WOMEN, NETWORKING AND THE IMPACT ON PAY, POSITION AND STATUS IN THE UK ICT INDUSTRY

ANGELA TATTERSALL AND CLAIRE KEOGH
University of Salford
Information Systems Institute
Maxwell Building
Salford, Greater Manchester
M5 4WT

a.l.tattersall@salford.ac.uk
c.keogh@salford.ac.uk
Abstract

This paper discusses the impact of informal networking on women’s pay, position and status within the UK ICT industry. Many women find themselves excluded from informal networks due to an accumulation of gender-related factors including male bonding, unequal division of childcare and household tasks, out of work hours networking and sexual politics. The ‘old boys network’ has been a major barrier to women’s advancement into senior management roles although evidence from our research proves that it is not impossible for women with flexible lifestyles and characters to penetrate and gain the associated benefits including promotions and equal pay awards. In this paper we present samples of female interviewees from the national Directing Equal Pay in ICT (DEPICT)\(^1\) study and the Women in North West IT (WINWIT)\(^2\) study ‘who have’ accessed the networks by ‘fitting in’ and consequently have reaped the benefits that have led to career success and a sample of those ‘who have not’ due to barriers and inequality. Additionally these empirical findings add to the well debated ‘women having it all’ argument which concerns itself with issues of work-life balance and career success.

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\(^1\) DEPICT – Directing Equal Pay in ICT. For further information regarding this project please visit [www.isi.salford.ac.uk/gris/depict](http://www.isi.salford.ac.uk/gris/depict)

\(^2\) WINWIT – Women in Northwest IT. For further information regarding this project please visit [www.isi.salford.ac.uk/gris/winwit](http://www.isi.salford.ac.uk/gris/winwit)
**Introduction**

We shall present a sample of interviews with women from the UK Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) sector and highlight the role of social networks on career success. Although a certain degree of knowledge and technical expertise is necessary to elevate pay, position and status we suggest that the membership of networks and the accumulation of social capital can also have a positive impact. The networks involved are male dominated and potentially exclusive making it difficult for women to penetrate and reap the rewards. Moreover these networks can serve to keep those women who cannot access the networks from advancing to more senior management positions. The women and technology literature informs us that the under-representation of women in ICT occupations, particularly technical and senior management roles is attributed to many factors including the relationship between masculinity and technology and the notion that women’s skills are less valuable than men’s which dissuade women from entering the field (Wajcman, 1991, Cockburn 1985, Woodfield, 2000). In spring 2003 it was estimated that there were 151,000 women working in IT occupations compared to 834,000 men (Miller et al 2004). To illuminate, it is estimated that only 1 in 5 of the IT workforce in Britain is female (e-skills UK/Gartner 2004). Research shows that those women who do participate and manage to overcome the barriers to access and entrance are then faced with male dominated cultures, environments and attitudes, lower salaries and fewer opportunities than their male counterparts (Tattersall et al 2004, Moore and Griffith 2006). Continuing efforts to tackle the under-representation of women in the IT labour market in terms of equal opportunities have struggled to adequately tackle the problem. Many equal opportunity initiatives have been well intentioned but have often made little difference especially in the terms of the ‘numbers game’. This so called liberal approach to equal opportunities means that it does not seek to change the entrenched discrimination, gendered cultures and gendered structures of organisations and wider society, conversely it heightens the problem in the form of ‘add more women and stir’ (Henwood 2000) Women have made some progress since Kanters (1977) study which described an industrial corporation and suggested female managers were mere tokens in lower and middle management and non-existent in senior management roles. Although they are represented in lower and middle management within the ICT sector there is a scarcity of female senior managers. Whilst we can perhaps lay the continued lack of women in senior positions in the IT industry partly at the door of ineffective EO initiatives, we suggest that part of the problem lays elsewhere. It has become increasingly more apparent that career mobility, higher levels of pay, positions and status are achieved through informal networking (Seibert et al 2001) which women find difficult to penetrate due to the ‘maleness’ and ‘sameness’ of the members and the activities involved such as after work socializing or golfing.

We proceed with this paper by offering an overview of the work undertaken by academic scholars, some of whom brought the concept of social capital to life. Most of the conclusions from these studies state that social capital has its positive benefits although it should be considered that it also has its negative effects. This will provide a theoretical framework on which our work has been based. Secondly we explain the methodology and
approach utilised for our study. The findings from our empirical research will then be presented.

