Suddenly Everyone is Working from Home: How Women Managers Managed Remote Work Teams

Dr Susan Ressia, Prof Glenda Strachan, Dr Kim Ball, Prof David Peetz, Prof Keith Townsend and Dr Carolyn Troup
Griffith Business School, Brisbane, Australia
Presented at:

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Outline:

- Research Background
- Literature
- Research Question
- Methodology
- Preliminary Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion & Importance of the Research

Research Background

- Challenges of sudden shift to working from home (WFH) arrangements

- Focus on professional staff in the University sector

- Implications for managers in adjusting to WFH

- How managers manage teams remotely

- Application to workplaces across the economy

Literature

- Line managers:
  - Supervision of staff while also being supervised
  - Issues of uncertainty and demand of employee flexibility (Streeck,1987)
- Span of control (Peetz, 2019; Wright, 1995)
- Trust
  - Manager
  - Peers
  - Computer-based work monitoring

Literature

- Productivity

- Emotional labour

- Skills/training to manage WFH

- Work/life balance impacts (Pocock, 2003)

  - Managers

 - Staff

  - Gender differences

Research Question

How do university women managers manage working from home arrangements during COVID-19?

GRIFFITH
UNIVERSITY
Queensland, Australia

Methodology

- Mixed Methods

  - Survey

    - 7 Universities across Australia

    - n = 5330 responses (2903 professional staff)

  - Analysis of Responses to 2 free text open-ended survey questions (positive and negative experiences)

