

# LONG HOURS OF WORK AS A STRATEGY FOR CARE DODGING

Mustafa Özbilgin, Alexandra Beauregard (LSE), Maria Balta (Brunel)

Prof M Özbilgin  
Brunel University, London  
Université Paris-Dauphine  
Koç University, Istanbul

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Twitter: @Ozbilgin



# Outline

- The link between long hours work and care work
- The interplay between gender, work and care
- Work-life policy and practice gap
- Care dodging – defined
- Methods
- Findings
- Conclusions

# Long hours of work and care

- Long hours of work as an enduring norm (Burke and Cooper 2010)
- Caring for children, elderly, significant others, community and self is demanding, repetitious, devalued
- Long hours work and care— complex relationship

# Gender, work and care

The gender pay gap serves to reinforce traditional gender roles and unequal care arrangements (ONS, 2010).

Because women earn less, it is predominantly women who reduce their working hours after their children are born (EOC, 2003).

In couples where women earn more than their partners, men are more closely involved in looking after their children (Maume, in press; O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003).

# Gender, the State and Care

Government rhetoric: men aspire to greater involvement in caring compared to previous generations (EOC, 2003b).

Fathers are more engaged in child care than their predecessors (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Monna & Gauthier, 2008).

Men's desire for greater involvement in caring may be exaggerated (Maume in press): weekends rather than on work days.

# Gender and care

Dual-earners are now the modal family type among couples (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004)

Limited caregiving activity by men on work days compels women to do the majority of caring during this time.

Detrimental to women's own career choices and progression (Budig & England, 2001; Gornick & Meyers, 2003).

# Tensions between work life policy and practice

- low take up of WL interventions at work by men (Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Berry & Rao, 1997; Fried, 1998; Houston, 2005).
- Career detriment stronger for men than for women (Bittman, Hoffmann & Thompson, 2004; Nord, Fox, Phoenix, & Viano, 2002).
- Seen as unusual, subject to question, or less than legitimate (Daly, Ashbourne, & Hawkins, 2008).

# Tensions between WLB policy and practice

Men cite reluctance to be absent from work as one of the reasons for not using more of the family leave available to them (Brandth & Kvande, 2001, 2002; Haas, Allard, & Hwang, 2002).

There is a tension between policy and practice of WLB.

# What is care dodging?

Avoiding or abdicating caring responsibilities

- Whose responsibility is it to provide care?
  - Individual (women/men?), community and the state

Why do individuals dodge care?

- Nature of care: repetitious, unrewarding, devalued, tainted
- Commercialisation of care – lowly paid and low status
- Can care dodging be a strategic choice?

# Method

62 indepth interviews with senior managers and board members mainly IT and banking sector

Thematic analyses

# Prioritising care over work as strategy

I don't allow it and let me tell you why, so I'm single now but when I was raising my son I probably did not work the 14 hour days but I worked the 10 hour, 11 hour days and I chopped my time so that I never took a lot of time away from him, so I'll give you an example, even when I was travelling with my job, when he was younger I would call every day to make sure that he knew that his mother was going to come back, but he always was in touch with me. My philosophy is that I live by two things, one a family is permanent, a career is temporary, and the other model I live by is live like passionately, passionately live life, so we are here for such a short time on earth that we must take advantage of it, so my family comes before any job. (Anne, HR Global leader, Finance sector)

# Primacy of work over care as a strategic discourse

A balance, and I don't believe they are if you are lucky enough to be in a role you enjoy work is part of your life and if I stepped right back and said "Which bit of my life would I rather do less of?" The first thing that comes to mind wouldn't be work, the thing that I would like to do less of is sorting out the car insurance, sorting out the house insurance, dealing with my bank account, fixing the shower, all the jobs that I don't enjoy doing and I'm not particularly good at doing but which are part of life so the things, the first, if I had a choice the first thing I'd cut out of my life would be those, not my work, I enjoy my work, I love doing it, if that makes sense. (Steve, Managing Director, Services sector).