**Theoretical Underpinning**

The next section will present an overview of the social capital literature which provides the theoretical underpinning of the study.

**Social Capital and Networks**

The concept of social capital has attracted research and analysis in many fields and arenas such as communities (Putman 1995, 2000) education (Coleman 1961; Bourdieu 1986) and organizations and the labour market (Baker 2000; Burt 1998, 2001; Fernandez and Castilla 2001; Granovetter 1973, 1974; Lin 2001; Lin et al 2001). The work of Putman (1995), Coleman (1961) and Bourdieu (1986) has provided scholars with a theoretical framework for examining the impact of people’s networks on their life chances and gives credence to the term ‘it’s not what you know but who you know’. There is a variety of research findings from the afore mentioned scholars which broadly states; people who are able to draw on others for support are healthier, happier and wealthier than those who cannot; their children do better at school and their communities suffer less from anti-social behaviour (Field 2003). Turning to an examination of social capital studies of the labour market Korpi’s (2001) study of job search amongst Swedes found that the size of an individuals network had a significant positive impact on their likelihood of finding work. Additionally, he estimated that the value of each additional contact was as great or greater than that of other forms of job search channels including formal recruitment agencies. Aguilera (2002) found that social capital (measured through friendship networks) was positively associated with participation in the labour market and therefore suggests that those who are well connected are likely to find work and are more likely to be active in the labour market. Networks not only facilitate the supply side of the labour market they also supply the demand side. One detailed analysis of hiring patterns in a USA call centre by Fernandez et al (2000) where the firm paid employees to refer their acquaintance for a particular job, found that the company made savings at several stages of the hiring process, fewer referrals were rejected at application stage, fewer fell out of the process at the interview stage and fewer turned down a job offer. The benefits persisted after the new employee entered the firm, they were less likely to leave and more likely to make their own referrals.

The concept of trust was defined as one of the key components of social capital by both Putman (1995) and Colman (1988), however Field (2003) suggests that it should be treated as an independent factor, in other words as a consequence of social capital rather than an integral component. Colman highlights the importance of trust in economic life and points the finger at economists for ignoring the qualitative change that manifests in the shift from micro level of the individual to the macro level of a system composed of individuals (Swedberg 1996). Bourdieu’s work does not directly mention trust however in his analysis of social reproduction it is clear that to expand useful connections there must be a basis of trust. Fukuyama (2001) goes further by suggesting that trust is the very basis of social order. Trust and trustworthiness is not only the attribute of individuals but also of groups and institutions and plays a vital role in gaining access to the benefits from
social networks (Field 2003). Putman (2000) takes a differentiated approach to social capital in that along with Woolcock (1998) he distinguishes between ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ forms of social capital. Putman asserts that ‘bonding’ (or exclusive) is based around close friends and family and other nearest and dearest, it is inward thinking and tends to bond people together from a similar sociological niche reinforcing exclusive identities and homogenous groups (Field 2003). On the other hand, ‘bridging’ (or inclusive) social capital links people to distant acquaintances who move in different circles from their own, it can generate wider reciprocity rather than reinforcing an exclusive grouping (Field 2003). Putman believes that ‘bonding’ social capital is good for getting by whereas ‘bridging’ social capital is vital for getting ahead. Lin (2001) refers to bonding as ‘strong ties’ and bridging as ‘weak ties’ and follows the work of Granovetter (1973) who suggests for example in his study of job searches that ‘strong ties’ were a good source of jobs in firms where family or friends were already working, whereas ‘weak ties’ were good for finding jobs in new areas (Field 2003). Lin (2001) theorises a model of social capital that forms a distinction between strong and weak ties, the purposes of mutual cooperation, actors’ structural social positions and membership of networks that provide access to positions. ‘Strong ties’ bind people together that are similar to themselves, following the principle of ‘homophily’, ‘weak ties’ bring people together from different social and cultural backgrounds.

**Inequality and Social Capital**

Many scholars write of the positive benefits and outcomes of social capital however Field (2003) points out that social capital is in principle as likely to promote negative outcomes including the underpinning of institutional discrimination. Although many do gain access to the benefits of network membership, groups may control or deny access to outsiders, moreover this type of Bourdieusian ‘clubbish’ social capital serves to underpin struggles of status (Field 2003). Additionally, Fukuyama (2001) suggests that social capital is far more likely to offer negative benefits than that of human and physical capital ‘because group solidarity in human communities is often purchased at the price of hostility towards out-group members’. In the main, social capital can promote inequality because access to various types of networks is unequally distributed. The Bourdieusian approach is a means of accessing resources of status and privilege that increase the standing of its network members at the expense of others, Field (2003) refers to it as a superior form of mutual back scratching and self advancement which serves to bolster and reproduce inequality and privilege in the wider world. ‘Bonding’ groups generate an uneven distribution of men and women, at the most extreme a male only bonding group would be a golfing club which excludes female membership and a female equivalent would be a battered women support group that excluded male participation, even if they themselves suffered domestic abuse (Norris and Inglehart 2003).