  - Semi-structured interviews

    - 25-30 Higher Education Worker (HEW) level 7-10

    - Manage staff in areas with student interaction

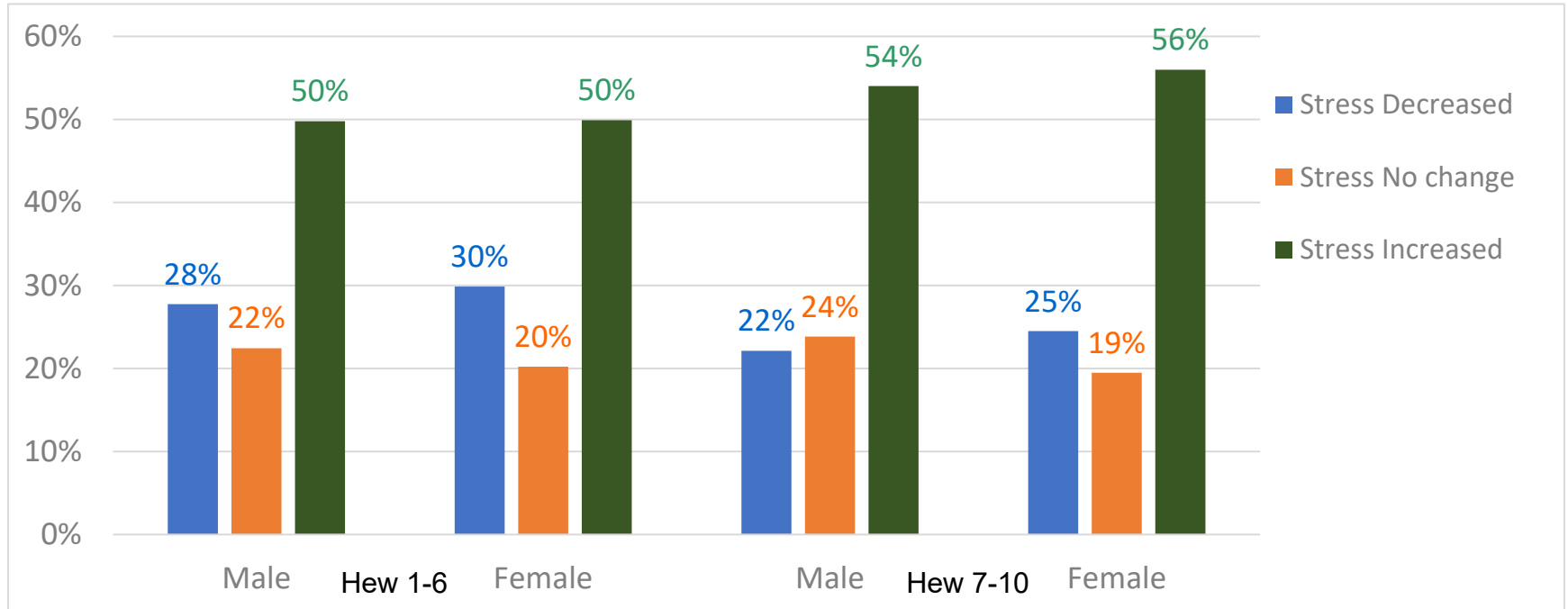   - Interviews 1 to 2 hours in length, transcribed verbatim
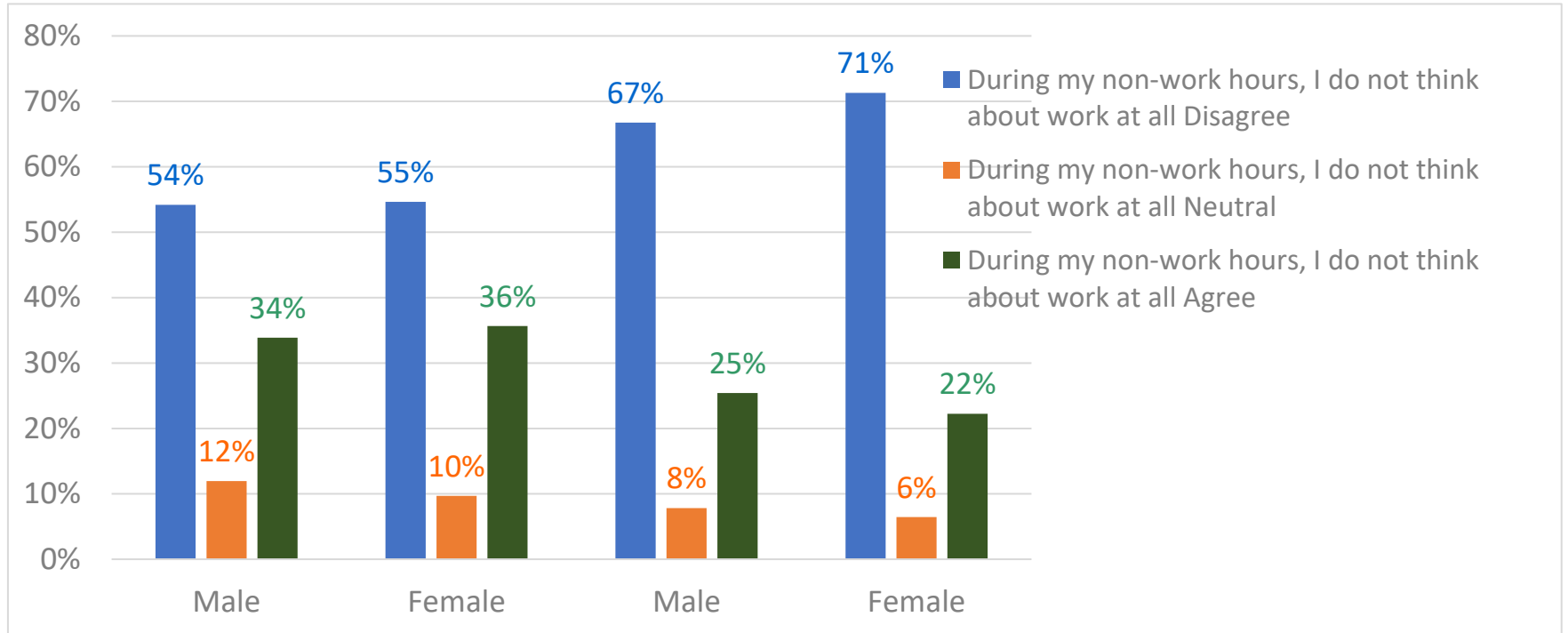
Findings – Quantitative Data
