

HOW MANY HATS

How many hats do you wear during the course of a working day or week? Are you able to focus totally on your paid employment? Or do you find yourself dragging the chains of domesticity into the work place?

I am curious to get a feel for womens experience compared to their partners, as to how a typical working day may pan out.

My own experience suggests that family matters creep into the working day, whether its buying the evening meal or sorting birthday presents [my own and other childrens,] hospital, doctors, dentist appointments for everyone, doing laundry before leaving the house, I could go on.

And likewise for those of you working at home, in any capacity, the same applies, just how many hats/jobs do you do in order to keep the household together?

I would like to get more of a feeling as to whether or not the extra domestic tasks undertaken during the working day influence career advancement by affecting self-confidence, self-esteem, focus and the ever discussed work – life balance? Or, are these disruptions in the working day necessary to maintain a harmonious domestic life, and generally speaking, taken more seriously by women? Marrying working life, professional ambition and personal relationships is I believe a series of compromises, but who makes these compromises? It seems strange to be thinking about this matter in 2013/14; I am having déjà vu, as I was writing and discussing the same issues in 1982. Arguably society still has expectations of women that center on the the domestic nature of daily life, and women still consciously or unconsciously live up to these expectations physically, materially, mentally and emotionally. At the same time women are told they can also have successful careers out of the home, however this is not borne out by the number of women on the FTSE 100 boards (Men 87.5% v Women 12.5%). I question the equal playing field that men and women allegedly play on. Women's forums are taking place all the time exploring equality of opportunity and work life balance, so this surely suggests that all is not as equal as it should be. I have no doubt there is a desire for gender balance in the home and in the work place, but I am equally sure that the position of women in the work place is chronically affected by overt and subliminal historical expectations and messages, combined with a lack of political will to actively redress these issues.

There is a lot of debate about 'the Glass Ceiling' and its affect on professional executives but I would suggest that whatever applies to business women can also be applied to women working in jobs with less highflying credentials, in that they are affected by domestic necessities.

Would it be too crass to say that it suits most boardrooms not to have an abundance of women sitting round the table? There would be no one at home to have the metaphorical 'dinner on the table'. I do accept that this might appear a rather old fashioned view of the working world, but it

seems to me that in order for domestic life to run smoothly (I use the word loosely) running the home, a working life and a relationship someone has to make sacrifices or die trying! Women do still suffer from this hangover to try and create the work life balance by forgoing their career and ambition. The apparently self inflicted 'glass cage' that is discussed in today's analysis of why women are prevented from rising through the ranks of professional ladders, does I think have some validity, however the glass cage cannot be the sole construct of women, a large part of it is a hangover from pre war times and seems to be perpetuated by our male counterparts. It is unfortunate that we women cannot totally shake off the traditional roles and shackles that let us have one foot in the kitchen and the other on the threshold of more recognised greatness in the 'Boardroom'.

It seems to me that it is the 'glass cage', before the 'glass ceiling that is the first thing to be broken through, and this is something women can do for themselves, but possibly not without some cost. It takes a rigorous review of current circumstances, and then a resolute self-confidence to put personal ambition above having a fresh loaf in the house, but with practice, and getting our Boardroom directors to pick up a loaf from the local Tesco Express on the way home anything is possible!!

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31480/11-745-women-on-boards.pdf

www.thewomensbusinessforum.co.uk3

<http://www.vanneman.umd.edu/papers/CotterHOV01.pdf>

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/27/world/27iht-rules27.html?_r=0

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/feb/21/women-glass-ceiling-still-exists-top-jobs>