It is important to mention that the transition of the social capital metaphor to a concept has proved problematic. Feminist critics have noted that social capital scholars have contributed (through their work) to the issue of ‘gender blindness’ (Field, 2003). Coleman and Putman largely ignore the gender dimension of a clearly gendered practice, whilst Putman attempts to make the effort to pay some attention to the factor in *Bowling...*
Alone, however, this is seen as rather impressionistic. His work seems unable to contemplate that women’s engagement in the workplace comprises of accumulated social capital that is not family based (Kovalainen, 2004). Additionally, it is suggested that the use of Coleman’s analytical framework could have far reaching consequences for further research because of his inherently conservative view of the family (Blaxter, 2001) and the way in which he focuses on networks and relationships but seems to ignore power, gender or the way people build consensus. Adkins (2005) looks at social capital as a ‘troubled concept’ one that she suggests feminists should disengage from, advocating that the use of this concept will always trap women in the social-historical time of industrial society. Further she adds that the reconfigured theorisation of the social capital actor embellishes all the characteristics of ‘masculine’ being rational, purposeful and abstract, drawing attention to the way that some social capital theorists rest their theories on extremely normative views regarding women and family, specifically heterosexual couples and domestically defined females.

**Methodology**

The empirical research presented has been collected over a two and a half year period from the Women in North West IT (WINIT) and Directing Equal Pay in ICT (DEPICT) projects. Both projects have been jointly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the University of Salford’s Information Systems Institute. The two key means of data collection were an on-line survey and a series of case study interviews with women from public, private and not for profit organisations of all sizes. For the purpose of this paper a sample of the 25 case study interviews will be presented.

The research is shaped by critical and feminist approaches to understand women’s disadvantage and inequality not only in the ICT labour market but also in relation to network membership and the associated benefits. By taking a critical approach to the research and focusing on identifying power relations, conflicts and contradictions, the study has the additional aim of empowering women to challenge and remove the barriers of alienation and domination (Oates 2006). Important to the research is that women are a heterogeneous group and that their experiences are diverse, therefore the main reason for conducting interviews was to allow the opportunity for women’s often silent voices to be heard, capturing their views, attitudes and experiences allowing the research team to elicit rich in-depth data. The interviews are conducted with a sample of women whose accounts reflect a broad range of career backgrounds and workplace experiences as well as unique lifestyles and family structures. The samples offered are by no means representative of all women in ICT and are intended to provide a snapshot of the current situation for women in the UK ICT sector.

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3 The European Social Fund’s (ESF) is one of four Structural Funds designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European union, the aim of which is to support the UK’s Employment action plan by providing opportunities for people at a disadvantage and to improve women’s participation in the labour market.
Research Findings

In this section we now offer examples from our empirical study. The interviewees had quite diverse stories to tell about their views, attitudes and experiences of social networking within the ICT industry. Many found it difficult to engage with social networking or were excluded due to an accumulation of gender-related factors including male bonding, unequal division of childcare and household tasks, out of work hours networking sexual politics and the ‘maleness’ of the venues and activities. However, some women have infiltrated the male dominated networks, accumulated social capital and reaped the rewards in terms of successful careers by adopting inclusion strategies in order to ‘fit in’.

Acting Like One of the Boys!

One strategy the women adopted was to mask their femininity and try to ‘fit in’ with the men, this strategy includes a range of behaviours in which women adopt some form of ‘masculine’ characteristic. Miranda a middle manager with a large IT organisation highlighted the importance of ‘fitting in’ to the ‘old boys network’ and how she had learned to talk golf in order to be accepted by her male colleagues ‘You have to be willing to talk about anything, well I have to do that with my clients anyway, you would think that I am an experienced golfer to hear me talk but its just because my husband plays golf and I’ve picked up some of the terminology and famous players names so I can join in on that conversation’. Although, she is aware that not all women can do this comfortably and feels it is a pre-requisite to have grown up with lots of brothers, she feels it is the only way to gain male colleagues respect. ‘Well I used to be a bit of a tomboy when I was a kid but I don’t think that I’m one of the lads but when we’ve had sales conferences and things like that, you know you have to do all the drinking and everything, really you have to fit in with the majority of men and not be upset by the banter. You can’t let it offend you, you wouldn’t last 2 minutes if you did. I just give as good as I get really’. A study by Blair-Loy, (2001) of networking and female executives in the financial sector highlights that despite women’s elaborate attempts to be accepted, they continue to be considered different by a male-dominated business world. Sometimes they found that male colleagues simply refused to relate socially to them, no matter how hard they worked at fitting in.