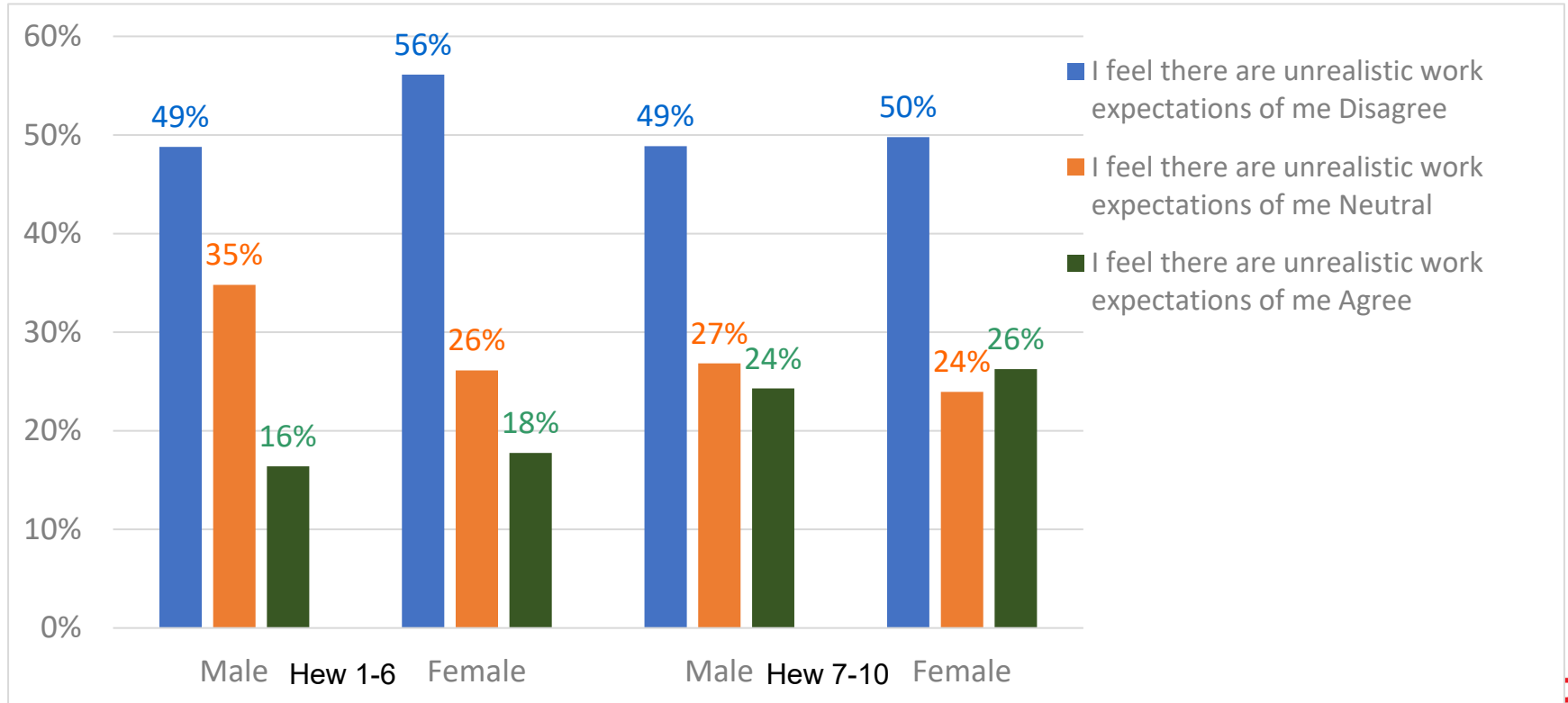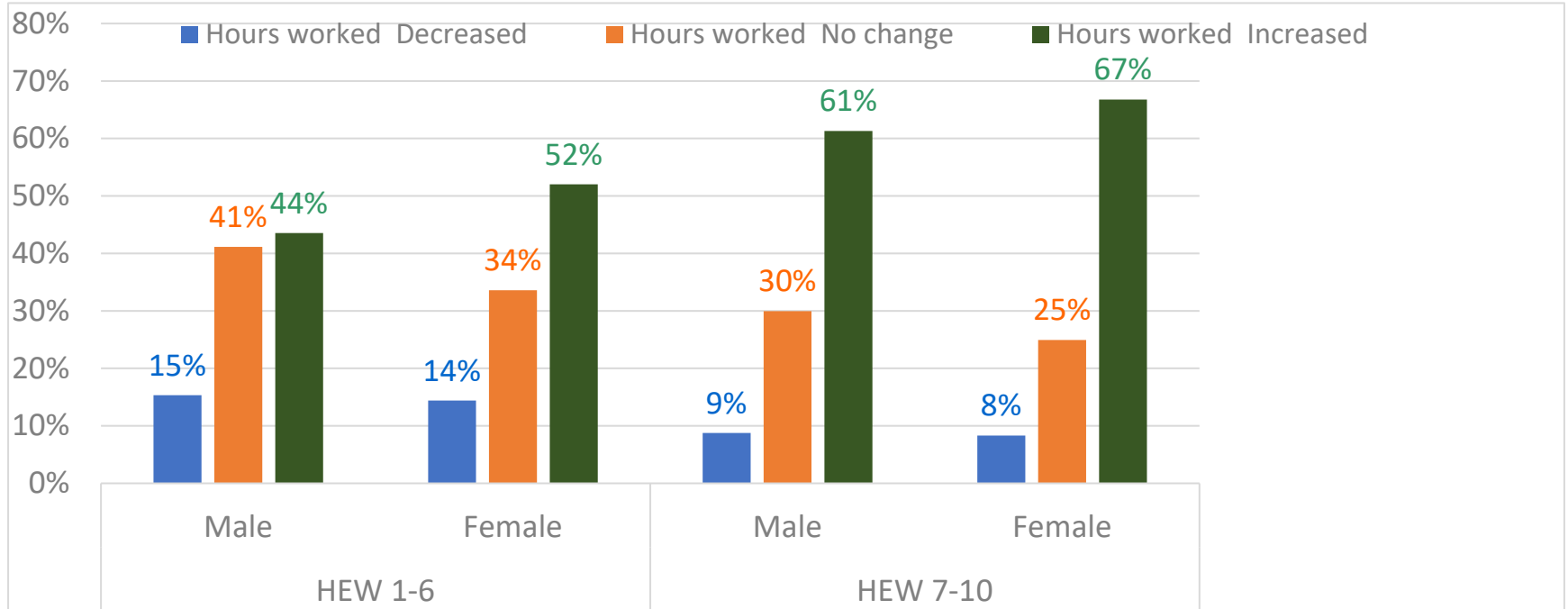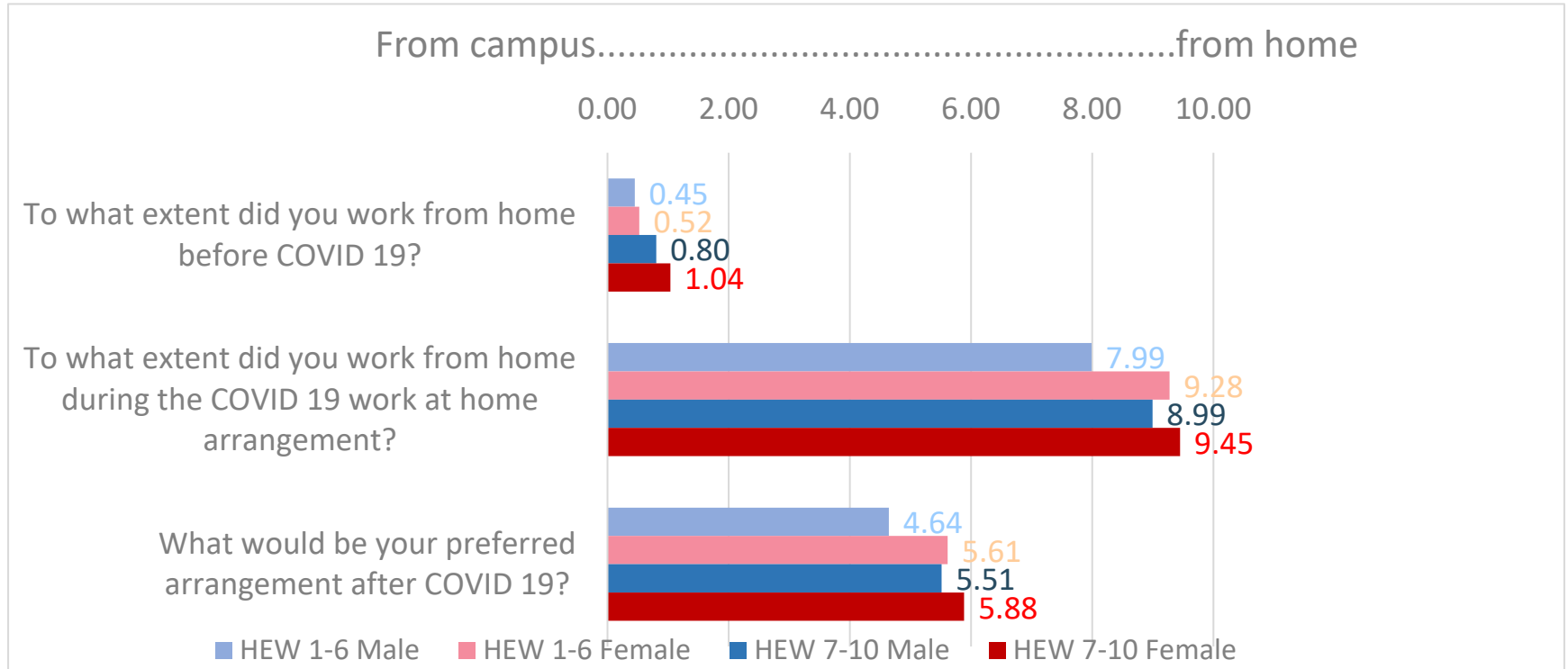
Findings – Quantitative Data

