had her perfect job. At twenty six years she was appointed to a position where she thought she would be now, aged forty. Felicity admits to not having given competition any thought beyond viewing it as a necessary evil involving threatening behaviour that can be extreme in terms of one person's position over another. This view is included for its contrast to healthy competition discussed above and highlights one aspect of what could be described as unhealthy competition.

Felicity: I've never given an enormous amount of thought to the word competition...I think competition is a necessary evil. I mean how could it be seen in a positive way?

Int: Have you experienced competition at work?

Felicity: I always think...there's always people who have been threatened or feel unstable and that causes extreme behaviour, but I've never really thought about what's driving that behaviour and what issue competition has.

Int: What do you mean by threatened?

Felicity: By threatened I mean someone else is trying to take over their job or they are not feeling empowered in the way they should be.

Zoe, the only part time manager in the study, is in a unique position to understand the limitations of working two days a week in relation to competition. Zoe explains how she has had to reassess her working persona including how she views personal and interpersonal competition. Zoe is in her early thirties, is married with three children, one of whom is a pre-schooler. She previously worked for a large organisation where she took maternity leave for her first two children but resigned when she had her third considering working

full time unrealistic. She is now working for a smaller company having been back at work for just over a year. As a part timer she discusses how she has to accept a lessening of her professional objectives and goal setting. She also accepts the relationship she has with her colleagues is different because she relies on them to cover her clients when she is not there. Zoe's experience examines how being aware of competition and how it can be interpreted differently at work can enable a more strategic approach to engagement especially when there are other limitations.

*Zoe: I slot in and out and I'm deliberately not competitive because I couldn't score more runs on the board. I only work here two days. I think if I worked five days I would be more competitive. I mean I'm competitive on other things. I don't think I'm not a competitive person.*³⁴

David observes how like competition, stress can be seen as just a necessary evil. As a senior manager who engages in active self reflexivity David significantly is one manager who has considered multiple aspects and manifestations of competition and stress suggesting that both concepts are similar in how they are practiced at work with positive and negative elements highlighted in line with what are perceived as acceptable usage. For example people David suggests seek out stress which challenges them to perform better, to seek a promotion or play a sport in similar ways to which personal competition is practiced.

David: I think a lot of people talk about stress being bad, I look at it and think people go looking for stress. Why do people play golf or run marathons, they love the adrenalin rush that comes from the stress of it. Why do people seek to get promoted in companies, they seek out stress. They say, I want that stress, I want that opportunity, I want that pressure. So when people talk about it as a bad thing, it is if you get more than you wanted, it's a bad thing if you don't manage it well, but actually most people go look for it.

³⁴ The sporting reference to 'runs on the board'³⁴ is an active part of the language of competition and refers specifically to the game of cricket.

The comparison of competition with stress is a useful illustration showing how different concepts are engaged with in similar ways. Using terms like ‘good and bad’ – ‘healthy and unhealthy’ for both stress and competition highlights the lack of time devoted by individuals to understanding the range of dynamics operating at work. Healthy competition is a term widely used by managers as shown to begin explaining their relationship particularly with personal and interpersonal dimensions of competition. However in unravelling the different meanings and interpretations of healthy competition I would argue that the eight dimensional model of competition provides a better framework for managers to engage with the practice and discussion of competition at work.

6.2 Good or bad competition: it's all about the organisation

Amy is a senior manager with a global publishing company where she has been employed for twenty years. She is now in her second career with the company which has included transferring to Australia from the UK three years ago. She is in her mid-forties and is married with no children; she travels extensively for work spending twenty weeks of the year away from home. Amy initially describes competition in binary terms before expanding her view to encompass how she has a responsibility to the external competitiveness of the organisation whilst describing the passion she believes ensues in individual performances. The language Amy uses of beating the competition illustrates how her commitment is founded upon her sense of responsibility to the organisation, its position in the market and her position.

Amy: I think competition is both negative and positive. I think you need those kinds of styles or attributes, you can overdo it or under-do it. You know if you're not competitive at all then you could be letting one part of your organisation do a better job than another part when you should be challenging them to get up to same kind of standard. If you're not seeing where those blind spots or competitive threats are and if you're not passionate about getting into those quickly or beating the competition in that sense then you're not going to perform very well either.

Deferring to the organisation, Matt in a similar way to Amy is reticent to engage with interpersonal competition but in his role and with a sense of responsibility to the organisation he engages actively with external competition. Matt is in his mid-thirties, married with one-preschool child working for a large Australian publishing company. He changed industries and careers with the appointment to his current role held now for three years. Matt defines competition as zero sum with a winner and losers and for him this scenario is acceptable only in the external marketplace. Matt suggests his understanding of a definition of competition is one which is in opposition to co-operation. The co-operative nature of the team he works is likely to be an influence appearing to promote a group of people where individual ambition is subsumed by team ambition and drive. Matt says his boss is retiring in the next year or so and he finds it inconceivable that anyone from the team will be involved in a promotional race. How this plays out over time would be interesting to observe to assess whether Matt's predictions are accurate.

Matt: When I think of competition I think of people striving to win, perhaps meaning someone will not win. In one sense, look, I think competition is good in certain contexts and not so good in others. For me sitting here if I am representing (organisation) I think it's important that I am competitive and try to win for them. But if I sit here as part of my team and think of being competitive well as part of a team then no I don't want to competitive. I want to be supportive and helpful for the team, so within that context I don't think competition helps.

The breakdown of teams is seen in many aspects of society; political parties and sports teams for example highlighting how changes in leadership can potentially impact negatively on team dynamics. A change in leadership can also impact on team objectives and resources and eventually on how external competition is going to be viewed. External competition is a particularly interesting dimension for a number of reasons. As shown in the stories of Amy and Matt external competition is visible and encouraged in contrast to other dimensions which are less visible. How external competition is engaged with by managers is active and widely perceived as a necessary element of an organisation's rationale for doing

business. External competition also lays the foundation for how many managers construct their positional relationship with the organisation identified in this study as the first repertoire which will be examined in the next section.

6.3 My relationship with organisational structures

Not referred to as a person or group of people – defining an organisation is difficult. Managers are likely to describe a particular organisation influenced by how it embodies its business culture and by their individual interactions and experiences. Acker (1990) in her discussion of jobs, bodies and hierarchies argues that until a person occupies a role, the role is merely an idea. It is in the process of employing someone to embody a role that their values and beliefs become entwined with their position. Similarly organisations may change and transform according to the people and their views populating the management hierarchy. In developing the repertoire - my relationship with organisational structures - a number of variables emerge which will be considered including; loyalty, rewards, job satisfaction, career objectives and length of service. As Halford and Leonard (2001) argue ‘the pleasures and dissatisfactions from working within organisations are complex and multiple, and may cut across gender’ (p92). In this section managers share how they understand their relationship with organisational structures, temporal and positional competition and how this impacts on their attitudes and behaviours at work.

Table 6.1			
Years in job	Men	Women	Total
Less than 1	1	1	2
1-5	5	20	25
6-10	2	3	5

As shown in the table above, the vast majority of the managers in this study have been in their current positions for up to five years. Amy is an exception having been with the same organisation for over twenty years, but as she says, she has had more than one career. She has developed a keen sense of what the organisation demands, how it demands it and what the key measures of success are. This insight highlights how potentially difficult and the length of time it can take to work out the subtexts operating below the surface of an organisation. In

Amy's story time and experience has served her well. Other factors that may influence the understanding of the organisations expectations may come from mentors, networks and good line managers. Amy makes it clear she has learnt to deal with the frustrations of her relationship with the organisation and has come to expect them. Now she can limit the energy she expends on those issues which test her patience. She has also learned an important tool, that of networking in a wider context than her immediate environs, categorised by Ibarra (2007) as important strategic networking. Building relationships in this way has become a useful way for Amy to increase her support network of trusted colleagues.

Amy: This organisation is results driven....they kind of lead you to a certain point until you're quite close you know, you've done quite a lot of work and stuff and then they'll say that's good but I want the results delivered in this way. I can't say I don't find it irritating but I've learnt to roll with the punches of it. And the reason why I've been here so long is that I fully expect them to happen. There are no surprises now and what I've learnt to do is to spend a lot of time networking outside my region. So I've learnt to reach out for those kinds of people whose views and judgments I trust and send them loads of stuff in draft before I go to our Board.

6.3.1 Organisational benchmarking

Benchmarking is increasingly used as a term which conjures measurement and progress against a range of competencies. Matt explains how in his organisation staff are measured in five core competencies which are outlined to staff at the start of their employment. This practice outlines the areas of responsibility each job function is expected to have within their department or section. It also allows staff to challenge the organisation when they are constrained and unable to perform in what they believe is an optimal way. For example, since an individual is supposed to be assessed in terms of technical excellence the organisation also has a responsibility to ensure that the tools and the training are available to enable good outcomes. People, teams and culture is perhaps the most critical category for managers in Matt's organisation as it could be interpreted to mean that the team is more important than the individual and that the culture is driven by the concept of collective effort. However it could be argued that most

organisations are collectives so citing such a category is merely a means of paying lip service to promoting a fair and equal relationship between organisation and manager.

Matt: We (the organisation) measure success against five core competencies which the company believe are essential for success and those competencies cross all the different roles, but that is how we define success here. The five are; technical excellence, people teams and culture, management, client experience and commerciality.

When Matt was asked about promotions protocol and practices in relation to the five stated core competencies he suggests the organisation may use its demands to achieve excellence.

Matt: Our organisation is all about excellence and ah, while you've got people striving to show themselves to be the one worthy of promotion, you've got five people striving for that and five people displaying excellence hopefully all the time, so that sits nicely with what we are all about.

Amy has spent the majority of her career with the same organisation and feels confident that she understands her needs within the context of the organisation's demands. Although a significant amount of what Amy has learnt appears to come from a trial and error approach conducted over a period of time, Matt suggests that the up-front demands of his organisation to promote excellence leaves little room for misinterpretation. The identity of the contemporary manager as Reich (2000) Wajcman (2000) and Beck (2000) comment is one which accepts responsibility for balancing their career trajectory and commitment to an organisation aware that in a free market nothing is certain or totally predictable and contradictions constantly prevail. In the stories of Amy and Matt contradictions appear in the quoted organisational frameworks which visibly encourage and demand external competition from managers and their teams. Tactics such as benchmarking in promotional races I would argue can be covert, for example using internal competition as a device to challenge

individual excellence. Such contradictions will be identified and discussed throughout this chapter.

6.3.2 Managers position in the hierarchy

The positional role a manager holds and even the function they lead is often important to building a social identity at work. In publishing, this is perhaps most defined within the functions of advertising and editorial. The relationship between these two functions is a begrudging acceptance of co-existence. Content is the lifeblood of all media and the responsibility for the collection, assembly and dissemination of such material is the editor's role. The imagery of 'hold the front page' perhaps best epitomises the importance of unique content and being first. Ultimately getting an exclusive is a zero sum competition where only one publication can be the winner. This is often an overriding influence for those working in this sector. Advertising is about yield (the revenue related to volume) with the aim of meeting the agreed ratio of advertising to editorial content in each edition to meet the financial objectives. The competitive environments which underpin the management functions of advertising and editorial in commercial media are good examples of how positional and external dimensions of competition can operate simultaneously. As John explains, advertising and editorial generally operate in conjunction with each other out of necessity rather than a desire to compete internally other than for budget resources. John is in mid-forties, lives with his partner and has two children, one of whom is a pre-schooler. He has been in publishing for the majority of his career and in his current role of two years.

John: I sit in marketing probably the meat in the sandwich between editorial and advertising who in my experience merely tolerate each other. Working with both functions I can see why they struggle to compete for anything other than money to spend because they ultimately need each other to do well and that just doesn't sit well. So it's mostly a standoff.

Peter in his late forties, married with independent children is an editor with a wealth of experience in newspapers and in his current job for a year. He is very precise about saying that he is competitive at work and sees it as an essential

part of his position. Peter is clear and articulate about the necessity to engage with competition and competitive relations at work stating that being first is of ultimate importance to the success of his newspaper and his position as editor. Peter's role is a good example of how the influence of environments can affect how managers process information and understand their role in relation to their surroundings. Within this scenario, how the market measures success and failure in terms of a manager's role is perhaps more acute in media than other industries because editors and advertising managers are judged by audiences who can decide to read or not to read a publication, listen to a radio or watch television.

Peter: My job is to have the story first for my newspaper. There is no second place. Yes I am competitive, no question. My success and the success of my team and the publication depend on me being competitive. It's what and who I am.

Positional competition operating across external and internal structures can be accentuated in specific industry profiles and market structures. Peter's position as an editor is a good example of why it is important for other managers to understand other positional functions within an organisation. In so doing managers can observe competition and competitive relations specific to a position and role and lessen unnecessary tensions by being able to distinguish one competitive practice from another. Extending this point illustrates the diversity of relationships individuals have with their organisation, peers, subordinates and in Peter's case, newspaper readers.

6.3.3 Internal promotions

The relationship a manager has with their superiors remains crucial to their continued success with the organisation and can be a barometer of how they are perceived by their superiors in the upper echelons. Ella describes a situation she found herself in with a subordinate who was being treated like a senior manager by 'the big boys'. Discussing how this situation placed Ella and a member of her team in competition highlights a number of issues. Firstly, Ella's reference to 'big boys' does not project a manager who sees herself in a senior position and could suggest a tentative relationship with her superiors. Secondly, the response

Ella felt in the perceived competition with her staff member does not define the basis of the competition or even if the staff member was aware of the situation. This scenario raises the issue as to whether a person can be involuntarily involved in a competitive situation. Without discussing this situation with the individual in question it is impossible to know how Ella's behaviour and attitude was interpreted. However Ella does comment that the relationship was strained for a period of time but how this was projected or explained to her subordinate is unclear.

Ella: I did have woman working for me in editorial, she has recently left to have a baby and isn't returning. For a while the big boys were bypassing me and going to her and I felt the competition between us although I don't know if she did. It did put a strain on our relationship for a while.

As an example of interpersonal competition Ella's experience illustrates how this dimension is perhaps the most complex. It can operate on a multitude of levels and in an array of situations and is often not transparent or even active. Not always easily identified because of the suggested distortions that can arise this can be further complicated by a confused situation where interpersonal competition is not even identified by all the parties associated or involved. The behaviours and attitudes associated with interpersonal competition can be as diverse as the situations themselves making it difficult to detect the strategies in play or to resolve issues.

Clem is in her late thirties, married with no children and like Lois is open about her desire to start a family soon. She works for a newspaper publisher in London and has been in a middle management position for three years. She remembers with some degree of anger the circumstances which surrounded her promotion into management. The company had new owners and a new senior management team. Clem was promoted to a management role which placed her in a position equal to the people who had previously been her superiors. She explains how she was not welcomed into the management fold diluting the feeling of success associated with being promoted. She was left feeling isolated or as Marshall (1995) describes 'in an evacuated relational space'. Clem's story illustrates how

internal promotion can be interpreted as interpersonal competition and bringing conflict to relationships which need to be re-evaluated and re-assessed in line with the promotion. The disappointment which Clem felt in response to the reactions she received from her old boss and another manager is easy to understand. However this does not take into consideration the disappointment that may be felt by those managers who did not move up the ladder. In this way interpersonal competition can be fraught with expectations and disappointments making for potentially a highly emotive category.

Clem: When I was promoted internally to this management position one of the other woman managers was very hostile towards me. But the team that I managed were predominantly women and were very supportive of me. My previous boss who was now on the same level as me, tended to try and keep me below him, and to be honest I did feel undermined and isolated.

The stories suggest that the chain reactions resulting from interpersonal competition are not always clearly defined and can originate in any number of ways increasing the risk of misinterpretation. The chain reaction started at one end of hierarchy can be felt all the way down on some occasions and this is not always able to be predicted by managers who then can only respond to the fallout.

6.4 The story of me and my career so far

Beck (1992) argues that the role of work in western society has become increasingly dominant in the lives of workers. For managers this means navigating a balance at work and in the wider labour market in three key areas; education, mobility and competition. Beck suggests that success is influenced by the ability to understand the importance of each area combined with the individual's relationship and their potential to succeed within each area. Using individual benchmarks as a device to measure performance and motivate personal competition is discussed by the managers who share their different approaches and rationales for use. Many of managers in this study have engaged with personal competition at some point and recognise its value in their individual career development and as a member of a wider team. Personal

competition is a key driver in how the repertoire - the story of me and my career so far - emerges from the managers' stories including education, skill development and assessment.

6.4.1 Measuring individual actions

In this study eight (four men and four women) managers interviewed had a post-graduate qualification, 23 managers had a tertiary education and only one manager had finished their secondary schooling. Benchmarking as discussed earlier in this chapter has become popularised in management practices and in the portfolio of professional development courses which promote the importance of the individual as a tool which can be measured against a range of criteria. David suggests that his perception of competition and competitive relations has changed over time as the requirement for professional comparison has been replaced with individual benchmarking. As careers progress and hierarchies are climbed it becomes increasingly difficult as David discusses to find peers that can be used for direct comparisons.