The situation and in fact ‘problem’ of being a women and issues of self and identity at work in male dominated ICT workplaces was revealed time and time again by our interviewees. For instance Mary said; ‘I have almost forgot that I’m a female in this business, I’m not denigrating being a woman in any way but I’ve almost had to push aside being a female and get on with the job just like any man would do’ Xena spoke of how certain characteristics were necessary to succeed which she perceived to be ‘masculine’, that do not come naturally to her, such as tough, arrogant and confident. Vanessa described how she took to wearing gender neutral clothing in order to ‘fit in’ and be accepted as a female manager. ‘I would only be wearing chinos and a polo shirt because I really shouldn’t be standing out. That took me a year and OK to the guys I was Vanessa, I was a woman but I was an’ it’. I was not a women, I was not a man I was a person....I dressed like this for a year until I attended one of the WITI (Women in
Technology International – a women in technology empowerment group) meetings on personal impact and how you should build your own confidence and I said ‘I’m too scared to show myself because I work in an all male environment’ Every time I mentioned I was going to a meeting they always said ‘oh you’re going to one of your lesbian meetings’ at work’.

The discomfort that these women felt with their gender roles in an ICT environment is palpable. So strongly masculine is the world of technological skill within which these women work that the only way they were able to ‘fit in’ was by denying their femininity. However, many of the interviewees stated that like Xena they were uncomfortable adopting masculine characteristics as this was not their natural self, they were determined not to compromise their gendered roles. This had negative consequences for some of the women working in all male environments as they felt isolated and excluded, due to the predominant ‘masculine’ culture that exists in ICT.

Controversially, the women and management literature as well as our findings provides evidence that some women in senior positions who have made it through the ranks without mentoring or support are often less likely to want to help other women achieve similar success into senior management. This is exemplified by Gaynor when talking about supporting other women in the organisation ‘the difficulty would be if you have a group of women who all want to work part-time and then you’ve got one man or me where I don’t have children, if I’m then working with a group of women who all want part-time work – I’ll be totally honest, I’ll support those women and it’s great but I don’t want to work with 4 of them because I know I’ll be doing more work than them, it’s fine if there’s 1 or 2 of them’. For organisations promoting ‘flexible working patterns’ as an attempt to improve gender equity, this type of attitude is problematic. Metaphorically speaking, this is a case of climbing the ladder and then choosing to pull it up behind you blocking the way for future aspiring female managers (King 1997). Ragins et al (1998) study of female executives identified that in order to be accepted the women interviewed felt that they had to develop a professional style that male managers felt comfortable with. Many ICT organisations embrace the ‘male orientated’ aggressive and direct leadership style. Women that display this style of leadership are labelled bossy and pushy, however if they adopt a feminine leadership style then they are deemed as ineffective (Ragins et al (1998). Moreover, in male dominated industries such as ICT women often feel de-valued and under-utilised and are not only excluded from informal networks but also from the decision making process (Jackson-Cooper 2001).

Gaynor, is an IT senior manager within the finance sector who realised quite early in her career that to dramatically increase her position and earning potential she needed to network. Strategically, she changes employer regularly gaining further skills and an increase in pay package. Gaynor described working in an ‘incestuous sector’ she said it is governed by intensive social networking from which she has gained all her job opportunities. Currently she is in negotiations for another position and if successful she will gain a pay increase of 30%. Here she describes the particular benefits of networking for a woman experiencing pay inequality; ‘Men manage their careers women don’t, they will sit and be put upon in a job and they think I’ll complain about it (pay) rather than getting their C.V’s together and moving on. You really have to manage your career, use
the resources (network) like any man would - .the biggest movement in salary in this industry is when you move from company to company, you can get between £10 - £30k minimum increase with each move - .you have got to know your worth and be prepared to bargain’. This situation is facilitated by her personal lack of constraints, no partner or caring responsibilities, leaving her free to make decisions about her career. Being employed in the IT arm of the finance sector it is culturally accepted and expected that an employee will move from one organisation to another.