Findings – Quantitative Data

Findings – Quantitative Data

Findings – Quantitative Data

Findings – Qualitative Data

Themes (open-ended questions and interviews)

- Increased workload

- Increased work hours

- Emotional toll

- Limited support

- Trust

- Travel time

- Cost savings

Findings – Qualitative Data

Positive responses to open-ended survey questions:

Really enjoyed working from home as more relaxed - the pressure of getting to the bus on time every morning is quite stressful... Saved lots of money on petrol and bus fares and by eating at home and not buying coffees. I was able to stay in contact with my team via online meetings 3 times per week and additional separate communications. Everyone has adapted to communicating online via Teams and Zoom. (ID: 1539)

Findings – Qualitative Data

Negative responses to quantitative open-ended survey questions:

I cannot get work out of my head. It seems to have taken over my life and my dreams. The administrative demands are unbearable. (ID: 30).

My team are the most stressed I have ever experienced. (ID: 1956)

There has been multiple mental health issues and pastoral care to get my team to work under difficult circumstances. (ID: 729)

Findings – Qualitative Data

Responses to quantitative open-ended survey questions about managing teams:

Many of my staff have had issues and crises which have required my support and a degree of latitude and flexibility in their work programs….My role as a leader has been to keep everybody positive and uplifted while myself not quite always feeling all that positive….My workload has increased quite a lot, as well as the juggle of increased childcare and homeschooling. There has been very little separation between work and life, and this just means I work all the time. (ID: 1020, male)

Responsibility to keep team going, liaise with them from their homes, set up regular chat sessions to prevent them from becoming isolated etc became greater over the course of time. I just realised in typing this no one ever asked how I was going …. (ID: 3454, female)

Findings – Qualitative Data

Interview data (trust and flexibility)

…I had some staff, obviously, who have got children …a single parent… [they are] one of my staff who I totally trust … [if they are] 10 minutes late, they make the 10 minutes up… I put a case to see whether …[they] could start a little bit earlier in the morning [and finish work later]…to pick up the kids … and it was, like, no! (M6)

Discussion

- Uncovered demands on managers

  - High trust and low trust approaches

- Organisational efficiency and control

- How managers managed teams

- How managers were supported during COVID-19

- A rethinking around the notion of the 'Ideal Worker'? (Acker, 2006)

Discussion/Conclusion

- Implications for developing policy and practices
  - Managing sudden change
  - Trust
  - Creation of flexible working arrangement for WFH
  - Benefits
    - Work/Life Balance
    - Productivity
    - Other

Contact: Susan Ressia, Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Nathan

e: s.ressia@griffith.edu.au

ph: + 61 7 3735 7856

Griffith
UNIVERSITY

References

Acker, J (2006) Inequality regimes gender, class, and race in organisations, *Gender and Society*, *20*(4), pp. 441-464. doi: 10.1177/0891243206289499

Bainbridge, H.T.J., & Townsend, K. (2020). The effects of offering flexible work practices to employees with unpaid caregiving responsibilities for elderly or disabled family members. *Human Resource Management*. *59*(5), 483-495. doi: 10.1002/hrm.22007.