David: I look at competition I guess both personally as a benchmark for improvement, I see competition with yourself as important always striving to be better. I am less concerned these days about being better than somebody else I am more concerned about being better than I am.

Amy's approach to benchmarking is similar to that of David where the role and the person are the key factors for goal setting and are intrinsic in achieving satisfaction and stimulating passion.

Amy: I'm not particularly individually competitive. I'm very passionate about being the best at what I do and my team delivering all of those kinds of things but I'm not especially competitive amongst my peers or individually in a sense of bigger jobs and more promotions and those kinds of things.

Amy has recently been assigned an executive coach to assist her in developing her skills in relation to managing her team better by delegating and coaching

them more effectively. Her superiors suggested to Amy that she needs to develop her team management skills. She comments that she uses the 360 assessment to ensure that she never has ‘blind spots’, but agrees with the assessment of this weakness. She classifies this as being rooted in her impatience and is enjoying the challenge of having a coach. This is a good example of how assessing and interpreting weaknesses is productive when supported by the resources and personal motivation to strengthen them, evident in Amy and her relationship with the organisation.

Amy: The CEO's were saying that I deliver results but the next layer down is weak so the challenge was actually to learn to be a stronger leader in a non-instructional coaching style with my people. And basically although I thought I was doing that I'm incredibly impatient so I would coach them for five minutes and they say oh just get on and do this and then that. So yeah the executive coaching has been really excellent in getting me a better grounding around if you like enlightened self interest, why it's important to deliver results by developing other people.

Sandra publishes a monthly magazine primarily for women aged 35 to 60 years of age who subscribe to the publication. There is no doubt that new subscriptions are important for the business and the niche market which this magazine occupies illustrates how Sandra is able to engage with personal competition as a motivator to drive forward professionally.

Sandra: Competition is just about trying to do things better really. I try to be competitive with myself especially after each edition.

Again like David and Amy, Sandra's goal is to deliver a better performance both personally and professionally, accepting that this is how the overall goals of the business will be achieved. In a similar way to external competition discussing personal competition comes easy to the managers in this study and their individual actions to further their development are apparent. However personal competition has, as David points out, different stages which relate to an individual's position and experience and operating without professional

comparison or guidance can be a challenge. This makes clear the point that competition is fluid and changing and requires attention to ensure that its practice remains relevant.

6.5 My portfolio of relationships at work

How competition impacts on different relationships at work can be influenced by the structures, attitudes and behaviours which dictate the importance or value of each relationship. The repertoire - my portfolio of relationships at work - constructs a constant reality which managers understand as fluid, challenging and having a spectrum of positive and negative outcomes. How and to what degree managers up and down management hierarchies decide to spend their time and energy in developing relationships can offer insights into how networks and mentors operate. This can also contribute to discussions of women in management and their place in the networks and other relationships which can offer invaluable support and advice. Distinguished as different from men and often isolated from the knowledge and connections made via such relationships, it is well documented that women managers' progress at a slower rate than predicted by the pipeline model³⁵ (Coe: 1992, Schwartz: 1992 Franks: 2000). The construction of relationships at work for men and women can be influenced by a range of factors as discussed which when combined can create often insurmountable barriers to progress. In this next section, the managers share their experiences and views of networks and mentors and the value of being involved in a spectrum of relationships at work.

6.5.1 Networks the key to information

How important is it to build networks and relationships internally and how does it effect one's positional role and career development? Grace discusses how she has experienced the advantages and disadvantages of not networking. She accepts she may have had better opportunities to progress if she had committed to networking at events and activities held outside prescribed working hours. At the same time she believes she presented herself as a neutral character allowing her to operate and be accepted across a wider selection of groups than may have

³⁵ The pipeline model suggests that as the number of women get more education and join the labour market the numbers of women in management will gradually even out.

been the case had she networked. How Grace rationalises her experience of networking appears to suggest her priorities outside of work being balanced with those at work accepting that with every decision comes a compromise. This approach requires a degree of confidence enabling a person to remain in control of their life managing the various components efficiently and effectively.

Grace: I think I may have paid a price for not networking outside of work, but on the other hand I never saw work as any more than a part of my life. In some ways this made me more approachable because I was not aligned with any one group.

Pat is also pragmatic about her role in networks at work and the purpose they can serve. She sees them as a means of gaining information to build power bases that suit her individual working agenda and its objectives. It is apparent in Pat's organisation that the value of information is paramount to being able to achieve certain goals and being in the information loop makes relationships and accessing internal networks important. Like Grace, Pat sees networks in the plural recognising the value in being accepted in multiple internal and external environments. The value of this is reported by a number of the managers interviewed and supports the notion that internally sourced information is crucial to being able to perform their jobs and to building a career.

Pat: One thing I see here often is that information is power. In this sector it is one of the most vital things sharing information – often the opposite happens. The common thought is I have power simply because I have information. It is important then to build liaisons or networks so that I become part of the power chain.

Networks which operate outside of the formal parameters of an organisation are most frequently cited by women managers as discriminating based on gender. As a structure this type of network can be active in reproducing stereotypes which disadvantage some women and men. (Coe: 1992, Itzin: 1995, Oakley: 2000). The value of networks is not usually underestimated by those that belong to them, nor by those who do not, as being involved in a network can be useful to

career progression. In terms of collective competition, networks provide an opportunity to communicate with peers and senior figures often outside but associated with an organisational structure or industry. This can increase personal confidence and collective notions of solidarity based on belonging to a particular gender, industry, profession or social position. Such collective notions can be instrumental in engaging in collective competition where supporting one person over another in their career is based on membership rather than meritocratic mechanics.

Mark presents a picture where networking and information is necessary for business development and admits a male dominated approach by his all male team as the normal practice. Based around sport and events which usually take place outside of working hours this form of networking he says, appeals particularly to the younger men. Although Mark says that such types of networking are not essential to being successful it remains a consideration for him when interviewing for positions. He suspects this is also the case for his competitors. The value of networking in this situation is viewed as an informal requirement and clearly makes it difficult for women to compete equally for positions. The relationship between age and this type of networking may as Mark suggests reach a point where it is no longer of interest or necessary. Whether it is replaced by a more sedentary approach as individuals get older is not clear.

Mark: The only broader observation I'd make is that it is a pretty blokey space, more so than some other spaces and that can be a tough element to break through. It's not old boy stuff its more sport blokey stuff, you know it's a very relationship driven business and there's a real flow of information and you know we need to have an edge...its young, it's people who are in their late 20 through to late 30's. It's a pretty sporty go to the rugby, go to the cricket, go to the pub kind of world. It's not an essential element, I mean even within our 'shop' here there are those who love and are happy to be in that kind of flow and there are others who are equally successful without feeling the need to be. But it's an element and I can't help but think that as you go through the process of interviewing people to come in and I'm sure

some of our competitors have looked around and thought well you know is that going to work?

The role of networks and mentors can be different depending on the objectives they are seeking to serve. If the aim is to gain information on an internal basis then relationships and networks across an organisation could be an advantage. If the information required is in the wider marketplace then relationships built with outside networks could be a priority and seeking to find platforms to access these would no doubt include sporting events where corporate hospitality can be a useful and popular means of introduction. Networking outside of office hours can be a barrier for some groups who have responsibilities that do not enable a freely available commitment of time.

6.5.2 Being a role model or mentor: motivating or restricting?

Being a role model is often assumed, rather than agreed to, and for women managers this can be a burden which sets them up as a bastion of expectations held by other women. Amy has experienced another side of women in management where her gender and position have been used as a device by her boss to try and entice her away from her current role to a global role in America. She has been explicit in her disinterest in this role and the use of emotional blackmail has left a bitter feeling that remains a sensitive issue. Furthermore the use of gender to manipulate a situation to gain some advantage highlights the danger that comes from prioritising gender over manager.

Amy: Our global CEO was again trying to convince me to move to anywhere in the US or London, he used my gender as a tool by telling me that oh I know you're a really strong feminist and if you move you would be a tremendous see you in this terribly important global role role model for all of the other women in our organisation to.

The importance of role models for young women as Singh and Vinnicombe (2005) suggest provide a source of ideas for building a work identity. In this study the reference to role models has been in regard to a lack of them for women. The male managers in this study made no reference to role models. This

is likely to be due to the age of the managers who are generally far enough into their careers that role models are irrelevant. There was also no suggestion (except for Fran) that the managers in this study may become or are role models to younger people in their organisation. For the managers in this project mentoring was a much more common term either in having one and/or being one. However the distinction between a good manager who mentors and a mentor who is not a line manager is blurry and possibly interchangeable.

It is one thing to have talent and ambition is it another to have managers who can teach you how to directly apply them to opportunities which arise. If one does not have a good manager who can help develop skills and confidence the opportunity for a mentor or membership of a network may be increasingly important. The value of having a superior or group of superiors who want to encourage an individual can from the beginning instil a sense of confidence that only comes from someone having confidence in you. One of the structural barriers that women cite as an impediment to progress is the exclusionary nature of networks especially the old boy type networks which continue to operate a policy of gender bias.

Elaine actively tries to present herself in a mentoring role to staff and explains how over time this is diminished by people who exploit the time and effort offered. The role of mentoring is seen as an extra activity and not as an essential part of a manager's scope and therefore the advantage of having one is likely to be accentuated because they are not the norm. Some managers like Elaine claim to have a mentoring style although she comments how she is now more weary of offering her energies in this way. Over time mentoring can demand energy and attention which often goes unrewarded and may leave mentors like Elaine feeling used and abused.

Elaine: I have always tried to offer advice in a mentoring way and I have seen some staff progress and move onto bigger and better jobs and it makes it worthwhile when they ring out of the blue to say how well they are doing. This I have to say is the exception most people take from you and bugger off with the energy you have given them. It makes me choosy now about who I

offer help to over and above what is required by my job. Let me also say there is no difference on this between men and women, it's a human deficiency.

Matt says that he has never had mentors but has worked with some people who have been useful in teaching him and developing his skills. He advocates that you reach a point where mentoring is not useful, with coaching being the next stage of development. This is something that Amy agrees with as she has now been working with an executive coach for three months assigned to her by her organisation to help develop a coaching style of management with her team, as discussed previously.

Matt: For me the mentor is the wise person whereas the coach helps you learn through self-discovery.

The only manager who shares his experience of having a traditional mentor described as one who oversees a person's development over a long period of time was Mark. For Mark finding himself in such a relationship came only as a result of his father dying as he was entering his teenage years. A relationship was actively initiated by his godfather, a successful businessman who was instrumental in guiding Mark through to adulthood, encouraging his development in education and into the early stages of his career.

Of the managers interviewed, no one claims to have been either part of a successfully introduced formal mentoring programme nor had they witnessed the introduction of one into their respective organisations. Pat suggests that her approach to mentoring has been successful throughout her career. She identifies someone who she believes has something to teach her and approaches them with an invitation to be her mentor.

Pat: In fact it's kind of interesting that you're bringing this up because I've been thinking recently that I sort of need a new mentor for myself. I need to answer a few questions first on the parameters, should that person be someone at work or outside of work. I need some help about what to do next

in my job so that's the reason I need a mentor to help me work out my options.

The mentoring experiences of the managers in this study project are largely positive and do not suggest strong gender influences in the relationships. This evidence is an example that within some organisations a mentoring style of management is working well with developing men and women managers who are being instilled with confidence and knowledge to support their career progression. Although being a mentor is not always rewarding and can become a negative aspect of management it is becoming more commonplace practiced informally within working relationship.

6.5.3 Good managers are good mentors

Does mentoring within a superior/subordinate role enable the barrier of mixed gender relationships to be overcome? Clem, Angela and Martha all refer to having male superiors who acted as mentors and the experiences described are positive, contributing confidence and knowledge to their portfolio's of skills. Whitely (1992) argues that as careers become more fluid short term mentoring is becoming increasingly used by managers. The relationship that develops with a line manager can be the first insight a new entrant gets into how an organisation works. Developing this relationship is the opportunity to assess what type of management style is practiced, what can be learned and from whom.

Encouraging a productive and positive relationship with a line manager is an important stage in being included as a member of the team. Martha remembers with a measure of fondness her (male) manager, upon becoming a junior manager herself. The relationship was based on mutual respect and a belief in Martha's skills. He did not see gender as a reason not to have a woman manager, even when they were operating in a male dominated area of the business. Experiencing this degree of confidence from a superior is positive and has allowed Martha to appreciate the opportunity she was offered.

Martha: I moved into my first management job in a sector that was male dominated and I was pretty young at the time so it was even more of – oh my gosh what is this chick doing on this side of the company? My manager at

the time was such a great guy that he allowed me the opportunity and it was a really good thing to do.

Clem earlier described her isolation in being promoted to a manager and the hostility that was directed towards her from other managers. She found support in her team and was also fortunate to have two superiors who offered to teach and guide her through the transition and beyond. Becoming a good manager is for many managers a process of trial and error which is made easier with good support particularly at the early stages of a management career.

Clem: I had two bosses, a man and a woman who were very supportive and I felt they took it upon themselves to be my mentors and to share information and experiences to the best of their knowledge with me. They helped me develop my managerial skills as it was my first manager's job.

Angela is in her mid-thirties, lives with her partner and has no children; she has been in her current role for two and a half years and is finding the lack of promotion a problem, which she suspects is due to her IT specialty. Although she feels confident about her management skills she comments that no one from IT seems to get moved into other management roles in the same way other specialities do and this is a frustration she is very open about. She shares the experience of her last boss, who like Clem she refers to as a mentor. He had confidence in Angela and encouraged her development as a manager by giving her the opportunity to have both responsibility and authority over a team. He showed her how to negotiate office politics assessing which issues are best left and which should be engaged with. However the skills Angela has developed are yet to enable her to break away from her area of expertise into more strategic roles.

Angela: My last boss is my mentor. He gave me responsibility and authority for a group of 35 people so I could further strengthen my management skills. He has confidence in my abilities and let me get on and do the job while always being there to offer support and guidance. The key lesson has been when and how to 'play' the politics with the organisation. To pick the

arguments you're going to have and when to get on with things as arguing and challenging won't make a difference.

For the women managers who found a manager who mentored them, this has been a positive development both professionally and as a manager. The unwritten codes have to some degree been deciphered as they have embarked on a development programme within the confines of their positional role. This does suggest that getting a good manager at the right time can be critical for some men and women enabling them to be educated in organisational and management structures and the relationships embodied within them.

Conclusion

Intersecting with organisational structures are the attitudes and behaviours of managers and the three repertoires identified in this study explore the nature and complexity of relationships at work through the lens of the different dimensions in the competition model. External competition is a visible dimension which managers actively acknowledge and engage with at work. In this dimension the rules of engagement are broadly agreed bound by external market forces and governed by the organisational positions and their associated contracts. Personal competition is also widely understood as individuals challenge themselves to exceed previous levels of accomplishment. In this study both these dimensions are found to be acceptable and potentially valuable.

This study finds that healthy competition as a framework for understanding competition is limited and can lead to emotional responses of anger and isolation underpinned by unexplored expectations of competition by individual managers. While managers positively respond to some dimensions of competition (external and personal) other dimensions (interpersonal, symbolic, positional and collective) cause a much wider spectrum of responses. As found in positional and collective competition particularly managers cite how misunderstandings about different roles and responsibilities within organisations can skew how working relationships develop internally.

Emerging from this examination two schools of experience emerge. Firstly there is group of managers who identify one or two relationships which have proved crucial to building their confidence and encouraging career development and success. Described often as mentors they are also managers. Furthermore the managers who have had these relationships often go on to describe their style of management as mentoring taking a pay it forward approach to their roles. The second group identify information as the main driver for developing relationships. These relationships are usually found within organisations and described as informal internal networks. Gathering information also drives informal networks outside of an organisation and these networks continue to be cited as male dominated by both men and women managers.

Gender is a strand which threads through relationships and illustrates how it continues to be a factor in the construction and experiences of women at work. This can be found in examples where women are singled out as role models burdening them with expectations beyond their remit or finding that women continue to be judged more critically in terms of how they conduct themselves. Relationships in any working environment are likely to be complex and the managers in this study are no exception. While accepting that overlapping dimensions of competition are often changing this also highlights how relationships at work are equally fluid.

Chapter Seven

Practising Competition

One of the challenges is that gender is routinely positioned within diversity programmes. Diversity is too often about making minorities comfortable with a dominant norm. As long as women are considered one minority among many to be managed, the issue will not be resolved.