# Framing work as care as a strategic discourse

It would be very nice to be able to spend 24 hours a day with your children, particularly when they're growing up, you know, that would be a very nice thing to do, but most of us have to work, we have to work to earn money, we have to work to enrich our lives, and the higher up you get in any organisation the more likely it is that your work is going to interfere with your family. For example, when I was... you know, all through my career until I was self-employed I was moving, my family was moving house every three or four years because my job was changing, I was either being promoted or I was moving to a new job, and you can say that that really is a bad thing, that the family is being moved regularly, but it's very interesting. I talk to my children now, who themselves have children, and they say not at all, as far as they're concerned the fact that we as a family moved every three or four years enriched their lives, it was wonderful, it was a positive, not a negative, so it does depend how you look at it. , you know, there are monetary rewards and the family does better, the family can have things it doesn't normally have. The family can have holidays it doesn't normally... it wouldn't otherwise have had, so there's pluses from that, and also there are occasions when my wife would also be involved in things I'm doing for the business. So basically no problem, that's just how it is. (Richard, CEO, services sector)

# More direct strategy

the fact that I work long hours is to mainly, to kind of avoid the whole process of looking after and looking after my son when I know my wife's able to do so. (Ahmad, Accountant Manager, Telecommunication sector)

## **New normal strategies: Men taking on care while women go to work**

Well he used to have an even more high pressured job than me, he worked at the BBC as a TV producer which was all sorts of shifts, different hours, weekends, that sort of thing, and he's actually changed his career and he's training to be a teacher, so he's made a compromise really for me because I have the higher earning potential to, and it then means that we get the school holidays off and it means we don't have to find childcare then for the school holidays 'cos he'll be with them. It's about synergy and, you know, it's very very important. Yeah, but, you know, quite often I feel a lot of pressure that I should help him a bit more but I can't in my job. It's a very very demanding job this. And at the end of the day I earn a lot of money for what I do so they just expect a certain level of performance and the one thing that my husband and I argue about really is the amount of time it takes me to do my job. (Silvia, Business Services Director, IT)

# New normal strategies: sharing roles

I'm again probably quite lucky in some respects. My husband was made redundant about three years ago, we had a nanny and we decided the children were at the age that we actually wanted one of us to be looking after the children full-time, so he stepped into that role. And in the last two years he's started to run his own company so he does like one day a week on and off of certain bits of week, so it isn't full-time so he's very, he's the one that really is the main stability carer for them, and then if I can I do it or if he's working then I do it. (Mary, CEO, Food and Beverages)

# Structural/systemic concerns

I work in a very male dominated industry, and I think in order to become equal or maybe accelerate a career in technology I think sometimes you have to pretend that your children don't come first or get in the way, and I think that's pretty tough for women, and the other thing is I think childcare is supremely expensive which takes a lot of women out of the workforce (Beatrice, Vice-President, Retail sector)

# Male dominated cultures

Some people have been very supportive of me having this career and having small children, other people, the division I work, so at the sort of plc level where Ruby works, our Chief Executive, they've been very supportive, when you get into my division it's so male dominated and I'm the only female on the Board, the concept of a woman having a career and three small children and working full-time I think is quite difficult for them to get their head around. So I think there's probably very traditional attitudes which would lead me to say that in my division it's not particularly family friendly. Yes, they have a completely different mindset first of all. I think because it's mainly men, it's early 50s that are my peers. (Silvia, Business Services Director, IT).

# Care dodging guilt and women

I also don't feel guilty and if I am late to pick up a child from school so what, I'm late. I do a lot more than most people. So I don't give myself a guilt trip like a lot of people do, also if there is an event at a school and I can't make it I don't feel guilty, I just do what I can do and then I just say 'I've done what I can do', and that's it, so I don't put pressure on myself like other people do to be absolutely perfect mother and an absolutely perfect employee, I accept that perfection is not possible when you do both things. (Emma, Managing Director, Services sector).

# Care dodging guilt and men

I think the key things, you know, it is difficult to maintain a balance to your family life and work life. I said, you know, I have a young daughter so, you know, she goes to bed very, very early every evening, so if I come back late I don't see her. So I could go two, maybe even three days, without seeing my daughter, so that, that's not something I enjoy, but, obviously, as they get older, they go to be a little bit later and it's about balance, really. So I think that's the key one for me, at the moment, it's really balancing getting back to see my daughter before she goes to sleep really, on a basic level. (Adrian, Senior Manager in Financial Services, Services sector)

# Conclusions

Long hours of work continues to have gendered impacts

However, gender relations and long hours work are complicated by economic and social context

Regulation of time at work and care giving is considered an individual (or couple) responsibility.

Lack of structural and systemic understanding of regulation, individuals strategically regulate their time and care work]

There is need to move towards a social model with better regulation of time and care, in order to address inequalities and to offer safety nets.