Bapuji, H., Doh, J., Ertug, G., George, G., Mair, J., & Prasad, J. (2020). Call for Papers – Special Issue of *Business & Society:* COVID-19 and Business and Society Scholarship. *Business & Society*. 1-4. https://journals.sagepub.com/pb-assets/cmscontent/BAS/BAS_COVID_CFP-1594277650617.pdf

Barker, J.R. (1993). Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-Managing Teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *3*(3), 408-37. doi: 10.2307/2393374

Bolton, S.C. & Boyd, C. (2003). Trolley Dolly or Skilled Emotion Manager? Moving on from Hochschild's Managed Heart. *Work, Employment & Society*, *1*(2), 289-308. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017003017002004

Burawoy, M. (1979). *Manufacturing Consent*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Caligiuri, P., De Cieri, H., Minbaeva, D., Verbeke, A., & Zimmermann, A. (2020). International HRM insights for navigating the COVID-19 pandemic – implications for future research and practice. *Journal of International Business Studies, 51*, 697-713. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-020-00335-9

Crawford. J., Butler-Henderson, K., Rudolph, J., Malkawi, B., Gloatz, M., Burton, R., Magni, P.A., & Lam, S. (2020). COVID-19: 20 countries' higher education intra-period pedagogy responses. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching, 3*(1), 9-28. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2020.3.1.7

Dwivedi, Y.K., Hughes, D.L., Coombs, C., Constantiou, I., Duan, Y., Edwards, J.S., Gupta, B., Lal, B., Misra, S., Prashant, P., Raman, R., Rana, N.P., Sharma, S.K., & Upadhyay, N. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on information management research and practice: Transforming education, work and life. *International Journal of Information Management, 55*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102211

References

De. R., Pandey, N., & Pal, A. (2020). Impact of digital surge during COVID-19 pandemic: A Viewpoint on research and practice 2020. *International Journal of Information Management, 55*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102171

Feng, Z., & Savani, K. (2020). Covid-19 created a gender gap in perceived work productivity and job satisfaction- implications for dual-career parents working from home. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 1754-2413. doi: 10.1108/GM-07-2020-0202

Gardner. H.K., & Matviak, I. (2020, March 05). Coronavirus could force teams to work remotely. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2020/03/coronavirus-could-force-teams-to-work-remotely

Henderson, T., Swann, T. & Stanford, J. (2018). *Under the Employer's Eye: Electronic Monitoring and Surveillance in Australian Workplaces*. Canberra, Australia: Centre for Future Work.

Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling.* Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach.* 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McKinsey & Company & LeanIn.Org. (2020). *Women in the workplace*. https://womenintheworkplace.com/

Minello, A. (2020). The pandemic and the female academic. *Nature*. doi: 10.1038/d41586-020-01135-9

Nash, M., & Churchill, B. (2020). Caring during COVID-19: A gendered analysis of Australian university responses to managing remote working and caring responsibilities. *Gender, Work and Organization.* doi: 10.1111/gwao.12484

Parker, S.K., Knight, C., & Keller, A. (2020, July 30). Remote managers are having trust issues. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2020/07/remote-managers-are-having-trust-issues

Peetz, D. (2019). *The Realities and Futures of Work*. Canberra, Australia: The Australian National University Press.

Pocock, B. (2003). *The Work-life collision: What is work doing to Australians and what to do about it.* Sydney, Australia: Federation Press.

References

Streeck, W. (1987). The Uncertainties of Management and the Management of Uncertainty. *Work, Employment and Society*, *1*(2), 281-308. https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017087001003002

Thatcher, A., Zhang, M., Todoroski, H., Chau, A., Wang, J., & Liang, G. (2020). Predicting the impact of COVID-19 on Australian Universities. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management, 13*, 188. doi:10.3390/jrfm13090188

Townsend, K., Wilkinson, A., Allan, C., & Bamber, G. (2011). Mixed Signals in HRM: The HRM Role of Hospital Line Managers. *Human Resource Management Journal, 22*(3), 267-282. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2011.00166.x

Wattis, L., Standing, K., & Yerkes, M.A. (2013). Mothers and Work-life Balance: Exploring the Contradictions and Complexities Involved in Work-family Negotiation. *Community, Work & Family, 16*(1), 1-19. doi:10.1080/13668803.2012.722008

Weststar, J., Troup, C., Peetz, D., Ramia, I., O'Brady, S., Werth, S., Campbell, S., & Ressia, S. (2020, November 5). *Working from home during COVID-19: What do employees want?* The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/working-from-home-during-covid-19-what-do-employees-really-want-148424

Wienderhold, B.K. (2020). Connecting through technology during the Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic avoiding Zoom fatigue. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 23*(7), 437-439. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2020.29188.bkw

Wright, C. (1995). *The Management of Labour: A History of Australian Employers*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Yildirm, T.M., & Eslen-Ziya, H. (2020). The differential impact of COVID-19 on the work conditions of women and men academics during lockdown. *Gender, Work and Organization.* doi: 10.1111/gwao.12529