Wittenberg-Cox and Maitland (2009)

The eight dimensional competition model used in the previous chapters as a framework to examine and discuss managers' perceptions and experiences of competition will in this chapter be applied to exploring how competition is practiced at work. In this chapter by uncovering managers' covert and overt competitive actions and relations the argument that intentional and non-intentional practices of gender and competitive relations underpin management hierarchies which disadvantage some and not others will be examined.

As the analysis proceeds in this study it is increasingly apparent as argued in chapter one that as a dynamic, competition is multifaceted, ever present yet too often invisible and given too little consideration in terms of its impact on the experiences of managers at work. In this chapter the competition matrix will demonstrate how the eight dimensions of competition are understood by the managers in this study. The managers' accounts are then applied to the competition model and the competition matrix to develop some manager profiles illustrating how practising competition can play out at work. The action of practising competition at work is discussed with four themes emerging from the data; management styles, success and confidence, sexuality at work, gender and competition.

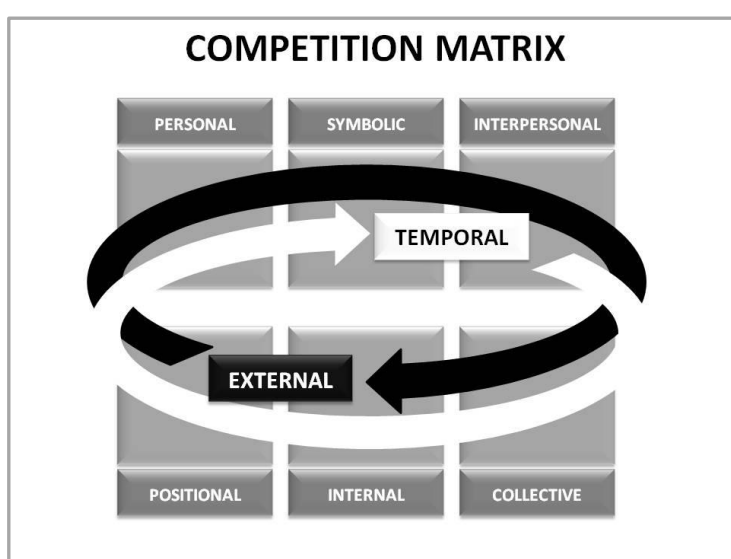
7.1 The competition matrix

I have focused on defining competition as a multi-functioning dynamic which influences managers and the way they work. Using the experiences and individual accounts shared over the course of the fieldwork, it has become

evident that dimensions of the competition model outlined in chapter two, often operate singly or in tandem. Taking the analysis a step further it is important to make visible through the interpretation of the data, competition in its dynamic form. Finding in the individual account that external and temporal competition are the most readily engaged dimensions of competition for the managers weaving through many aspects of their work and non-work experiences the competition matrix is developed to graphically represent the dynamism of the different dimensions of competition.

In the matrix it is important to illustrate how external and temporal competition overlap with all the other dimensions. This highlights the finding in my study where all the managers could identify to some degree with both these dimensions across a range of experiences at work. The other dimensions were not found as discussed throughout this my thesis to have the same traction as external and temporal competition underpinning their importance in the matrix. Using the matrix and the accounts of the managers the next stage of my analysis is to build some profiles of managers to exemplify the complexities of how different dimensions can create a wide array of situations and outcomes. Understanding the dynamism of competition and competitive relations at work can be important to creating a concept which is more transparent to more managers.

Chart 7.1 Competition Matrix



The following profiles *players*, *careerists* and *the frustrated* are generated using the competition matrix and the eight dimensional competition model to illustrate how competition can embody a manager's identity and their approach to work. It is important to note that these typographies are by no means considered a definitive list. However they are intended as a means of showing how competition can with greater recognition and understanding be used as a lens to discuss gender and management which is the purpose of this study.

A. Players

Players accept and welcome the scenario that in the market and in the organisation a serious game is on. They have a tool box of strategies and tactics easily adaptable in most situations. They have usually had a series of mentors and belong to a number networks which meet their social (including sports) business and strategic career needs. Although they suggest they have no career plan, they do have a plan to accumulate opportunities from which they can make decisions based on the financial and professional challenges presented. External competition is where they find the game most interesting accepting that internal competition for resources is largely fixed with finite resources available. They are driven by a personal desire to improve their own performance but equally find social comparison with peers and superiors motivating. As they reach the later stages of their career they may reduce the degree to which they compete finding younger players attractive to watch and maybe mentor. In their private lives if they are married their wives/husbands are unlikely to be in paid employment if there are children. The career model for a player is the dominant one in a household and meets the traditional breadwinner model.

B. Careerists

Careerists are usually managers who have amassed a wide range of skills to meet the needs of their position. They enjoy the challenge of climbing a hierarchy embracing the challenges which come with each new position. Although they do not enjoy zero sum interpersonal competition in terms of promotions they accept the situation often avoiding the terminology of competition to describe such processes. The focus on collective competition becomes an important facet of their career as they build and manage effective teams to perform in their terms

co-operatively for the good of the organisation. They use personal competition as a means of motivating their own performance and use terms like healthy competition as a way of accepting that competition exists but does not have to be conflicting or negative. Discussing competition per se is difficult and where articulate on many other issues they can stumble on this subject showing how difficult they find the concept locating it most comfortably within the categories of external and personal competition. They will often be found mentoring subordinates and will be good networkers with peers and colleagues across their industry. They can often be found to have long tenures with organisations but are not naive and are constantly prepared to be the next cut back. In their private lives if they are men, they are likely to be married with a part time working wife if there are children, and if they are women and married as likely as not to have children

C. The Frustrated

The frustrated can appear confused on whether they themselves are competitive or not, seeking comfort in an approach that is non-committal. As they progress in their careers it becomes difficult for them to accept that competition and competitive relations is something people do but never talk about. Climbing the hierarchy it becomes apparent to this group that competition is all around and is largely described as being OK as long as it's healthy. This does not enable them to engage with the dynamism of the concept at any level and their inability to find platforms from which to explore and practice competition leave them vulnerable to those managers who are simply better at understanding the workings of this dynamic. Internal and interpersonal competition is potentially where the frustrated find the most conflict and the most competition and for middle managers this can present a scenario which confines and limits them as managers. Frustrated managers do not usually leave middle management regardless of whether they want to nor and they often embody a sense of bitterness which can be directed towards a range of issues which have been a source of frustration in their position. They may have had mentors who have been ineffectual in enlightening these managers to the wider contexts of organisational cultures which can exist including being able to identify the roles and agendas of peers and superiors. For women who are in this group, gender is

often a barrier which becomes embedded in their work identity as a woman manager. They can experience marginalisation and informal gendered practices but are often left without a frame of reference or a support system to help them identify and process such gendered situations. For men in this group they are likely to inflexible to the changing conditions of careers wanting to continue the simple concept of a job for life.

Table 7.3 Typographies

Players	Careerists	The Frustrated
Strong networkers.	Like to mentor and network.	Likely to have had mentors.
Always looking for opportunities to build career.	Motivated to build career based on skills and knowledge.	Want to have a career but find it difficult to accept some of the realities of management which may challenge their code of ethics.
Like to operate directly in external market.	Strong ties and loyalty to organisation and identify with being team member and/or team leader.	Want to be a team member but often marginalised because of attitude, gender and perceived lack of engagement in competitive relations.
Meet traditional breadwinner model of one income household. Children likely if man and less likely with women.	Meet mixed income household model of one main and one part time worker. Children likely if man and unlikely if woman.	Meet transitional income household model of one main worker who if man is likely to want a job for life type career. If woman then likely to be before children, part time and then resumed when children independent.
Focus on all dimensions of competition	Focus on external, positional and symbolic competition.	Focus on external and personal competition.

The profiles designed illustrate how men and women managers can engage with categories of competition in varying ways and with a spectrum of outcomes. The gendered nature of organisations, management, careers, success and time as found in this study supporting previous studies (Acker: 2000, Blair-Loy and

Jacobs: 2003, Liff and Ward: 2001) show the value in making visible the dimensions of competition at work.

7.2 Management Styles

Symbolic competition is defined as the ability to impose one's own definitions, meanings and values on situations or processes. This is most likely to be found in the development and practice of a management style which is enlisted to meet the objectives set for a team, department or division. Symbolic competition, the fifth element in the competition model, and potentially the most fluid dimension as management and personal experience can modify and change an individual's view of the world and the social reality they occupy. In this section, management styles will be discussed to illustrate how meanings and values can be interpreted and practiced and how these can be influenced in the interaction crossover of structures, behaviours and attitudes, all of which can change according to different situations and dynamics.

How the formal and informal practices of managers are experienced can be found in their working styles and their attitudes to superiors, peers and subordinates. Potential areas of conflict can arise when expectations for themselves or for others is not fulfilled and also when gender becomes an issue particularly for women managers who can be overburdened with responsibilities exceeding their position as a manager. How a manager develops a style which works across all the relationships and situations they encounter presents a window of opportunity to examine managers perceptions of competition at work. The managers in this section will articulate their own interpretation of their management style explaining the journey they have been on so in their career.

7.2.1 Being the boss

James is a senior director in a European publishing company based in London. He is in his mid-forties, married with one child. He has climbed the corporate ladder in the publishing industry over the course of his career and has held his current position for nearly two years. James leads a team of about one hundred people and is responsible for the organisation's activity in the UK. Discussing his management style it is clear that James has considered his position and

persona in terms of his own performance. James' description contains the major hallmarks of a stereotypical masculine style of leadership including the expectations he has for his team.

James: If I was to describe my management style I would say I am antagonistic, ruthless and competitive, balanced with a good dose of positive encouragement. I am competent at my job and I expect those that work for me to be competent at theirs.

Due Billing and Alvesson (2000) argues that understanding and evaluating the components of a feminine style of leadership would be more beneficial to debate than promoting the style itself. As discussed in chapter two, distinctions between masculine and feminine styles of management need to be deconstructed to enable a more integrated approach that is not gender based. Like James, Amy distinguishes her style as being a leader which comes from being responsible for multiple teams in different countries. However unlike James, Amy comments on the concerns she has about how as a leader, she is perceived by her staff, a worry countered by a staff member who tells her that she is viewed as successful and knowledgeable. Her use of language such as 'ruthless' and 'my way or the highway' suggests that at times Amy struggles with the balance between her position within the organisation which she is clear about and her approach which fluctuates in terms of clarity. The organisation makes judgements about leaders and their value to the business and it is apparent that James and Amy are clear about this being the ultimate measure.

Amy: One member of my staff said that people like working for successful people and they don't actually see me as ruthless, they see me as knowledgeable and that I get people out when I need to. So I guess one of the things I worry about a little bit is you know, am I going to be seen to be 'a my way or the highway' kind of leader but ultimately there comes a point where that's actually what I am paid to do.

Ella has moved up the hierarchy from middle management to her first senior management position which she has been in now for eighteen months. She notes

a change in the aggressive elements of her style once intentionally practiced to give her an edge, but one she considers not now necessary as she enters a new level of management. However she is happy with the legacy of being regarded as a bit scary. Ella's experiences of middle management could be interpreted to have been competitive where aggression has been a necessary tactic to survive and progress. Having been with the same organisation over the past decade the culture appears to be demanding of its managers, especially those who are ambitious. Encouraging styles which include aggression to meet expectations and deliver results are rewarded with promotion as Ella had found and in reaching a threshold in the hierarchy different approaches can now be enlisted.

Ella: I have actually stopped beating desks to get things done, but I know that some people think I am a bit scary and I don't mind that because it gives me an edge.

The team that Mark leads comprises of men only and although he purports to have a consensus style of management which he believes is best suited to his team he does admit that ultimately he is responsible for performance. In contrast to James, Mark is arguably more reflexive about his style adapting to the demands of the situation and the people involved. This suggests that with more experience in senior management styles can transmute from heroic to engaging as Mintzberg (1975) describes. Mark retired once and took up his current position because as he says the challenge was too tempting. This suggests a degree of experience the other managers interviewed do not currently possess and may reflect in the more adaptable approach Mark describes. Unlike the other three managers' he does not use the language of aggression and although eager to succeed appears to rely more acutely on an underlying confidence as a leader.

Mark: I ceased work a few years back and wasn't really going to go back into my profession. I was done with that but this job is rather a unique sort of situation and opportunity and I made a decision that I'd probably live to regret it if I didn't give it a crack. So I will see this through to a certain stage and then I will happily go back to university to study the Classics.
Int: How would you describe your management style?

Mark: Consensus.

Int: All the time?

Mark: No, ultimately somebody has to make a decision but it's a small group and we operate a very flat structure. These are very bright, very intelligent people and a very hierarchical structure would not be one which would encourage their growth. So a more consensus approach is appropriate but ultimately someone makes the call.

The hierarchical ladder of organisations appears to operate differently once a senior level of management is attained and arguably the roles of leader and manager are intertwined. However, degrees of experience at this level continue to influence how managers work and how over time they adapt to their new positional environments and the ensuing demands as shown in perceptions shared by James, Amy, Ella and Mark. Understanding how each level of management works shows how repeatedly managers have to reassess their styles to reflect their position, recognising that with experience can come more fluidity and less conflict between the individual, their role and the organisation.

7.2.2 Not moving up the ladder

The ladder of management is structured differently in every organisation with nuances attributable to size, industry and geography. For example, a middle manager in a large organisation may likely be a senior manager in a small organisation and this can make it difficult to negotiate career development. Only one manager in this study worked in IT and although the mainstay of all business in the 21st century, it is not often that IT is viewed as a source for general managers. Angela is a middle manager in her mid-thirties, living with her partner and has no children. She has been in her current role for nearly three years as an IT specialist in a publishing company. She suggests that it has been difficult to move beyond operational management into more strategic roles because there is a stereotype that IT people stay in IT and do not move in wider roles within an organisation. Furthermore as Grey and Healy (2004) suggest, IT has a strong relationship with contracting lessening the opportunity to become an integral part of an organisation. Angela comments that she is frustrated by her inability to

move beyond the stereotype of IT and be considered for other management positions.

Angela: I would describe my management style as supportive and encouraging and adversarial in a positive way, being constructive.

Ella, Amy and James all describe similar approaches to Angela and all three are in the early stages of senior management.

In contrast, Martha who started her career in publishing at eighteen has a wealth of experience beyond her years. She is matter of fact about the role of a management style suggesting that it responds to the demands of staff, assessing the most productive means of extracting the best performance. This she suggests requires being attuned to the diversity of the people that work in the team and the organisation and quickly working out tactics that should be employed to achieve the necessary work outputs. For Martha the goal is managing staff effectively and continuing to develop and practice a style that is personally and professionally satisfying. Although Martha is clear about her style and admits to being happy at her current level of management, in time this may change. Accepting that different tactics in management work for different people is an important part of Martha's style. She acknowledges that 'doing the fluffies' with some staff is the means to getting a desired performance from them.

Martha: I am very black and white in how I can process a lot of things and that works great with my current employer but with other members of staff we have to do all the fluffies and we talk and its repeated and its more on the emotional side. That's part of management you know, it's what process they need to get down and get their work done. People are all different, different upbringings, different cultures, different processing of the brain.

The lack of a defined management style has been an area of concern for Eve. Yet the essence of what she describes as important in relation to managing is similar to that of Martha in accepting differences between people and the need for manager's to understand and work with varieties of personalities. These two

women have similar career histories working from the bottom up to the level of middle management where they are both now positioned. Eve is very clear about the necessity to combine her personal moral code with the demands of the job and this underpins her approach to management.

Eve: I don't really have a particular management style and that is something maybe that's been a negative thing. I don't know but we were always taught to have different management styles and have different hats because of the different personalities we're dealing with. But you do have to be above reproach and it really hard to manage if you're not. You have to be honest.

The ranks of middle management are populated by potentially the most diverse group of managers. Within these ranks are the frustrated and ambitious like Angela, the experienced and content like Martha and those seeking to meet their personal expectations like Eve. Dopson and Neumann (1998) argue that middle management has become more generalist in many organisations in response to the scaling down of this level over time. This has resulted in the demand for a more flexible and adaptable style of management responding to the changing needs of the organisation. Middle management can provide an interesting and challenging environment which satisfies the current career needs of some managers like Eve and Martha but can become a battleground for unfulfilled ambitions as found in Angela's case. Understanding why women populate junior and middle management is important and underpins the research question: is competition gendered?

Gail Rebeck, CEO, Random House believes that 'women's frequent failure to reach the top is largely due to a lack of confidence and aspirations' (Rebeck cited in Claes 1999: 6). While investigating how women can be more effectively incorporated into management structures Coe (1992) found that only two thirds of the women she interviewed felt they received adequate respect from their male superiors. As one respondent says, '*There is a subtle way in which we are never given quite the full authority, never quite the full credit, never quite the full respect*' (Coe, 1992: 15). So is there a link between being given respect as a

manager and growing the confidence to become a more successful manager? Kanter (1977) argues that 'power begets power' (p168) - those who have it get more and those who have none continue to have none. Exploring how confidence is an important factor in becoming successful can inform strategies which can be employed to build confidence.