The whole point of these ‘fitting in’ strategies is to remove men’s discomfort with gender difference. Blair-Loy (2001) describes these type of tactics as deliberate and orchestrated to make men believe that their business dealings with these women are natural outgrowths of their natural conviviality and common interests. However she adds that although these strategies may help individual women to infiltrate male exclusive networks, reap the rewards and climb occupational barriers they also reinforce the symbolic boundaries that exclude women from senior posts and highlight that ordinary women who display their femininity, do not belong.

**Networking and gendered barriers**

Recent studies (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989; Ibarra, 1993) have identified that women’s lack of access to informal networks with male colleagues and the fact that they are consequently constrained from the benefits of forming alliances, gaining up-to-date information or insights into the politics of the organisation, is a major factor behind the levels of resistance to women and women’s feelings of isolation and alienation at work. For instance Deb who worked as a junior programmer in a male dominated technical environment, where she was the only women described her own situation “I hated it, I thought what have I done. They were horrible men who went to the pub every dinnertime and never asked me and they used to talk about football all the time. Apart from feeling intimidated, scared and unconfident I just hated them all”. Cockburn (1991) refers to the concept of the ‘men’s club’ as ‘corporate patriarchy’ that harbours cultural processes and practices that discriminate against women. Deb described how she witnessed many new male recruits making inroads into the organisation via internal relationships, elevated through the ranks, whilst she felt invisible. This type of informal ‘who you know’ recruitment was highlighted as a common practice by many of our interviewees, which again instilled feelings of organisational and network exclusion and unfairness.

Although the division of labour is now more equal than it was a generation ago, data shows that paid employment and housework are still shared according to traditional patterns, that women still have the prime responsibility for childcare and housework. Although men have taken on more of the responsibility for housework, it has not been to the same degree as women’s engagement in paid work. (Hardy and Adnett 2002). Additionally various studies (Kanter 1977; Brass 1985; Coe, 1992; Rutherford, 2001; Linehan, 2001) have highlighted the importance of networking and visibility in organisations and how men much more so than women are likely to be involved in informal networking practices. Moore (2006) proposes that the differing positions of
women and men in the workforce who are married with children impose different sets of opportunities for networking, further suggesting that structural opportunities, particularly job opportunities and higher incomes occur more often for men than for women. Moreover, marriage and parenthood often constrain women’s opportunities to network, whilst marriage offers men the time to form network ties beyond local boundaries. Mary, a senior manager with a large multinational IT organisation, who is married with two children acknowledges the difficulties of trying to juggle both a career and a family. Working full-time and often long hours, sometimes away from home is problematic. With the added factor that her organisation is centrally located to London although she is based in Manchester, means that it is impossible for her to travel in order to socially network, however she is aware that this has been a major career barrier; “It’s a limitation being in the north and not down south, I think I would have got to where I am now a good few years early had I been more around more able to liaise with and socialise with and just be seen by senior male executives, whereas 200 miles away I am out of sight out of mind, so you’re having to really exceed targets and make your name shine from a distance and then you get your name on the table”. This example highlights how other tactics are utilised to compensate for the exclusion from networks ‘As I went through the ranks I learnt how to learn the sort of overview things I’d need for that sort of ‘elevator conversation’ if you happen to be with the IT Director or somebody more senior, the six silver bullets that would actually get you a foot in the door’. Davidson and Cooper (1992) discuss how problematic it is for women to penetrate the ‘old boy’s network’ and as a consequence they are denied contacts, opportunities and are excluded from information and resources that networks provide. Moreover, information equates to power and politics, so women’s exclusion can result in women’s disadvantage in the workplace and therefore their inability to compete on a level playing field (Broadbridge 2003). Mary’s feelings of being out of the loop are commensurate with the findings of Liff and Ward (2001) and Wood and Lindroff (2001) who identified that success in the promotion process is about being in the right place at the right time and knowing and impressing the right people. This is less problematic for men than it is for women Milke and Peltola (1999) highlight that women’s location in the social structure affords them less power and control in work and family spheres and likely contributes to a greater total workload, more sacrifices and difficulties in balancing work and family, time in one role may equate to neglect in another. In the case of Mary, she feels that she is already making a considerable tradeoff, substituting her time with the children by employing a nanny. This situation leaves her racked with guilt and fear that her husband will divorce her and her children think the nanny is more a mother to them than she is. However for men, work and family identities are interdependent, the provider role allows them to fulfil their worker, husband and father duties and thus they experience less stress (Milke and Peltola 1999).