7.2.3 Gendered trade-offs for managers

Women working in management sectors appear to make more trade-offs in comparison to than men often in direct response to the additional responsibilities they carry in terms of care and domestic work (Coe: 1992, Still: 1997). In chapter five the discussion focused on temporal competition showing how men and women continue to have diverse experiences which are accentuated when child-rearing begins. This fundamental point of difference may be important in examining how men and women managers perceive competition at work and what affect this may have on building confidence and enjoying career success. Martha is in her mid-thirties and left school to start work in publishing where she has remained throughout her career although for different companies. She is divorced and has a daughter and is now considering doing some further education to balance her work experience and give her some more option in the future. Martha has a confident attitude to work and motherhood and this degree of confidence is projected in her ability to prioritise from the outset that family comes first and having made this decision, she is in a strong position to maintain a boundary between them. Confidence as I have shown is a key factor in constructing relationships at work, particularly with superiors. Women who do not possess or are not encouraged to develop such confidence, as discussed by Martha and Ella, can be at a disadvantage in negotiating working terms and conditions in terms of time and money.

Martha: I've got a daughter you know and making sure first of all that I'm a great mother to my daughter – the rest can take a hike. That's sort of my thinking...I would never compromise my family for a job because at the end of the day it's just a job.

7.3 Confidence breeds success

Having spent her career in advertising, Pat who is divorced and has no children, has in recent years experienced a change in the way she views success, money and time. Shifting her focus five years ago from money being the only measure of success to a situation where personal achievement and more time has become important resulted in a change of job sectors within media, from advertising in New York to public relations in Melbourne. The conscious choice she made accepted that a financial trade-off for more personal time was unavoidable.

Pat: Success can be measured in so many ways. In the early days of my career, I could tell you that my success was probably almost solely measured in dollars. You paid me more I went and worked for you. Simple as that. Now I really base my personal success on primarily knowing that I've done the best I can for that day with what I have and the circumstances. One of the trade offs I made in deciding to moving away from advertising was a clear decrease in salary in exchange for measuring my success in having a fuller and richer life. I've seen far more people here who I consider to be very ambitious and extremely capable, but because of having young families or because of health reasons ...they've chosen not to purely do the corporate ladder climbing. They're able to make that choice, that they're this level and they work these hours and that's the choice that they've made, and that, that is success.

Pat's definition of success is measured by the choices an individual can freely make about how they work and she cites examples of people with families or health issues choosing not to climb the corporate ladder as being successful because they have exercised choice. Stepping away from measuring success in a singular way can become more complex involving a series of decisions that could be portrayed as choice or constraint (Crompton and Harris: 1998a) depending on one's current position, in relation to social, professional and familial roles and responsibilities. Notions of success as defined by individuals can be fluid and subjective whereas organisations are more likely to have fixed measures as discussed in chapter three. Pat's story highlights how organisations

are often inflexible and do not accommodate change in managers attitudes or circumstances.

Ella has concerns about why women do not reach the top of organisations and although she also concludes that confidence is a factor, she suggests that ambition plays a key role. In terms of ambition Ella observes that in publishing, creative women only want to create and are therefore not interested in moving outside the discipline into senior management. With an editorial background herself Ella understands that in order to join the higher management ranks of the organisation it is important to be ambitious and at that point developing and displaying confidence is important. Are Ella and Pat referring to confidence in the same way or is there a spectrum which develops over time and according to different hierarchical levels?

Ella: There appear to be two reasons why women don't reach the next level, firstly they are not ambitious enough and secondly they lack confidence. In my company the ambition thing is because women work in creative and editorial areas and they just want to create so as long as they do that they are happy. The confidence thing applies more to women like me at my level.

The trade-offs people can make to ensure they meet their own personal life requirements are often measured by the financial sacrifices made to secure more time but they may also be measured by reductions made in personal and career development opportunities which may limit ambition and confidence.

7.3.1 Gendered confidence

Grace works a flexible schedule to accommodate school hours twice a week and periods of school holidays. She finds that in the employment process there is a noticeable distinction between the behaviour of men and women and that often the 'best man for the job' gets it because of the confidence he demonstrates. This is a situation that Grace would like to see change so that competition for positions is based on a package which includes skill, talent and confidence - a combination she believes is important. As for herself, she maintains that getting her own levels of confidence right is difficult and is an on-going process of

learning. So why do women managers find developing confidence at work seemingly more difficult than men and what impact does this have on career trajectories?

Grace: I have had to employ a good few people over the years and I still find that generally women are much less able to negotiate for more money and benefits and sometimes appear to just be grateful for the interview. Men on the other hand come across as ambitious and available for a price that they set, which gives you the impression of confidence and in this business that's important. At times I want to shake some of the women I see and tell them to be more positive about what they have to offer. There are a few though that do stand out as confident and self assured and they teach me a thing or two in that area. I have learnt that there are many shades of confidence and how you portray it is an important part of what you offer to an employer. I think men are just so up front about it that it just over the top, but it does work although I couldn't do it like that.

Why women managers can be perceived as not exhibiting enough ambition and confidence may be a result of the definitions used in organisations, which portray male versions of confidence as the norm. Blackaby et al (1999) found in their study of senior women managers in Wales that women's confidence was easily undermined, and that this marked a difference with men who often have much more support in developing confidence through mentors and networks. When I interviewed Zoe, the only part time manager, she was in the midst of inducting three women graduates and was obviously shocked by their lack of interpretative skills. The qualities which Zoe cites as important for successful progression were found lacking in the graduates raising the question of how and where the stated skills are learned and from whom. The apparent shock of coming face to face with young and inexperienced graduates as a manager underlines how important the teaching aspect of management can be as this example illustrates. Early successes in a career can build confidence repeatedly referred to by Ella, Martha and Grace as necessary for longer term career progression.

Zoe: I can't believe their lack of interpretative skills at this stage. They're just check listing things. They don't think – and that's really important if you're going to be successful, you've got to be on the ball. You've got to be time focused and driven and you have got to understand the scope of the job and what your role is in it. You have to have attention to detail, be energetic and focused on that end result.

Furthermore leaders expect their managers to admit their weaknesses and compensate for them by delegating or appointing the appropriately skilled people. Having a manager such as Zoe who is aware of the level that is expected, can be an important process for graduates to begin identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. However, women managers are sensitive to the potential of their weaknesses being exploited and without good support confidence is found lacking. Comparisons made on this basis do not consider that women managers often operate in multiple environments, where different types of confidence are considered appropriate. For example, in a domestic zone, a woman may satisfactorily carry out her responsibilities; at school and in the community she may be perceived as a strong leader and contributor and yet at work she may experience an inability to meet the parameters of what is considered confident. Going beyond the citations of women's lack of confidence as a reason for lack of management advancement is important to clarifying practices which can maintain this situation. The observations made by Ella and Grace suggest that how confident a manager is perceived to be by peers and superiors, is important to being successful and in this area the findings suggest that women managers remain largely uncompetitive.

In her mid-thirties and single Elaine is a manager of three years who has experience of how passive men are when confronted with gender performance issues including their own. The situation that women managers may face in meetings especially when they are or see themselves as the token is one of isolation. For some men this can involve being sexist, rude, competitive and antagonistic, for others the role can be encouraging of such behaviour merely by saying and doing nothing.

Elaine: I was often the only woman at management meetings and this was at times quite intimidating and I had to put up with the snide comments that floated around and the roving eyes that always seemed to land on my boobs. Some of the men were great and were supportive of some of the things I had to put up with but they never supported me in public only when quietly walking to back to the car park or whatever.

Does the presence of a lone woman in this type of situation accentuate the desire by some men to perform their gender more overtly than perhaps if there were no women or more than one woman present? The answer to this question is important to understanding gender performances because it is likely that each scenario would produce a range of behaviours. Elaine says that some of the men offered support albeit not openly and although she accepted this as being great it is difficult to believe that this response is not being overplayed. Not being supported in public can translate into realising that as a woman manager you are alone and therefore not entitled to the same respect as men. Is the sense of isolation made worse when support from male colleagues is covert? How gender is experienced in relationships at work is influenced by competitive relations as Elaine illustrates in her experience of male colleagues supporting her position in secret so as to maintain a different position publicly.

7.4 What makes managers successful?

An exploration of how managers measure success and/or failure is an important area for consideration to establish if there is a relationship between success and competition in terms of career development and trajectories. As with many issues in management knowledge and experience throughout a career can over time influence a manager's perceptions and success is a good example of this. How one measures success today may have changed over time and may continue to do so depending on where an individual is located on the career spectrum.

Exploring notions of success emerges as a recurring theme in this study as it seemingly provides an easily identifiable framework for managers to discuss their personal perspectives, motivations and measures of this otherwise subjective area. Mark (a player), David (a player) and Beth (a careerist) are all

senior managers with more than five years experience at this level. Beth is in her late forties and has been in her current position for ten years, lives with her partner and has one independent child. The three managers each eloquently present the portfolio of skills and qualities they believe are important characteristics of a successful manager. Drawing a picture of success with successful managers is an insightful process to explore what qualities they identify and positively encourage in subordinates.

Mark: Point of reference. I think in no particular order of significance you need a pretty high intellect, a very strong work ethic, a healthy streak of ambition, healthy dose of humour and I think because it is a very people oriented business, you've got to be able to show empathy.

Beth: I think to be successful you've got to have tenacity, I think you've got to have a lot of energy, I think you've got to be curious and I think you've got to have empathy.

David: You have to have integrity because you can't lead people who don't trust you...I think you have to be innovative, you've got to have lateral thinking and you've got to be decisive when it's needed and listen when it's needed. You need passion, you need to have an element of empathy. But I also think you've got to have a certain amount of perfectionist desire and you have to also have a certain amount of impatience. If you are too patient things will never get done.

The role of empathy is the single quality which all three managers cite as being important suggests a significant relationship between managers, peers and subordinates. For Mark, a strong work ethic and ambition indicate a manager who works long hours – he works over sixty a week. Beth, in citing tenacity and energy, suggests her management career has endured a long hard process to reach her personal and professional goals. David produces a range of qualities which appear to hinge on being passionate first followed by having the ability to know when to be decisive and when to listen but always focusing on achieving the objective. Notions of success and management styles together compile a

layer cake of managers' experiences accumulated over the period of their career. Although this stratigraphical³⁶ method of analysing the data does not provide the detail of individual situations, it does enable conclusions to be drawn about those management practices which are successful.

7. 5 Good managers and bad managers

Felicity is adamant that a manager should be accountable for not providing feedback and acknowledgement to staff, suggesting its strong connection to building foundations for success. Furthermore she suggests that when managers promote acknowledgement as a fixed or limited resource it can make staff 'hungry' for attention. The idea of hunger as a basic human need can result in behaviour that is competitive with survival becoming of absolute importance. Felicity's description presents a scenario which places the successful manager as one who encourages success in their subordinates as opposed to the 'crap manager' who is unable to enlist empathy of any kind. Uhl-Bien and Masly (2003) suggest that reciprocity between a manager and subordinates is an area which can measure the value and quality of the relationship. They observe that negative reciprocity results in lower levels of performance and conscientiousness with the opposite being true of positive reciprocity.

Felicity: Success, that's about a hunger for acknowledgment. Crap managers don't give positive feedback to staff so everyone is hungry to do something that is noticed. Personal success is about acknowledgment.

Acknowledgment for managers can be experienced directly or indirectly as subordinates efforts are recognised. John combines success and satisfaction as the key factors that are important to him. Both John and Felicity see the relationship between success and recognition via acknowledgment as integral for themselves as individuals but more importantly as managers responsible for a team.

³⁶ Ice core drilling provides a non-bio-stratigraphical method of dating. This term is used in this study to describe the layers of experience which occur over the period of a career.

John: I am always trying to gain personal and reflective satisfaction from my peers and staff. I do compete with myself but not necessarily to improve who I am and what I do but to get more recognition. Success for me is about recognition for the work I do and the work my team does.

As the layers of a manager's experience are uncovered it becomes increasingly evident that some practices at work which are unintentional or unchallenged can persist throughout a career causing negative effects on workers. The theme of acknowledgement underpins this point, as it is can be implicated in negative and positive responses in staff creating zero sum competitions or be an active part of building confidence in subordinates.

Esther is new to management with only two years experience in her first and current management role. She is in her early thirties, is married and has one child. Esther draws on the negative aspects of being a subordinate to challenge her own approach to developing a management style that is fair and reasonable. It raises some questions over the performance of her former manager whose inability to exercise authority in a measured way suggests that when a subordinate feels that they are in a competition with their superior the relationship is likely to deteriorate.

Esther: My first boss was a woman and she was always competing with me to prove that she was better than I was. She only ever communicated the negative stuff, never the positive and always did it in front of others. She saw subordinates as mud on her feet and treated them the same way. She certainly made me aware of everything you shouldn't do to staff and how you should treat subordinates as it is very easy to lose their respect.

Esther continues to share her experience of this relationship and becomes angry at her former manager who as a woman manager appears to have let down not just Esther, but women managers in general. Whether the individual experience Esther shares is over influential in the conclusion she reaches which is to claim to prefer to working for men and their way of managing, perhaps indicates a comfort in understanding what that means. The scrutiny, often hidden, which

some women managers face from their female subordinates as this study shows, can over-emphasise their gender in their management role.

Esther: My boss made me angry because she was confirming to everyone that women didn't make good managers. I had thought that having a woman boss would be good and thought she will do things that are not 'a man's way' but now I prefer to work for men.

In a Gallup poll conducted annually since 1982 men continue to be preferred as a boss year on year but change is being recorded. In 2006 the poll indicates that although 37% prefer a man and only 19% prefer a woman, 43% have no preference. Powell and Butterfield (2002) conducted studies in 1979 and 1984 hypothesising that a good manager would be androgynous (high in masculine and feminine traits). In both studies they found a good manager was defined as predominantly masculine. In 1999 repeating the study for a third time they found that good managers were still perceived to possess more masculine characteristics although the margins had lessened. They argue that stereotypes continue to hinder the development of women by restricting their behaviour. Stereotypes as Schein repeatedly observes (1975, 1989, 1994) are a barrier for women as they seek to overcome entrenched views of a manager being male. Do women managers experience a double bind of stereotypes, those that seek to constrain them by comparison to men and those that seek to judge them against the unrealistic expectations by other women?

Lois in a similar way to Esther expects women managers to have learned more than she considers they have. It is the combination of anger and disappointment which pervades what both these managers say that is concerning. Perhaps until some of the barriers women face in terms of working and having successful long term careers, a scenario of idealist expectations will continue to be held by women of other women.

Lois: Women bosses tend to take two views either support or no support but with both it is on their terms and is often driven by personal attitudes. There

isn't one woman who I can look at and say yeah I would like to be like her, they don't exist and if they do I never come across them.

The disillusionment Lois shares in discussing women managers suggests that in her experience the lack of role models relates to the women managers she has encountered not being good role models. Yet neither Lois nor Esther is clear as to what they expect from women managers as role models. This presents a confused situation where parameters are undefined and difficult to challenge. Equally the benefit of having negative role models can possibly assist women managers in assessing the elements they do not wish to replicate in their own management style a situation Esther admits to by saying she is now clear about all the things she would not do as a manager. Mavin (2006) comments that whether stated or not, the blame or fix women position can become a default mechanism which continues to marginalise women in management from their gender and position. The indication that some women managers are unable to meet the expectations which other women set for them can lead to conflict within working relationships which is difficult to resolve because of the personally held and often hidden views of the individuals involved.

7.6 Sexuality and competition

Since women entered management it is well documented how as a group they have been marked by men as distinct and different based on their sexuality. Pringle (1990) argues, 'Far from being marginal to the workplace, sexuality is everywhere. It is alluded to in dress and self-presentation, in jokes and gossip, looks and flirtations, secret affairs and dalliances, in fantasy, and in the range of coercive behaviours that we now call sexual harassment' (Pringle, 1990: 162). How sexuality at work plays out in the informal and formal practices of managers is the core of this section examining what role this has in how different dimensions of competition are understood and experienced. The influence of sexuality at work on how some women construct their social reality of being a manager is an important element to understanding the different environments which exist at work. How such an element may override the capacity to engage with competition and competitive relations is also found to have some traction.

7.6.1 Sexuality still potent

Sexuality is not just about biology, reproduction and sexual orientation, sexuality as Martin (2007) suggests is 'sensed, expressed and interpreted within very specific socio-political conditions' (241). As with gender, sexuality responds to different situations and as a result influences how sexuality is understood and practiced. Segal (1999) suggests that 'what one becomes is always ambiguous with only some signs of 'woman' to the fore, some of the time' (p72). Separating gender and sexuality is difficult and I agree with Richardson (2007) who describes the relationship between sexuality and gender as 'patterned fluidity' pointing to a mix of complexities which can be influenced by any number of predictable and unpredictable social, cultural, political, legal and economic situations.

In the workplace introducing sexual harassment laws is a good example of how over the last three decades the issue of sexuality in organisations has been made visible in organisations and also in the wider public sphere (Hearn and Parkin: 2003). This is supported by the introduction of legislative and judicial processes now in place across western societies to serve and protect the workers from unwanted sexual behaviour. However with sexual harassment as Halford and Leonard (2001) argue, definitions range across a spectrum making it difficult to identify what one person may deem harassment another views as part of the organisational environment. This highlights the complexity of sexuality and the fluidity of its influence on individuals.

The body of work that investigates the role of sexuality in the workplace is comprehensive and continues to influence policy developments and their implementation (Collinson and Hearn: 1996, Powell and Graves: 2003). In my study sexuality at work emerged as theme comprising of a mix of experiences and concerns about seemingly 'old' issues like dress codes and language which continue to fuel tensions between men and women and interestingly between women. This included scenarios of women actively using their sexuality to gain advantage at work with men and over other women. While also discussed is how some young women workers and managers hold particularly high expectations for senior women managers in terms of their behaviour, attitudes to being a manager and an unspoken demand for loyalty to the 'sisterhood'. Such attitudes continue to set women managers apart from their male counterparts and can contribute to additional tensions in gender relations. Additionally,

‘new’ issues such as women managers having to negotiate around their gender and sexuality with the partners of their male colleagues was discussed on a number of occasions. This was found particularly prevalent in the scenario of travelling with male peers and colleagues in line with positional duties which needed to be conducted.

The behaviour of some young women which Amy encounters in her management role is a concern she holds strongly. That women are using their ‘girly charm’ as a mechanic to meet their objectives is a tactic she believes to be inappropriate. She suggests this behaviour used to be prevalent and is working its way back into the workplace - a situation she finds unacceptable. She has directly addressed this with several of women subordinates who respond she says with bewilderment. The idea of using any tactic available to get the job done illustrates how some women see their femininity as a weapon which although may be intended for use against men can also be used against women.

Amy: I see a fall back on this very girly behaviour as a way of getting through conflict or getting what you want. I’ve had a couple of people who worked in different parts of my organisation that I’ve spoken to about it. Their reaction is bewilderment. They are you know if it gets the job done you know then it’s part of my arsenal of tactics. I go it’s not working for me honey; things get done on the merits of your arguments, on the cleverness of the proposals on the smarts of you working well with the organisation.

Grace has a similar view to Amy on women using their sexuality commenting that it is a game which at best has short term gains. She is adamant that other women do not encourage or support this approach and suggests that as a game plan there is no evidence that it even works. For women who use their sexuality explicitly to gain an advantage as described by Amy and Grace can often demonised by women colleagues (Ely: 1994).

Grace: Watching some women use their sexuality with male bosses does them no favours amongst other women – I was not prepared to play that game, it’s like selling your soul for a few pennies and I always thought it

was naive because in the long term they never got ahead they just seemed loaded down with work and responsibility.

Making distinctions between women who do and do not overtly use their sexuality at work highlights a gendered practice which can as in Amy's account highlight a blurred line between intentional and unintentional practices and the outcome of negative perceptions. As a site of tension the issue of some women actively using their sexuality is potent and suggests that progress made in one generation does not mean it carries over to a new generation of women entering the labour market. The terms used by Kanter (1977) and McDowell (1997) discussed in earlier chapters including pet and seductress show how sexuality continues to influence women's attitudes towards themselves and others.

7.6.2 Still working with dress and language

The continuing experiences of women managers finding dress and language an issue which marks them as being different to men should cause some shock and dismay. But throughout my study assumptions of progress have been found to be erratic in reality. The double whammy now - as Esther explains - is that is not just men but women who practice the use of gender as a tool to secure control, power or advantage. Esther is in her early thirties, is married with no children and is a young manager, in her current position and organisation for only a year. In this new organisation she finds herself being judged for unintentionally practising her sexuality at work. She was told by a female peer that the only reason she got the job was because of the way she looked. Esther says she takes pride in her appearance but in her current position is made to feel conscious of her sexuality and gender by a male colleague who displays discriminatory behaviour towards her as a woman, reinforced seemingly by her boss's attitude.

Esther: One woman who is always trying to compete with me said that the only reason I got this job was because of the way I looked. Funny though, another colleague who is a man and started here after me and who thinks all women should be pregnant and at home and who I would say does not get on with me at all, or me with him. He only ever talks to me when he wants something and then dismisses me. He only ever deals with the male reps and

never the women. My boss though takes him more seriously than me even though he thinks he is social misfit.

To a young manager, organisational hierarchies can be intimidating and adding gender into that equation can exacerbate any feelings that may arise such as isolation and a lack of confidence. While Esther describes her female colleague as competing with her and using Esther's sexuality as a tactic to undermine her position, Esther finds the behaviour and attitudes of her male colleague out-dated but still effective in their outcome. The experiences Esther describes are good examples of the difference between practising gender and gendered practices. Practising gender as Martin (2003) explains directs attention to the literal activities of gender 'the doing, displaying, asserting, narrating, performing' and can include a comment or action which is done in real time and therefore cannot be recalled. The influence of gendered practices at work can have a wide ranging effect on how managers as individuals develop as discussed in chapter five and six.

For Esther the repeated behaviour she experiences from her peers and superiors appears to cause her degrees of discomfort around being comfortable with her gender, role and identity. While as Martin argues that the comments and actions may not be recalled because they are subtle, a part of everyday work life and happening in real time, this can also mean that when they are verbalised they can be interpreted as minor 'hiccups' which one should expect in gender relations. However this view can contribute to reinforcing the idea that issues such as sexuality at work are largely resolved leaving managers like Esther fending for herself. The value of developing and defining a competition model as found in this study enables fresh perspectives to be taken on identifying gendered practices and as Grace describes for 'the game' to be better understood. So whether as participant or bystander strategies and tactics used by subordinates, peers and superiors at work can potentially be more transparent to more people enabling responses to be more effective and productive.

The long-standing gendered practice of setting a dress code for women can be an affirmation of a gender order within an organisation or hierarchy contributing to

maintaining attitudes and behaviours where gender is actively reinforced and certain types of gender performance are predetermined. As found in the experiences of women managers in my study and in other studies (Claes: 1999, Catalyst: 2005, Davidson and Burke: 2000, Franks: 2000) I agree with Acker (1990) who argues that gender hierarchies can be maintained by organisations who use sexuality as a means of ruling women's bodies out of order an idea which was found across the three repertoires unravelled in chapter six.

Esther: Women were not allowed to wear trousers or short skirts. This didn't seem to bother the other women who were older and seemed to think it was right and proper. We also had to call all the directors 'Mister' which I found a bit off in this day and age.

The embedded nature of sexuality intertwined with gender relations recognises a relationship which can change and transform in response to organisational attitudes and behaviours. Moving away from an acceptance that organisations can be gender-neutral to accepting gender as a dynamic in organisations continues to be an important transition in management hierarchies. While I show that dimensions of competition are largely operating below the surface at work, I also find that similarly gender in some organisations also operates this way. While this study aimed to define and examine practices of gender and competition in management, it became clear that seeking to compile a finite list would be counterintuitive as practices are continually changing and adapting according to circumstances.

7.6.3 Old issues, new practices, new experiences

Lois and Liz both call attention to a new situation which now confronts them. Travelling for work with male colleagues has brought into sharp focus their position as women managers with their colleagues' wives and partners. Being called to account for perceived sexual attraction between them and their male colleagues has required them to take pre-emptive measures to lessen unnecessary stresses. These experiences are aligned with Wajcman's (1999) argument that women managers who want to be successful need to negotiate their sexuality, which is what Lois and Liz are actively doing. However Wajcman made her

comments referring to people inside the organisation whereas this scenario of travelling for work steps outside this structure to include men's partners. This is a new addition to this topic and could be included in future research. To find here that some of the issues facing women managers are morphing is not that surprising. As women managers have increased in number populating all levels of organisational hierarchies combined with many organisations operating beyond their local geography, the demand for travel as a required component of working life is accepted as a necessity. However this appraisal as the managers' show is not so simple with gendered practices active and reaching past the organisational structure.

Lois suggests that building some trust with the partners of male colleagues is an important tactic making it clear that while you are not attracted to your colleague you are not suggesting that he is unattractive. Negotiating around one's sexuality as Lois explains in this case highlights the additional pressure women managers can encounter in merely undertaking their positional duties. Blackaby et al (1999) cite in their study that some senior managers were unwilling to go on business trips with women colleagues because of the 'suspicions of their wives and they resisted working with senior women as a result' (p75).

Lois: Something else I have come across lately is how women are leery about their man taking business trips with women. I hadn't really thought about it as I have always tried to make a point of talking to wives and girlfriends so they know I am not interested without trying to make them think their husband or whatever is a prat who I wouldn't touch with a barge pole. You really have to be careful about that one.

Liz agrees with Lois that having to resolve other people's issues around sexuality at work is a burden that is tiring and has no remuneration other than simplifying potential complications. Having your gender thrust into a work related situation from outside can be an isolating and tiresome experience where resolution is not easy to navigate.

Liz: Travelling with the job is difficult because you are away from home and it requires always being on duty. The other problem is wives who automatically assume that because you're not married; going away is a chance for you to get involved with their husbands. It's a pain really and does add an edge to what is already an exhausting experience.

This study shows how cycles of words and actions which encourage attitudes and behaviours in management can continue and morph both in and outside of organisations. Sexuality at work is diverse with examples of conscious and unconscious behaviours varying alongside changes in organisational structures and cultures. Although legislation and education have succeeded in providing the basis for policy design and implementation alongside a system for complaint, the on-going reality of women's sexuality being used and abused at work remains as found in this study a site of confusion and conflict. Continuing to portray women's sexuality in management as different to men's sexuality and consequently problematic indicates the on-going need for this old issue to be reconsidered alongside other examinations of gender and work.

7.7 Gender and competition

Social identities for managers can encompass a multiple and complex set of meanings which stem from the roles and situations which build the framework of an individual's reality. The analysis of competition in this study is primarily concerned with assessing the role gender in management. Competition as a masculine management stereotype has maintained some on-going status within organisations particularly with those managers who operate a heroic type management style as described by Mintzberg (1975) and Sinclair (1998). Adhering to such gender based stereotyping has been repeatedly studied by Schein (1989, 1992, 1996) concluding that think manager – think male remains a discourse which sets the norm for managers as male and organisations as masculinist as discussed in chapter one.

Broadbridge and Hearn (2008) argue that in identifying organisations and management as gendered some trends are apparent. Firstly the priority of work over home commitments and secondly the gendered division of authority in

management and gendered processes in sexuality reproducing dominant heterosexual cultures and practices. Competition portrayed in managers as a masculine trait can, as with similar traits, present a confusing and challenging picture for women managers who may find themselves embracing such qualities. At this point stereotypes can have a negative impact on a woman manager's social identity as trying to rationalise management qualities with potentially being typecast by peers and subordinates into roles as Davidson and Burke (2000), Halford and Leonard (2001) and Leathwood (2005) describe. The 'pet', the 'seductress', the 'iron maiden' and others epitomise the difficulty women face in engaging with competition as just one aspect of management. How embedded in organisational cultures such roles are can be an indication of the agenda in relation to equality.

The participating managers shared their own perceptions and experiences enabling an examination of their relationships with management, gender and competition. Zoe begins her assessment with the essentialist view of competition as a male tendency which may be considered a safe place to begin such a discussion and reflects the masculinist association of the trait. However this situation does not appear to satisfy her and upon some simple probing she admits to being competitive but acting like she is not. So why the performance? Although accepting that deep down she is competitive and suggesting that she is also good at it, Zoe discusses the dilemma of women who are competitive being perceived negatively whereas men are not. Unlike women, men have platforms like sport and work readily available to exercise and practice competition which may contribute to understanding why Zoe's first response was an essentialist one.

Zoe: So, I think it's innate and it's ...I think it's more of a male tendency than a female tendency.

Int: So, if I asked you if you were competitive what would your answer?

Zoe: Yeah, I think I am deep down. I think I act like I'm not, but I think I am probably.

Int: Do you think there's probably other people like that?

Zoe: Yeah

Int: Would you say that you're not quite sure how to channel your competitiveness?

Zoe: Oh absolutely. Yeah absolutely. So I think it kind of comes...it manifests itself in different ways. Particularly where guys can play sport or in their work. Whereas women...it's not viewed negatively that they are competitive whereas for women, it is a bit more viewed negative if they're competitive. But I think I must be good at it.

Butler (1999) argues that discourses can be important to maintaining the framework of scripts and behaviours which regulate and reproduce the dominant cultures found in organisations and their management hierarchies. Proposing that competition is a negative trait in women can limit their engagement with it anticipating that full participation may result in negative outcomes. The distinction Zoe makes between feeling competitive and being competitive suggests that she has found covert ways of practising her version although she is unable or unwilling to articulate these in any detail. It is difficult to categorise the type of competition Zoe is referring to as it appears very general and without context except in relation to gender. Zoe would be typified in the competition matrix as being someone who falls between all the categories which illustrates the limitations of profiles in the matrix but highlights how they can generate a deeper understanding of how an individual perceives and experiences competition.

How individuals perceive competition in others can be an influence on how they experience and engage with it themselves. Martha suggests that women lacking in confidence are competitive as they strive for acceptance at work. She points out that the gap between being good at something and having to prove it to others can become a site of internal conflict. Martha suggests that there are two situations, firstly between men and women where women try to prove they are capable of delivering their positional responsibilities and secondly where women have to build their confidence just to do their job. The type of competition Martha refers overlaps a number of dimensions; personal, interpersonal, positional and symbolic, suggesting a complex scenario for women managers trying to rewrite the scripts which precede them. In identifying that women are

the group which lack confidence at work as discussed previously, Martha admits to having personally experienced the scenario she describes and which remains an on-going challenge.

Martha: I think there is competition especially from women who are not confident, I mean there is a difference in being good at something and proving your good at something and I think a lot of women still try to prove that they can do a man's job so to speak even though it probably isn't a man's job. Not just going look I can do this quite well, this is my strength and I really enjoy it but not have to prove themselves. To me that says a lot of maturity and personal growth is needed and I've been there too, I've done that to a certain degree you know.

Analysing the experiences of male managers in this discussion is an important aspect of understanding the perceptions of gender differences. Sinclair (2000) argues the two identities of man and manager have fitted hand and glove and that in this way 'work accomplishes masculinity' (p84). Matt doesn't believe that men and women are any different when it comes to being competitive. Yet he suggests that men are usually more open, tangible and aggressive about competition in a similar way to which Zoe describes above. The conclusion that although men and women may both be competitive, it is more acceptable for men to outwardly exhibit this trait is a theme which concurs with other studies which question whether women in management demand a re-examination of masculinities at work (Hatcher: 2003, Hancock et al: 2007).

Matt: I think statistically there might be more males who are outwardly aggressive in a sense of competitiveness, and outwardly aggressive is not in a nasty way it might just be more tangible. I also think there are plenty of women who are driven and competitive and my gut tells me there's no difference between men and women.

It is with confidence that Mark, a senior manager comments that men and women compete differently. Yet immediately he focuses on a trait widely categorised as feminine, empathy. Mark uses the term skill rather than trait

which positions empathy as something that is learned rather than innate. In making this point he suggests that feminine and masculine skills can move beyond the gendered boundaries fostered through stereotypes. He goes on to describe the behaviour of the men in his team using images which strongly suggest masculinities which are based in a dominant heterosexual language of guns blazing and bulls in a china shop. Working in binary opposites Mark like Matt presents interpretations which appear in one sense to accept the role of women managers and similarly continue to accept that men dominate the organisational culture. Wilson (1996) observes that the category of man and masculinity is central to analysis of organisations and yet largely remains 'hidden, taken for granted and unexamined' (p828).

Mark: Certainly men and women compete differently. I think funnily enough having described that to you. I thought oh my god, the skills you need for this job is empathy and on the whole women have the capacity to display empathy or feel empathy considerably better than men do...I try and teach the younger guys here exactly that, that they can't be bulls in a china shop. That they've got to pause and take a breath and you know discuss the weather, don't go in all guns blazing.

The language which Mark uses to describe men is quite different when compared with that which Felicity uses. Describing women and competition in terms of subversive and covert directly contrasts with Matt above who talks about the openness of men. From Felicity's point of view she identifies the main objective for women as gaining, having or protecting power using tools like gossip to withhold information. The relationship between information and power is one which suggests that women have reached a point where they have identified an important element of organisations and utilised tactics with which they are comfortable.