**Women Only Networks**

Female ICT professionals have come to realise that it is important to be active members of networks for career advancement. However because of the exclusiveness and inaccessibility of networks, particularly the informal ‘old boys network’ in recent years women have begun to assemble female only formal type networks. Klenke (1996) points...
out that most women leaders do not share a traditional ‘old boy network’ because they are mostly on their own. They often have to create alternatives to substitute for what informal networks accomplish. However, both Pini et al’s (2004) study of women in Australian Government, and the DEPICT research findings identified that one of the main benefits of female only networks is the existence of support which enables women to overcome feelings of isolation and provides a sense of identity, the women form relationships and share their experiences, often providing mutual empathy. There are instances where men are unreceptive of women’s involvement with this type of network. As mentioned earlier Vanessa was taunted by her male colleagues when she attended WITI meetings, Simpson (2000) highlighted in her study of ‘gender mix and organisational fit’ that minority women (tokens) were seen to carry extra burdens of visibility, their presence generated ambiguities in terms of group culture which was controlled by the male majority and men responded to that ambiguity by raising the boundaries between the two groups so that differences were exaggerated. However, an interview with two female entrepreneurs who left both public and private ICT sector positions to set up their own business (an all female ICT company, targeting women only businesses) spoke of the benefits of formal women only networks and how they have attributed to their business success. They have utilised the networks as their main source of marketing and advertising ‘we have done many networking events ....we first started by getting out there and letting people know we existed, anywhere where we think that there are going to be female customers...we don’t plan to spend any money, we just chat and hand out business cards, we have gained all our clients this way ‘Additionally they have utilised their own informal networks which has provided vital information and resources. Now they are concerned with the future of the women in IT ‘problem’, ‘we would like to do something ourselves in schools and make contact with local women in IT to help us with a project for school girls aged 11-14 get them involved with web design and show them that IT is interesting and offers some fab career choices, if you can see there is something different and exciting about IT in today’s climate it shows exception because the majority can’t…..we are really passionate about it because we have come through the turmoil ourselves’. These women have experienced the bitter side of working and progressing within the ICT industry. Networking has proved a valuable asset to their success and now they feel that they can give something back by providing information and support for other females contemplating or choosing a career in the ICT sector.

**Conclusion**

As the social capital literature has informed us there are many positive benefits to be gained from networking; however there are warnings of the negative implications. The lack of women in senior management roles can be attributed to the male dominated networks that exist and harbour gender inequalities and discrimination. Those women who want to ‘fit in’ to male dominated networks have adopted varied inclusion strategies to enable the infiltration of the so called ‘old boys’ network which offers the information, resources and knowledge needed to gain opportunities to achieve higher pay, position and status in the UK ICT industry. In order to ‘fit in’ with a male dominated world and accumulate necessary social capital these women have adopted ‘masculine’
characteristics including masking one’s femininity, adapting to male dominated activities and venues such as after work drinking and sporting events. Moreover, in order to accommodate this, these women have predominately flexible lifestyles and characters. However this is not the case for all female ICT professionals many stand steadfast in their view that they should not have to compromise their gender or make tradeoffs in order to attain equality and an equal footing in the workplace. Furthermore, many women are unable to network due to a number of gender related factors which reinforce and emphasise the ‘exclusive’ Boudieusian view of social capital, which focuses membership on the privileged, thus bolstering and reproducing inequality. The negative impact of social capital is not only strengthened by the majority but also by the minorities that manage to infiltrate the networks, in other words women who have achieved success can be unwilling to be as supportive to other women in the industry. Our findings also add to the ‘women having it all’ debate, or not as the case may be, in terms of achieving career success and a work-life balance. As we have shown it can be extremely difficult for women to give full priority to both. They have a hard time negotiating, balancing and competing with often overwhelming demands of paid work and family commitments unless they are prepared to make tradeoffs. Women in ICT have identified the need to network and are establishing their own substitutes for the ‘old boys’ club in the form of more formal type groups. It is still early days for any conclusions to be drawn on the effectiveness of formal women only networks including whether they can provide the same resources, opportunities and knowledge as the informal ‘old boys network’, enabling women to achieve higher levels of pay, position and status within the industry.
References