Felicity: I think where women are concerned issues of competition are under the wire, subversive, covert. With women it happens with gossip and withholding information because knowledge is power, control of knowledge, who has it and who needs it.

On suggesting that women are ‘under the wire’ about their competitive behaviour is also made by Martha who describes men as being more honest about competition than women. The distinction Martha makes between women and recognition and men and achievement is expanded by the comment that women actually want recognition from men. Adding to comments from Zoe, Martha and Felicity about their experiences and observations of the uneasiness women in management, give an impression that feeling like an outsider waiting for a welcome from men underpins a number of gender differences in management.

Martha: I think men are more honest about it. I think, like if they say I’m going to get this sales target, they’re just thinking about that at that level. A lot of women compete with me for recognition. They do it to be recognised by men. Men do it because they’re more competitive between each other, they do it to achieve but I think women do it for recognition.

Eve in suggesting that competition is about temperament reflects how the layers of experience contribute to how a manager handles situations. Although she does not discuss gender per se it is likely that the experiences one manager has will be influenced by their gender thus affecting how they construct their temperament. Eve makes the comparison between an emotive and a more considered response which can be interpreted to mean that with experience also comes less emotionally based reactions. Whether this is because emotion is not considered appropriate in management *per se*, or merely in relation to women managers is not clear.

Eve: Competition is about temperament. I think you have layers of experience and I think those things effect people and how you handle it as an individual and this determines the outcome. You can be emotive or you can take a step back and in ten seconds work out what you need to do.

This discussion continues to reinforce the concept that organisations are not gender neutral and that behaviours and attitudes are governed by social identities

developed at work which in turn are influenced by gender. How men and women experience similar situations can present differences which can only be attributed to a gendered perception. Throughout this discussion the sense that women remain outsiders in management is persistent and this is evident in the descriptions of competition shared by the managers in this study. Whether through the use of language like ‘bulls in a china shop’ or references to ‘being outwardly aggressive’ men appear more comfortable across competitive environments, explaining why they may be described as being ‘more honest’ about being competitive by women.

Conclusion

In this chapter the eight dimensional model is applied to the managers stories to create a competition matrix to demonstrate how the managers perceive, experience and understand competition. The matrix acts as a useful device for thinking about how perceptions and experiences of competition can shift within an organisation over time and have an impact on how organisational cultures develop. The matrix then becomes the basis to develop the player, careerist and frustrated typographies which while simplistic act as means of engaging the different dimensions of competition. What emerges in this chapter is how competition is practiced and developed in different management styles and how success, confidence and gender differences intersect particularly in the symbolic, positional and internal dimensions of competition.

What becomes apparent from the managers’ stories is how one’s hierarchical position is an important factor in recognising the attitudes and behaviours prevalent in an organisation. What is interesting however is that such organisational knowledge and wisdom usually only comes from the experience. It is almost like a ‘rite of passage’ only recognised with the practice of positional power. The senior managers in my study acknowledge how they noticed in themselves a new level of confidence with reaching senior positions highlighting how within each tier of the management hierarchy, success feeds confidence and vice versa.

Symbolic competition is a pivotal dimension of the competition model as this is the site where individual values and beliefs are most likely to be located and able to be examined in relation to many aspects of work and organisational culture. For women especially sexuality remains a highly influential factor bound in multiple layers of observation and experience pervading how they perceive and develop competitive relations at work. The mix of progressive and regressive attitudes and behaviours found operating concurrently in some organisations can as found in my study cause isolation and confusion for women particularly as they combat well established policy and legislation with the day to day reality of informal gendered practices.

The gender relations between women as found in this study are increasingly becoming a site of tension as the management pipeline now operating for a number of decades continues to deliver women into this arena. With the scenario of more women in management for longer, come many layers of different experiences which equates with more diverse views of organisations, competition, success and other women. This aspect of management is one which could be interesting to explore in future research.

Chapter Eight

Gender, competition and management

I was asked to join the so-called 'Equality' Committee when I first joined the BBC – it had been set up to make sure that women and ethnic minorities got promoted. I thought it a complete waste of time and said I was sorry but regarded signing up to an equality agenda as a backward step. In my book I already belonged to the superior sex! I never bothered to get involved in anything specifically to do with women – a complete waste of time. We must not be treated as a special category if we are to compete and succeed in the workplace.

Janet Street-Porter, 2008: 110

In this chapter my study's main findings are outlined in relation to the research question - how and in what ways is competition in management gendered? The discussion explores how my investigation contributes to further understanding discourses in management which can impede gender equality. Breaking down the competition stereotype that promotes zero-sum winning and by default losing, was an important focus for my study. Further to this was the aim of dispelling the idea that competition is one dimensional and static but rather it is dynamic and functions across multiple dimensions. The first section draws on one of the five research sub-questions outlined in chapter one: Do men and women managers perceive and experience competition and competitive relations differently?

The patterns of experiences the managers shared in my study highlighted how the two main frameworks being drawn upon to guide their interaction with competition at work are limited. For those managers drawing upon sporting contexts of competition as their main point of reference, the foundation is undoubtedly solid but limited by the lack of discussion about the differences between sporting and working arenas. However what this study finds is that the sporting foundation for competition is certainly advantageous because it is driven by the fundamental recognition that competition is dynamic.

For those managers who adhere to the concept of healthy competition the limitation is founded on a lack of definition which often results in disappointment for those who draw up this framework. The eight dimensional competition model has proved in my study to offer a useful framework enabling the dynamism of competition to be captured, identified and defined. The model has been instrumental in providing me with the tools to unravel how managers' experiences and perceptions of competition present a new lens through which to explore gender inequality in management.

The second section of this chapter discusses the findings which demonstrate how the different dimensions of competition can intersect and draws upon the two questions: What is the relationship between competition and success and/or failure in terms of career development/pathways/trajectories? And, is engaging with competition and competitive relations at work mandatory and if it is, what effect does this have on workplace and career choices and the wellbeing of the worker? By analysing the interacting dimensions of the competition model insights into structural, attitudinal and behavioural aspects of organisations can be illuminated. This contributes to increasing our understanding and continued evaluation of why gender equality in management remains an on-going issue.

Section three discusses competition in the context of gender and management which resonates with the research question: How do competitive relations at work affect relationships between individuals of the same gender and those of different genders? It is clear from the women managers in my study that their working environments are laden with a mix of precarious situations. Different to their male counterparts the women managers are judged not just on their ability to perform their positional role but also against a highly subjective range of criteria by other women. Whether as superior, peer or subordinate women remain visible at work by their difference from the male manager norm and this aspect of gender relations has elements of competitive relations which as this study finds can result in tensions across different dimensions of competition.

This study finds that how managers approach management can produce pivotal experiences for those they manage. In the career biographies of the managers

some reported transformative experiences of being managed which were instrumental in laying the foundation for their own successful management career. For others their experiences of being managed were negative and resulted in a lack of confidence in terms of building successful working relationships. The connection between managers and competition as this study finds, is similar to other organisational issues and policies. Managers, especially middle managers, are both the instrument and barometer for influencing how competition is understood and experienced by their teams. In response to this finding I would propose that the eight dimensional competition model has proved to be a good framework for analysing competition at work in this study and could be usefully presented as a management tool.

8.1 Engaging with competition

The managers' individual accounts generally support this study's hypothesis that competition in management is generally ill-defined, largely in-articulated but widely understood in terms of the scarcity and challenge models. There are three main streams of thought emerging from the managers in this study which highlight the spectrum of ways individuals engage, often unconsciously with elements of competition and competitive relations. The first group report that they do not engage with competition at work beyond what is deemed necessary to carry out their jobs. For the second group (mostly women) who have a basic consciousness of competition at work the discourse of healthy competition dominates their approach. The third group is distinct from the other two as managers (mostly men, and the smallest group) who consciously interact with competition. What this group reports is how sport and competition is their foundational framework of experience from which they understand and develop competition at work.

8.1.1 Rules of the game

The role of competition as revealed in the accounts of managers is not always visible and can lurk in the suggestions of games and rules which are often referred to without specific location or definable guidelines. This was also referred to in Blackaby's et al (1999) study of senior women and in Oakley's study of gender-based barriers to senior management positions (2000). The

reference back to sport where the scarcity and challenge models are found as discussed in the early chapters confirms the hypothesis made in this study that competition is generally understood within the confines of sporting scenarios. This is reinforced by one senior manager in this study who strongly suggests that learning about competition comes from playing sport or being part of a team activity in childhood and early adulthood. Although there appears to be a relationship between sport and competition which becomes a starting point for competition at work, examining this in detail is beyond the remit of this project but does suggest an area for future research.

References among the participants in this study to management as ‘the game’ suggests that there are rules and identifying and defining these may be revealing. Beth is responsible for managing a number of sales teams which keeps her active and at the coalface of the business. She is a confident individual who knows her job, her industry and is commercially experienced. Beth makes it clear she views the marketplace as a battleground that favours men more than women. She suggests the rules of the game are more often undefined for women placing them at a disadvantage. Beth suggests that men and women compete differently in terms of the rules, who sets them and who knows what they are. As a manager, Beth believes it’s important to teach subordinates that these rules exist, explaining that although sometimes indefinable they will be at least equipped to recognise when they are active. McDowell (1997) and Marshall (1995) report similar instances in their studies of high achieving woman who attributed their success in part to senior women managers who shared with them basic guidelines of how organisations operate. Although Beth describes the rules as ‘not being like rocket science’, she says you do need someone to tell you as you it is very difficult to work it out yourself.

Beth: Look men and women compete differently men can put one over you as they know the rules better.

Int: What rules do you mean?

Beth: Those undefined rules that are all around us. I tell my teams to be careful because competition is not the same thing to everyone. Some people see it as negative and may not be able to stand up to it. But whoever and

whatever, you have to always be looking to see what games people are playing on the inside and the outside.

The acceptance that there are rules in organisations and management, often referred to as unspoken, underlie their general inaccessibility and highlight inequalities in accessibility for all to the same information. The value of a manager's experience repeatedly suggests that recognising sites of tension and prejudice can result in a measure of knowledge that allows for more informed strategies to overcome, bypass or merely accept situations.

8.1.2 Sport and competition: an exemplar for managers

Some of the managers in this study when discussing competition and competitive relations at work used the language of sport and sporting analogies. There is also evidence to suggest that the unspoken rules which managers refer to in this and other studies (White: 2000, Rindfleish: 2002) are an important aspect of the relationship between competition and sport which extends into the work environment.

The main difference as argued in this study is that while sport offers widespread access to competition, competition found on the sports field has agreed and enforceable rules which does not as discussed earlier translate into the workplace. However this does not mean that the sporting arena is not a useful place to learn about elements and dimensions of competition as David discusses.

David: Sport is a very pure form of competition in a very defined set of rules. In other environments competition is less well defined.

Int: Do you think playing sport is a good place to learn about competition?

David: I think people who have been involved in team activities definitely have a huge advantage in competition at work.

Int: Is it just in sport?

David: It doesn't have to be sports, it can be part of a musical band or a scout troop but you have to learn about interdependence, learn about teams and you can't learn about this from books. I think you have to experience it,

you need to lean both individual and team issues. Sport does teach this and it is an advantage but it is not the only place.

Int: What sort of advantage to you mean?

David: One thing you have to learn is both winning and losing. You don't win all the time and it's alright to lose, it's not the end of the world, it just happens. Where you learn about competition isn't important, it is the fact that you do learn it.

To compete on more equal terms in management hierarchies, the sporting model offers some learning opportunities for women which are already widely used by men. That men and women perceive and experience competition in different ways suggests that the starting point for understanding and practicing competition is not the same. Richman and Shaffer (2000) argue that participation in sports is neither encouraged nor reinforced for women as it is for men, this suggests that the gateway to understanding competition is accessible, just not widely advertised to women. Kelinske et al (2001) found in their study that there were no socialisation differences between men and women. They suggest that 'women who play sports seem to have the same advantage as men in terms of fostering competitive behaviour, learning to be a team player, perseverance and networking' (Kelinske, 2001: 82). The advantage referred to in Kelinske's study is important to this study as it reinforces the value of learning about competition in the sporting context which was found in the accounts of some managers in my study. Suggesting that women and sport exist in a sporadic vacuum which randomly brings it into the lives of some women and not others continues to highlight how gendered processes can result in constraints which can continue unchallenged.

8.1.3 The misdirection of engaging with healthy competition

The taboo of competition particularly for women as discussed by Coward (2000) and Longino and Miner (1987) is also found to be active in my study potentially acting as an impediment to engaging fully with the dynamics of the work environment with one manager referring to competition 'as a necessary evil.' Understanding specifically how the dynamic of competition operates for managers is, as I have argued, important to assessing how it influences gender

equality. The reliance on healthy competition as a framework used by a significant number of women managers in this study is an important contribution for explaining how competition is gendered. The process and outcomes of healthy competition I have discovered are flawed for two reasons. Firstly is the generally communicated assumption that healthy competition is widely held and understood as an approach to competition. The second reason comes from the practice of healthy competition which is reported by some managers in this study as resulting in varying degrees of isolation and disappointment. Finding that healthy competition is at best an idealistic notion of ‘doing the right thing’, this study highlights the value of individuals to start with understanding that competition is a multidimensional dynamic. Breaking down the taboo of competition by using healthy competition as a framework for engagement is an in-adequate response.

8.2 Moving competition beyond winning and losing

Developing and using the eight dimensional competition model has been instrumental to defining each of the dimensions (personal, interpersonal, internal, external, symbolic, positional, temporal and collective). The framework offered by the competition model has enabled an exploration and analysis of how the dimensions function and interact which has been crucial to my study. To suggest that a single dimension of competition can act in isolation is to suggest that competition is not dynamic. In my thesis I have argued that the process of defining competition and its multiple dimensions when examined alongside the experiences and stories of managers offers a positive contribution to discussions of gender equality in management.

8.2.1 The comfort of external competition

In my study, the managers as a group were keenly aware of external competition and their role in representing the organisation to deliver a performance which contributes to its on-going success. External competition was found to be intrinsically embedded in a three way relationship between the manager, the organisation and the wider commercial world. While this outcome was readily shared and communicated by the managers in this study similar outcomes with the other dimensions of competition did not result. The relationship between

external and personal competition is keenly felt by the managers who repeatedly describe their personal sense of responsibility to the organisation and their position. The further up the hierarchy one goes an increased sense of responsibility is found, superceding other considerations such as being concerned with the judgements of peers and subordinates. The ease with which managers spoke of 'doing their best, securing more business and commanding market leader type positions in their industry', demonstrates how when competition and competitive relations are disembodied as found in external competition, a comfortable relationship is described. The currency and practice of external competition was generally agreed by the managers as being somewhat separate from other competitive dimensions, whether or not these dimensions were consciously acknowledged.

The first level response of managers sharing their perceptions of competition often described a general concept which centres on a dichotomy of winning and losing. This highlights how considering competition as dualism is limited, and confirms the proposition made in this study that competition is largely invisible and in-articulated among managers and across management hierarchies. The grounded theory framework used for building accounts of competition gained depth and breadth throughout the interviewing process. As the managers, with some probing, moved past first level responses to competition they often enacted a process of exploration and interpretation from which their own rich and diverse experiences emerged. This process was further informed by a small group of managers interviewed who did engage with multiple dimensions of competition demonstrating how the dynamic can be motivating and challenging. However it remains that clarity in defining multiple dimensions of competition is rarely addressed by managers regardless of whether or not they are engaging with one or more dimensions in their working lives.

8.2.2 Personal competition: a popular starting point

Personal competition is the most frequently identified dimension by the managers in this study after external competition. Through the examination of accounts of personal competition it was found that by not connecting one dimension with another presents limitations for managers in considering how

and in what ways competition may be practiced. For Pat, Sandra and Eve, who engage with personal competition as a means of self-development, a sense of understanding that competition is dynamic is apparent. However, despite reaching this point Sandra and Eve remain fixed on only developing this dimension appearing unaware or unprepared to engage any further. Pat is different, with the majority of her career spent in the cut-throat world of advertising where competition operates across multiple dimensions, she consciously decided to change environment to lessen the dominance of competitive relations. She has reduced her engagement with the dynamic, although it is evident that she misses the fast world of advertising, albeit momentarily as she shares the value of having time to experience other activities. It became apparent that the managers who identify and use personal competition as a means of benchmarking their own progress do not necessarily consider how they would answer the question - are you competitive?

8.2.3 Temporal competition: an opportunity to think about time

Although it is evident from the accounts of the men and women in this study that some similar experiences and perceptions of competition and competitive relations are shared, when gender enters the arena differences become more distinctive and acute. Temporal competition is perhaps the site where gender is distinctly visible reinforcing social stereotypes and traditional roles such as men go to work and women stay at home. This highlights how for too long men have been employed as managers with an expectation that organisations are employing one and a half people, the half referring to a woman fulfilling the domestic elements. Beck (2000) explains that as the 'monogamous work society' has become more open, structures, attitudes and behaviours which support multiple activities for individuals require some transformation. This study argues alongside Sirriani et al (2000), Simpson (1998) and Hochschild (1997) that temporal competition is an important site to fuel such changes and therefore demands more active engagement with how time works across all elements of production and reproduction.

The women managers studied were more conscious of the multiple facets of temporal competition compared to the men managers who focused largely on

time at work and how this met their positional responsibilities. The women certainly shared perceptions that men use temporal competition for example presenteeism and long hours as tactics to demonstrate organisational commitment and to facilitate a view which distinguishes men as positively different to women. Experiences of stress and work colliding appeared most visible in the 'I'm too busy' discourse which was both used and challenged by some managers, including Zoe, who admitted to using it herself as an excuse or strategy to avoid conflict or confrontation both inside and outside of work. The spectrum and comparison of interpretations around time uncovered by managers as they experienced different attitudes in different organisations showed how some organisations can promote cultures of hard work exaggerating them by a suggesting a necessity for long hours. Felicity had direct experience of this type of approach demonstrating how temporal competition can be manipulated to encourage a zero sum game between the manager and the organisation. She left one company where long hours were embedded in the culture, finding that upon moving to another company working past 5.35pm was considered not only unnecessary but detrimental to all workers (including managers) and therefore the organisation.

Organisational commitment within the framework of temporal competition can be a catalyst which thrusts women managers into management 'no man's land', particularly those managers with children. For the women managers who accept early in their careers the requirement for commitment as a means of demonstrating their ambition, a culture of being married to the organisation prevails. However as life stages evolve, questions over long term commitment can change. Susan, Grace, Fran and Ella were particularly conscious of this culture and had seen a number of their women manager colleagues leave because the organisation did not allow for changes in people's lives, especially around having children.

However not all managers subscribe to the idea that management and motherhood is achievable or even compatible and as Sarah attests, people with children can place too much burden on workers without families. The incompatibility for organisations to have managers with more than one major

commitment in their lives continues to question whether there can be gender equality in management. Subsequently the question as to whether the 'hidden brain drain' can be reclaimed as a productive resource for the labour market could be asked. Temporal competition as discussed in chapter five is often at the centre of work and non-work collisions affecting primarily women managers by highlighting their gender and associated social roles of manager, carer and mother. Competition and competitive relations can as a result of changing elements of careers have an impact on managers particularly women who as found in this study often experience temporal competition as the dominant dimension in their reality. Temporal competition in my study strongly suggests a good framework for understanding the needs of managers who have caring responsibilities including children and further examination could be influential in exploring the mismatches between traditional and modern career models.

8.2.4 Practising temporal competition

Building on Martin's (2003, 2006) work which argues that gendered practices are not always intentional and can co-exist with other determinants, Connell (2003) argues that the collective practices of an organisation or workforce can create gender effects. For example long hours as a prerequisite for management promotion can disadvantage women particularly those who cannot commit to the double dose of work and care. Martin argues that gender has a social structure with practices which encompasses multiple meanings, actions, behaviours, identities and discourses which are 'fluid and shifting, yet robust and persisting' (Martin 2003: 345). The practices involved in temporal competition as found in my study are highly visible as they focus on the two factors of time and presence both of which are impossible to avoid. It is in this dimension of competition whose essence is easy to interpret as fixed and immovable that a framework for understanding the multiple roles of individuals at work and outside work. This presents an opportunity for engaging with the possibilities for change across work and society. While there are more examples of top down initiatives of temporal competition moving away from a zero-sum game such as found in the example at Ernst and Young quoted in chapter five. The road to transformation is undoubtedly long and complex. However until time as Adam (2003) and Gerson et al (2004) argue is viewed as fluid and shifting then how managers work is

likely to continue in the existing patterns constrained by static temporal structures which dominate organisations.

8.2.5 Relationships: the essence of positional competition

How relationships develop at work among superiors, peers and subordinates are influenced by positional attitudes and behaviour and how one person experiences an organisation in terms of their position can depend upon the relationships they have encountered throughout their career. In this study the managers shared accounts of positive and negative relationships with colleagues which had been influential in how they developed their own management style. While some organisations were clear about the requirements for external and internal competition this was only in one instance written into a policy. In this investigation it was found that there was strong link between the length of time a manager spends in an organisation with an understanding of how expectations and relationships are constructed, creating some advantage to how they approach their role. This includes being able to accurately interpret the standards an organisation sets for measuring success in terms of managers and staff which although openly stated in job descriptions do not always reflect the unspoken practices expected, including as some managers in this study suggest, a degree of circumspection.

Management requires a skill base that is broad and flexible and develops through the experiences gained from operating as a manager (Martin: 2005, Margretta: 2002) interacting and responding to changes in life stages and career developments. The relationship a manager has with their organisation changes over time as hierarchies are climbed and markets challenge new ways of working. As individuals take on a much greater share of the responsibility for their own career planning and development, the relationships fostered in working scenarios can be very important in achieving the opportunities required to reach identified goals. Wajcman and Martin (2002) use and define the term 'market narrative' to describe 'how managers understand and explain their career paths and to account for their future choices' (Wajcman et al, 2002: 999). As Reich states, 'Now you owe your career to yourself. Financial success depends on how well you sell you. Selling yourself can be a full time job' (Reich 2000: 133). He

recommends that connections are key to meeting a person's working objectives and definitions of success. The majority of managers in this study have been with their current organisation for between one and five years which suggests some stability and commitment although loyalty in the traditional 'job for life' sense was not evident.

The managers were generally found to agree that amassing a rich tapestry of different experiences as individuals was important to creating a career which could withstand both predictable and unpredictable changes. Martha's account is a good illustration of how this study finds that managers draw upon their own observations and experiences for wisdom and direction. What also emerges is how a manager's instincts usually override analysis.

Martha: In my experience with some adversity in business also comes some blessings and to overcome it you need to make sure your head is on right and definitely work the management part with your team because you can't do it solo, there's just no other way, so a good business has to have a good manager. I've hit the wall a few times about management things but you know we all do.

Women managers are increasingly taking their place within management hierarchies of organisations and for some the road has been smooth. For others it is a story of structural, attitudinal and behavioural impediments gradually negotiated as found in Marshall's (1995) of why women managers leave their jobs. However the male manager norm found in many organisations continues the contribution of gender to the experience of women as managers and remains an important consideration as discussed by Acker (2000) in her own experiences of managing an equity project. Although women and men managers have made progress in working together, some women managers as cited in this project continue to face the same barriers and experiences found in the glass ceiling, glass walls and sticky floor debates. Concurrently, women managers also appear to be increasingly adroit at analysing and understanding their position in their management environment while negotiating difficult situations when work is not always a hospitable place to be as also suggested by Davidson and Burke (2000)

and Horlick (1997). However I have found in my study that the time and energy spent on such analysis can present a barrier to focussing on other work related dynamics such as competition and competitive relations.

8.2.6 Relationships with internal and interpersonal competition

How competitive relations interact at work for managers with subordinates, peers and superiors across a range of functions can respond to a spectrum of environments and scenarios. Whether a manager is seeking to secure a promotion, be included on a particular project or vying for additional resources to build a team often requires navigating internal and interpersonal dimensions of competition. The complexities involved in juggling organisational needs, the needs of a manager's current position and longer term career can be difficult. What emerged from these interactions were the two repertoires 'my relationship with organisational structures' and 'my portfolio of relationships at work'. These were discussed in chapter six. For example, Amy the longest serving manager studied explains how, with time, she has developed the tactics required to lessen the number of surprises which the organisation can level at her, allowing her to progress with a lot less stress.

The attitudinal and behavioural practices, as Lois, John and Eve point out, revert to a framework of temporal competition where managers use time as a means of exerting authority over other peers and subordinates. Elaine specifically refers to the 'double sided' relationship with men managers who publicly adhere to dominant organisational gendered practices like marginalising women managers while privately supporting them as peers and superiors acknowledging their isolation. This suggests that a manager's position in the hierarchy can be influential in determining how they respond to competitive relations accepting that in order to succeed it is important to be perceived as complying with dominant organisational cultures and practices. Managers John and Peter illustrate how they do not consider their position in terms of their gender only by its function. For Clem, Esther and Elaine who have a history of gendered experiences this is an unrealistic notion. While the diverse experiences of the managers offer insights into their careers the gendered perspective too often

remains the women's perspective and is an exemplar of why introducing different lens such as competition can inform perceptions beyond gender.

8.2.7 Collective competition: not quite delivering the keys to the club

How important role models and mentors are in career development can depend largely on individuals and their interest and commitment to developing such relationships. All the managers studied had experiences of informal mentoring which may add weight to the relationships because of the element of choice involved from both parties. Formalised programmes were not discussed except to dismiss them as unavailable within any of the organisations where the managers worked. In line with Burke et al's (1997) discussion the relationship between success and a mentor was not one which was found in the manager's accounts in my study. However it was notable how the majority of the managers in the study included mentoring as an important and valuable aspect in their management style. However in line with other studies (Ibarra: 1993, Coe: 1992) the value of relationships within networks was considered important especially during the time it takes to climb the first few rungs of the management hierarchy.

Mark who manages an all-male team commented that networking was considered part of the job for younger members of his team, particularly those in their 20's and 30's. After this time when it was suggested that a career was considered by the organisation as stable, so networking became increasingly selective and optional, especially outside standard working hours. This suggests that during those ten or so years when careers are being developed networking is viewed by some organisations as an informal requirement, for men at least. This presupposes of course that platforms to engage in networking are available to join and participate in - on both counts women continue to be excluded from male networks.

Having the opportunity to practice and learn from experienced and successful individuals who are willing to teach younger members about the rules of the game was cited by a number of managers as advantageous to learning about competition. Beth particularly was committed to teaching young women how to recognise competition and competitive relations to enable them to learn how

systems work even if, as she suggests, access to some competitions are restricted to membership of networks. Zoe also agrees saying that men have more opportunity to practice competitive relations because they simply have more platforms including sport to learn, which allows them to be better equipped to control and manage competitive relations at work.

The choices made in terms of what types of relationship are important in career development appear to be governed by availability as discussed by Markiewicz et al (1999) who looks at how different friendships and develop over the early stages of careers. For men who occupy positions horizontally and vertically the opportunities to form relationships with other men in similar and more senior roles are much more apparent than they are for women. The role of same gender relationships in management has historically been the domain of men and this continues encouraged by attitudes and behaviours which support this both inside and outside organisational structures. For women replicating successful male only relationships does not appear to be working to the same extent highlighting the 'newcomer' status of women managers. While there are a growing number of women networks the women managers in this study did not participate in them except when invited or corporately involved. There was a marked absence of experiences and recommendations of any such networks by the women managers studied.

8.2.8 Symbolic competition: good managers' help develop good managers

The relationships which proved to be most important and influential to the managers and were discussed in most detail were those with superiors. Generally these relationships were reported to have direct connections to the value of having good managers and being a good manager. At each stage of the managers' careers the relationship with their line manager and superiors was quoted as being pivotal to learning and skill development. Clem, Martha and Angela were particularly enthusiastic about the supportive and instructive male bosses they each had in their present positions. Relationships with their team were also important to the managers in my study, particularly senior managers who were conscious of how they were perceived by their subordinates. Amy reported how she was somewhat pleasantly surprised with the respect the

members of her team displayed to her and her position especially in the way she executed the necessary and not always pleasant aspects of her role. Mark also commented how one of his challenges as a manager was to ensure he was developing the knowledge and experiences of his intelligent and skilled team. The action of managing and continuing to engage with symbolic competition to challenge and develop one's own values and beliefs was found to be important for many of the managers in my study.

The ability of some women managers to overcome structural, behavioural and attitudinal obstacles to career progress has demonstrated their increasingly sophisticated approach to organisations even when they have not always welcomed as managers. The group of pioneering women managers who have been instrumental in breaking down some of the stereotypes which Schein (1975, 1992) has studied over time have been rewarded with contributing to greater opportunities for women to reach senior management. However progress is repeatedly being reported (EOC: 2007, Catalyst: 2005, Wittenberg-Cox et al: 2009) as static particularly in the upper echelons of management and the relationship between confidence and progress has not seemingly transferred along the pipeline.

That some women managers struggle with confidence, a situation experienced by a group of women in this study evidently continues to be an issue over the period of a career, even with promotion and experience. Other studies including Catalyst (2005) who explore the impact of gender based stereotypes on women's careers and Grey et al (2004) who examined the IT sector and the role of contracting report similar issues around confidence. For women manager's confidence appears to come from other people at work including subordinates, peers and superiors and has strong links with acknowledgement. The women managers in this study suggest they do not experience the same degree of acknowledgment from such a widespread array of sources as men and identify this as a contributory factor. Whether this process of acknowledgement is something that happens in the early days of a career is unclear but the perception of some women is that men benefit from such attention throughout their careers. However what emerges in the accounts is that as time goes on some women

recognise that confidence comes from within and can be approached like any other skill which in developing requires practice and analysis to perfect. The self-sufficiency which these accounts testify to are found running through the body of work on gender in management including Kanter (1977), Rindfleish (2000), Schwartz (1992) and Street-Porter (2008) who also show how women remain pioneers at work adapting in line with what is available to reach the target or objective desired.

The relationship between being a pioneer, working at a persona of confidence and experiencing some degree of isolation is not so surprising to find in the accounts of women managers. Significantly a number of the women here shared some experience of feeling isolated at work also admitted to the negative impact this has on their confidence. Some women explained how any sense of isolation was further compounded by the lack of visible support from male peers who witnessed attitudes and behaviours of superiors directly connected to women and their gender and yet only offered support privately. For women to have to accept the double edged sword of continuing to be tokenised for being women and also having to accept only covert support from male colleagues is difficult to overcome.

8.2.9 Linking confidence and success

How success is understood differs from one manager to another and is often measured against how their superiors define success (Sturges: 1999). While organisations are usually clear about how success is measured internally with position and salary being the two main elements, the transformation from linear to more multi-directional careers in the western world has been influential in more varied measures of success. For a number of managers in this study who had either changed career direction, re-entered the labour market after leaving or had moved from the private to the public sector, their criteria of success had expanded.

However whatever the personal measures of success such as less stress, more time, increased variety or new challenges the managers generally agreed about some of the skills required to be successful managers and leaders. Particularly

notable was the widespread need for empathy often described as a feminine trait. While this suggests the people element of management is important it may also reflect that increasingly a more engaging management style is being practiced. Mark, a senior manager, suggests that empathy is a learned skill and whether women historically are better developed in the mastering this skill this does not alienate men from also embracing it into their management style. What is interesting about this approach is the suggestion that men as managers seek to be successful by accumulating the necessary resources excluding nothing which maybe relevant. Tenacity and energy were cited as important by some women managers highlighting perhaps a sense that a greater degree of commitment maybe required to overcome obstacles which are not necessarily apparent to men. With the landscape for careers changing examining the effect this has on how skills like tenacity are developed may be an area worth further examination to determine whether there is a relationship with gender.

8.2.10 Moving up the ladder, new challenges, new wisdom

While my study is interested in managers, it became clear in the different accounts that at each level of the management hierarchy new attitudes and behaviours are encountered. However in examining this aspect of promotion what became apparent is the surprise of the managers themselves experienced at the point of moving from middle to senior management, a position Ella, Amy and James found themselves at the time of being interviewed. In the move from middle to senior management there appears to be shift from manager to leader and with this a requirement to shape a leadership style which complements their existing management style. In this process it was made clear that the managers has reached a crossroads where they had to re-examine their working relationships to establish the right balance of authority and responsibility. There was also a notable recognition of engaging with personal competition as a source for motivation, an assessment of skills and a plan to strengthen their weaknesses. Mark and David, who have been senior managers for ten years, also spoke of how personal competition becomes more important the higher up the hierarchy one goes. They both agree that this happens in direct response to recognising that social and professional comparison becomes obsolete leaving a reliance on the individual to continually benchmark their own performance. The role of personal

competition comes full circle from earlier in this chapter where it was described as the starting point by a number of managers who recognised the value of this dimension of competition in their career development.

8.3 Competition, gender and management

Men and women managers in this study were found to perceive and experience the dimensions of competition and competitive relations in different ways in different situations. In the stories and accounts of individual women managers some issues emerged which are found in other gender and management studies. This includes the identification of a general lack of confidence as a reason for stalled careers and a sense of isolation usually encountered by women managers at some time in their career as a direct response to their gender. While competition as concept was accepted by women managers as a necessary element of 'doing business' the women managers as a group were found to be less likely than the men in this study to have spent time and energy considering competition as a dynamic.

8.3.1 The gender relations of women at work

Being a manager and a woman can result in being judged by other women in terms which can often fall outside the parameters of the position they hold. This became evident in the descriptions of the relationships between women managers, their women peers and subordinates where conflict was experienced. Some women in this study shared a range of experiences where they felt a sense of disappointment and anger in describing how they had observed the behaviour of other women managers. Such behaviours include a failure to act as role models, being openly ambitious and having heroic management styles. The expectations held by some women managers in this study suggest a perception that same gender presupposes compliance to an agreed gender equality agenda.

However the accounts illustrate how the expectations directed to women by other women are high and often well beyond what is directed towards their male counterparts. This distinction between how women and men are judged by women is important to this study and reinforces the complexities which some women managers can encounter both overtly and covertly. Women who look

directly to more senior women managers for guidance on what is possible and how it can be achieved do not as found in this study always get a positive result. On the other side as also found in the accounts it can be difficult for women managers who are making trade-offs to overcome attitudinal, behavioural and structural obstacles to achieve their ambitions to also meet the expectations they have of themselves as well as those directed towards them from other people. Amy and Liz especially share in their accounts how balancing their gender and a commitment to the feminist project can make them vulnerable to manipulation from male managers who seek to exaggerate the gender issue for their own ends.

Casting women managers who demonstrate ambition and the will to succeed as somehow behaving in an unacceptable manner continues to foster different standards for men and women. This can have a negative effect on junior managers who begin to realise that on the journey up the management hierarchy they too will become subject to the expectations they project onto their superiors. There are suggestions by some managers that this situation did act as a deterrent for them entering middle and senior management. What was surprising however is that there was no mention by the managers of wanting to become a manager in order to make changes and be part of a transformation process.

Continued re-emergence of queen bee related discourses are a reminder that women as a group still have to resolve the obstacles which are enforced by women-based stereotypes around ambition, commitment and success. Elaine's reference of some women squashing those who stand in their way illustrates how the queen bee syndrome continues to be describe those women managers who do not appear to subscribe to solidarity within the sisterhood (Rindfliesh: 2002).

Elaine: I have come across some women who are very open about wanting to reach the top and who make it very clear that you don't want to cross them or you will be squashed. This attitude I have always found quite sad because they end up looking petty to their colleagues and just plain intimidating to their staff. They do often have pretty high staff turnover which is hardly surprising really.

While it is likely in any organisation is that some individuals will practice management styles which are considered by some as innovative, others may consider them single-minded and cut-throat. While the gender of the manager should not be part of judgement this is not always the case in such situations. For as long as women managers continue to held to account for their actions in ways that men managers are not and are singled out as a problem especially by other women equality will continue to be allusive. Schein's (2007) argument discussed in chapter two that equality at work will not be achieved while current organisational structures are accepted, my study highlights how focusing the lens of competition on gender and management a contribution to re-claiming and re-examining the equality agenda within the management arena can take place.

8.3.2 Attitudes to management careers

Why individuals work has not changed for centuries - primarily fuelled by financial need. How individuals work is by contrast, complex. The intersection of the how and why of working is at the centre of this study using gender and competition as a lens to examine the behaviours and attitudes of managers. The thread which this study finds weaving through the practice of being a manager is the traditional career model which as Edwards et al (2005) argue remains intact in some organisations while it is becoming more flexible in other organisations. How gender intersects with management careers is highlighted in the situation of women with dependent children where tensions can be acute across work and home environments as found in Crompton's (1999) work on patterns of employment and gender in the banking and medical sectors. As Edwards states 'The developmental trajectory of a career is still designed to fit men's life course. Women's careers, which are generally 'broken' or 'interrupted' to have and to care for children, are thereby rendered not just different but deficient' (Edwards et al, 2005: 77).

Over the past thirty years the focus on how people work has encouraged wide ranging discussions about the future of work including how flexibility is instrumental for addressing a balance between home and work extending into family friendly policies including maternity and paternity leave. While some issues facing some women and men with children have progressed seen in

extended maternity, paternity and paternal leave legislation and policies, the issue of combining work and family continues to reinforce stereotypes that working women are a problem - unable to fit into the rigid organisations and their equally static temporal structures. In my study the role of temporal competition and the static temporal structures of organisations was widely identified with by all the managers on some level. However temporal competition was found to be most acute amongst the group of women with children or women thinking about starting a family who were wondering how to rationalise their future of combining care and career.

For many women as found in the growth of their participation rates in part time work in the UK and Australia exemplifies how attempts to reorganise working patterns has not fully resolved the issue of women working and having a family. The 'hidden brain drain' as discussed in chapter five as an outcome of this scenario continues to push a notion that the majority of women fall into a classification of 'adaptives' as Hakim (2000) in her Preference Theory. However while only one manager in this study worked part time this decision came only after having her third child who had some special needs. There was no sense from any of the managers that part time working in any capacity was a future consideration while recognising that the choices and constraints were at best likely, at worst inevitable.

Suggestions by Baruch (2004) that linear careers would be replaced by portfolio careers has arguably made less impact in society than the rise of small business enterprises particularly amongst women as found in the study by Still and Timms (2000) who found a 'do it yourself' response to combining care and career as discussed in chapter two. While linear career models continue to dominate the labour market, what has changed is that workers generally no longer expect a job for life. This results however in an increased demand for individuals to ensure they continue to develop their skills and stay engaged with the labour market to ensure they have some control over their career. In such an environment of individualised career development the role of competition could be expected to increase as Beck (2002) suggests yet as this study shows this is not such a straightforward conclusion.

8.3.3 Is the gender and management landscape really changing?

Within organisations management as a discipline has seen a number of modifications which have had an impact on this landscape. Firstly middle and senior managers are more likely to have a postgraduate qualification (in my study the majority had this) shown in the increase of business schools in the UK and other western hemisphere countries. Secondly more women than ever before are managers, yet they remain distinctly absent from the upper echelons. They also continue to be paid less than their male counterparts. These two factors highlight how progress on gender equality in management appears static and too focused on barriers rather than solutions propagating the ‘fix the woman’ scenario found for example in chapter seven where old issues such as sexuality continued to be active in the experiences of some managers. While the barriers and obstacles to gender equality in management continue to be a focus for researchers and practitioners the pipeline still leaks (Catalyst: 2009) suggesting more work has to be done alongside developing new ways of thinking about equality in management.

Appearing out of the often stagnant and circular arguments in the equality debate is the notion Kelan (2009) describes as ‘gender fatigue’. Whether this is directly as response to those who believe that women are now embedded in management and require no further consideration in terms of policy, legislation and practice or those who comment about ‘banging the same drum’ or ‘banging their head against the wall’ when it comes to equality. What is interesting is the notable change of language around gender and equality replaced by diversity and inclusion. Whether this change meets the needs of women as one half of the population is difficult to resolve and can be instrumental in re-igniting the women as ‘other’ argument discussed in chapter two. Such a strategy while it may serve minority groups can too easily be implemented to disregard women while enabling men to maintain the status quo of power and leadership.

8.3.4 Leveraging competition as a lens for change

There is some evidence in this and other studies (Coward: 1992, DeBoer: 2004, McDowell: 1997) that women managers' are more reluctant to fully and consciously engage with competition than their male counterparts. The in-articulation by many managers around meanings of competition suggests that any distinct advantage of actively engaging with competition could be temporary and limited. Being open to competition operating in multiple ways and in multiple relationships is where those managers who do engage with the concept appear to have an additional strand to their management mind-set which as suggested in my study can positively influence success factors and career progression. The managers' interviewed in this study presented a range of initial responses when the concept of competition (winning and losing) was their first response and it is testament to them how readily they overcame their own preconceptions of competition to re-examine the concept.

For my study the main research question, 'is competition gendered', has taken up this challenge to find a new way of looking at the environment of gender and management. To investigate the research question tools including the eight dimensional model, the matrix and the typographies were developed to firstly identify competition as a dynamic and secondly as having multiple dimensions. To identify competition as that lens shows how a concept largely accepted by managers as inherent in markets and in organisations does not, as this study finds, translate into a concept which every manager understands beyond the dualism of winning and losing. To find that competition in management is gendered is to support and add to the large body of research and debate which finds organisational structures, behaviours and attitudes are gendered. Throughout this study the stories of these managers echo the stories of other managers in other studies (Kingsmill: 2001, Mallon et al: 2001 and McKenna: 1997) repeatedly suggesting that women are still newcomers to this environment of hierarchies and the in-articulated protocols which too often support the development and success of men and not women.

What has continued to be integral to the structure of my study has been the importance of defining competition as dynamic and multidimensional. Further to

this has been the value of building a series of eight dimensions and their definitions to provide a framework for engagement which supercedes what has been found in this study to be limited as discussed earlier. Bradley whose work I have drawn upon in this study argues that ‘It is harder for those in receipt of privileges to accept they have attained these because of their gender, class or ethnic attributes, rather than because of their own individual efforts...If women are indeed to be equal competitors, then men see their own chance of promotion and economic advantage weakened’ (Bradley, 1999: 74). This reinforces the value of transparency which can only be leveraged when definitions are clearly stated.

As my study has shown in developing the eight dimensional competition model, a singular definition of competition is inadequate for achieving parity between men and women at work. While my study finds that the managers who did not consciously interact with competition were still enjoying successful careers it is important to acknowledge that their unconscious interactions with competition were often bound in the advantages of education, social and geographical mobility. The contribution this study makes to the gender and management body of work is to demonstrate how using a different lens like competition can produce new knowledge and new interpretations of existing knowledge. While the notion of competition is generally acknowledged by managers, the value of this lens only comes from using a model with defined dimensions to explore attitudes and behaviours which may be consciously or unconsciously be practicing gender. To draw attention back to the sporting context the success of sport proves that transparent rules and defined and agreed guidelines enable the opportunity for effective practices which can result in strong performances by teams and individuals.

Those managers who did not have a grounding or experience in competitive situations as this study shows are less likely to be comfortable or understand competitive behaviour in others. In my study this scenario is more often found in women managers. What becomes clear from the managers experiences however is that the intersection of elements such as behaviours, attitudes and structures often imbedded in organisations and their hierarchies are active in gendering

competition. This study encourages men and women managers to engage with competition beyond their current level of engagement by suggesting that competition may provide them with another angle from which to assess their own managerial experiences. In many instances it is the organisation which continues to maintain the advantage whether it is around temporal competition or external competition both dimensions which are readily identified with by men and women managers.

8.3.5 The art of management

What constitutes a good leader as Sinclair (2000) and Gosling and Mintzberg (2003) all comment often gains more attention and discussion than analysing what makes a good manager. Yet in this study as discussed in the previous chapter the managers were generally committed to making distinctions between good and bad managers, analysing the positive and negative impact this can have on career development. The link between how gender and competition may be understood and practiced in attitudes and behaviours at work is evidently tied to how managers teach and guide their subordinates.

Whether being gender and/or competition blind are conscious or unconscious positions the influence on perpetuating attitudes and behaviours which can impact on individuals' experiences of working in organisations can vary in their significance. The repertoire 'the story of my career so far' discussed in chapter six examines how individual experiences of similar events and career paths can be at opposite ends of a spectrum with gendering being a much more active component of women managers' stories. Whether managers choose to be ignorant or blind (Wilson: 1996) to gender and/or competition at work, or take the view that while they agree such dynamics exist put the caveat that 'if it's not happening to me then I will not consider it', I argue throughout my thesis that such positions should be actively challenged to enable attitudes and behaviours to be more transparent.

Pat and Mark highlight how important it is to be active in the pursuit of information and suggest that engaging with internal and external networks are therefore necessary. This strategy is based on the premise that knowledge is

power, a concept which Felicity also reports as being important. How a manager presents themselves in terms of information gathering and giving is important to how they embrace their position and their relationship with the organisation. The senior managers studied make a very clear distinction between the levels of hierarchy and suggest that the move from middle to senior management is a leap much greater than they anticipated. The practices mastered in middle management often did not fit with senior roles and required new approaches offering individuals a unique opportunity to appraise their management style before embarking on merging this with an emerging leadership style.

The idea that men can embody an image of confidence, which surprisingly does not always relate to position, age and experience, confounds how and where such confidence originates. In this study a number of reasons were identified by Grace, Ella and Felicity who used their own positions to discuss how men and women managers differ with women more often citing a lack of confidence. Firstly, male managers within their gender group have a vast number of examples of success - a key resource to help assemble an identity which fits the individual and their desired environment. Secondly, male managers largely are not defined by their gender in the same way as women managers and consequently do not expend energy on assimilating and rationalising their gendered experiences. Thirdly, male managers have more opportunities to get support in building confidence merely by being able to have one focus – work compared with women who too often remain bound by domestic and caring responsibilities.

8.4 The strengths and weaknesses of the study

The main strength of this study is also its weakness - the subject of competition. To propose investigating a subject as ill-defined as competition does in the first instance demand the development of a framework which allows the process of defining to gain traction within the research project. While the value of addressing competition and devising a model of eight dimensions; personal, interpersonal, external, internal, positional, symbolic, collective and temporal is an important aspect of this study, there are limitations in using a model which suggests a finite list. In devising and defining the dimensions of competition a

criticism which could be levelled at the study is the wide range of literature and debates which were drawn upon. However this issue highlights the merits of a finite list in constructing the competition model. While taking an interdisciplinary approach to my study could arguably lessen the levels of critical analysis which could be undertaken, the wide range of texts examined I would suggest are a counterbalance unravelling competition and making it more accessible. Although at times this process may appear to produce unnecessary content I would argue that without such an approach competition and the model of dimensions would not be as comprehensive. In my view this framework sustains the interdisciplinary nature of thinking and discovery which is at the heart of the gender and management body of work. However while I accept such a criticism, I would argue that when breaking new ground finding studies which can contribute to the discussion requires drawing upon a wide search and an open mind to discovery. How the process of discovery is woven into the investigation is where the strengths and weakness of such a direction can be found. The strength of this study is opening up the opportunity for further discussion across a range of disciplines to encourage new thinking around competition, gender and management which are all essential elements of global economies.

What would I do differently if I was starting again is perhaps a good question to ask when critically evaluating the thesis. The constraints of being unable to access an equal number of men and women managers does limit the conclusions in terms of men and their experiences and I would seek to rectify this if the exercise was repeated. However I would add that such a limitation does present an opportunity for future research and again this would apply to taking a similar study into two organisations and making direct comparisons. But social science research as I have found, is as much about the journey from the research design to the obstacles faced in the field which all contribute to the final conclusions.

When as a researcher I experience first-hand how fluid and changeable the social world is responding to any number and combination of factors I also experience first-hand how static and rigid that same social world is. The contradictions which emanate from this study are I would argue the strength of my thesis

enabling an investigation to be undertaken which reaches an answer to the main research question and a final conclusion that there are many more questions to be asked and more discussions to be undertaken on gender, management and competition. The passion to explore a different way of examining gender inequality, the motivation for this study has waxed and waned at various stages. My intention to ask new questions remains steadfast as I find value in using new lenses to look at long standing concepts like competition to reinvigorate old debates, encourage new ones while seeking to find innovative ways of applying knowledge to issues as yet unresolved.

8.5 Next steps

The scope for further research on competition is discussed throughout. For example the relationship between sport and understanding the basics of competition and how this can positively impact on career planning and career development is interesting. Whether promoting sport to girls over a longer period would encourage a greater understanding of competition once they enter the labour market could be one strand. It would also be useful to consider the role of competition in different sectors to ascertain the impact on horizontal and vertical segregation using the competition matrix to build profiles like those in chapter seven to test how competition is experienced in different environments. Embracing the competition model and competition matrix in management could offer managers a means of assessing their own management style, those of their peers and superiors enabling modifications to be made and encourage discussions of what makes a good manager.

Expanding the gender and management debate to include competition allows for new ground to be broken in terms of how attitudes and behaviours practiced at work can be understood beyond the current frameworks. For as long as gender equality challenges the thinking and practices of men and women managers and encourages them to actively engage with existing and ill-defined concepts change may continue to be possible.

The model provides a good base for the evaluation of formal and informal practices which can disadvantage managers in different ways with different

outcomes over the course of a career. Particularly distinctive were managers' experiences of temporal competition which was generally accepted as a constraint for everyone and for some managers the perfect exemplar of a zero sum game where organisations win and managers lose. Women managers identified strongly with temporal competition particularly in terms of balancing manager and motherhood. Whether this challenge was past, present or a future prospect, the majority of women were aware of the issues and the impasse that exists in organisations which continue to be dominated by a historically single minded masculinist attitude to work time. Engagement with temporal competition was found to be the dimension where all the managers in this study could find some foothold in their own experiences at work and extending to their life outside work. Within this realisation the managers generally accepted that working time is an aspect of society which fuels wide reaching tensions effecting gender relations in a variety of ways across the length and breadth of careers.

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