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An investigation into the experiences of managers who work flexibly

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the experiences of managers who work flexibly. Flexible working policies are prevalent in all organizations in the UK because of the legislation giving specific groups of parents and carers the right to request flexible working. Many organizations extend the policies to all employees, yet the take-up is not as high as expected, particularly among staff at managerial levels. This thesis explores how managers construe and experience flexible working arrangements while successfully fulfilling their roles as managers of people.

The exploratory study consisted of interviews with eight managers with unique flexible working patterns. Analysis of the interview transcripts identified concepts of consistency and adaptability. Consistency refers to meeting fixed needs from the work and non-work domains, and adaptability refers to the adjustment of schedules to meet the changing demands from those domains. The concepts of consistency and adaptability were further explored in the main study which is based on interviews with 24 women and 10 men who held managerial positions and had a flexible working arrangement which reduced their face time in the workplace.

The research offers three main contributions to the literature. At a theoretical level, I propose a model which demonstrates how individuals use consistency and adaptability to meet the fixed and changing demands from the work and non-work domains. This model extends understanding of the complexity of the segmentation/integration continuum of boundary theory, explaining how and why managers use flexible working arrangements as a means of managing boundaries and achieving desired goals in both domains. Four distinct clusters emerged among the managerial participants in terms of the type and direction of adaptability, indicating the range of strategies used by managers to ensure the success of their flexible working arrangements. A detailed description of managers' flexible working experiences is provided, adding to what is known about the role of manager through the exploration of the enactment of that role when working flexibly.

Keywords: Consistency and adaptability; segmentation; integration; boundary management; promotion; work life balance

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My mother and my late father (Pat and Kevin Fitzgerald) both left school as young teenagers without any formal qualifications, but with a love of learning and a belief in the value of education. They worked hard to ensure that my siblings and I had the opportunities they would have loved, and have always been so proud of our educational (and other) achievements. I think this one surpasses their dreams.

My sister Eithne Fitzgerald began her MA as I began my PhD and we have had many long phone conversations about the intricacies of grounded theory, literature reviews and coding structures, when nobody else would have been interested. She has also

helped with proof reading and still remained interested (and successfully completed her MA long ago!).

My three children were 14, 12 and 10 when I began this undertaking, and have grown into wonderful young adults. Clare, Declan and Paul have had their own learning while I have been busy pursuing my doctoral studies. Aside from school and the assortment of A levels, AS levels and GCSEs they have passed between them in recent years, they have also had some "life lessons" in cooking their own tea, becoming adept with the washing machine and the iron, and generally becoming more self-sufficient as I spent more time on my PhD and less with them. They all have demanding academic challenges in the immediate future and I hope to give them the love, patience and support they have given me.

My husband Rob has been my greatest supporter throughout my studies and I simply couldn't have done it without his love and enduring encouragement.

This thesis is dedicated to my family, with love and thanks.

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1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the research topic of managers' experiences of working flexibly. Section 1.1 explains the aim of the research, explaining my personal interest in the field of flexible working. The background to the research is discussed in section 1.1.2, with regard to the specific context of the UK legislation which has supported and encouraged organizations in the offering of flexible working policies. Section 1.1.3 covers a brief introduction to the literature in order to establish the research gap, leading to the overarching research question, followed by supplementary questions. An outline of the thesis is given in section 1.2.

1.1 Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to explore how managers use flexible working arrangements and how they perceive the relationship between their working pattern, their own work life balance and their on-going career. It also seeks to determine if gender differences exist in the ways that women and men experience flexible working when working at managerial levels. This research will provide a greater understanding of the ways in which flexible working can be used successfully at senior levels, acknowledging the challenges which individuals and organizations face in the ongoing implementation of flexible working policies.

1.1.1 Personal interest

As is so often the case when deciding to undertake a PhD, my interest in this field began as a result of my personal experiences. I began to work flexibly after the birth of my first baby when I took on a part time job and was completing a Masters degree in Occupational and Organizational Psychology. I successfully completed my degree but decided to work as an independent management trainer so that I could spend a significant amount of time with my children and yet also have a fulfilling career.

My Masters thesis explored the family support and social support available to first time mothers with children under 18 months, comparing those who returned to work and

those who had chosen to stay at home and I was fascinated by the issues which women faced when making that decision. As a member of the National Childbirth Trust I took on the voluntary role of supporting "new mums", who were typically well educated, middle class women with careers. Conversations were often about the anxieties of leaving their babies to return to work, or alternatively, a concern that they were giving up their identity in some way through deciding to stay at home with their baby. There was little acknowledgement of the possibility of doing things differently and flexible working was rarely an option.

I had enjoyed my master's degree and for some time considered undertaking a PhD, but it was not until my youngest child was nine that I finally decided to focus on progressing my career and the question of the PhD re-emerged. I loved working with people in a learning situation and began to look seriously into an academic career. In some ways it would have made sense to choose a topic such as leadership or recruitment and selection for my doctoral studies, subjects with which I worked regularly. But the topic of women, and how they combine motherhood and their careers, was my passion and I lived close to Cranfield University where there was a centre of excellence in senior women and leadership. Through conversations with Professor Sue Vinnicombe and Dr Val Singh from the International Centre for Women Leaders, my research proposal took shape and I was delighted to join the doctoral programme here at Cranfield in September 2003.

Following the pilot study which investigated the lived experiences of both women and men working flexibly, Professor Sue Vinnicombe was instrumental in the creation of a major project, in conjunction with the charity Working Families, which examined the impact of flexible working practices on performance. I was privileged to work as a researcher on the two year project in seven organizations. This thesis draws on data gained through that project in four of the organizations, all of whom had a well established flexible working policy for which all members of staff could apply.

1.1.2 Background to the research

The Worklife Balance initiative introduced by the UK government in 2000 provided a major impetus for the introduction of employee-friendly flexible working policies

designed to help employees balance the demands of their work and non-work lives. In April 2003, new legislation was introduced in the UK giving parents of a child under six years of age, the right to request flexible work including a change in working hours, days or place of work. Eighteen months later a report published by the Department of Trade and Industry (2004) showed that 37% of women employees with children under the age of six had requested flexible working since the introduction of the legislation, whereas only 10% of men with children under six had made the same request. Many organizations in the UK now have such policies as part of an integrated approach to supporting employees in their quest for work-life balance. Since then the introduction of legislation giving carers and parents of young or disabled children the right to request flexible working has continued to keep the issue high on the social agenda, and in May 2008, the Walsh Report recommended further extension to include those with parental responsibility for children up to the age of 16.

1.1.3 Research gap

Despite the fact that many organizations, especially multi-nationals, do not limit their policies to those groups covered by the legislation, and offer the right to request flexible working to all employees, the take-up of such arrangements has not been as high as expected (Kodz, Harper & Dench, 2002), particularly among senior employees. Analysis of the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey highlighted that managerial employees are less likely to be able to make use of flexible options such as reduced hours and flexitime (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007). Interestingly, managers perceptions that flexitime was available to them was greater than other occupational groups. The lack of take-up may reflect the commonly held fallacy that flexible working is inappropriate for individuals in positions which involve supervisory responsibility (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Mattis, 1990).

The fear of "career death" as a result of working flexibly is also offered as a reason in practitioner literature for the reluctance of individuals to work in this way (Flexecutive, 2002; Flexecutive, 2004; Roberts, 2004). Yet there are some senior employees in many organizations who no longer work in accordance with the traditional pattern involving five days at the office from nine to five thirty. This research seeks to explore the

experiences of managers who themselves work flexibly, in order to develop understanding of how they make flexible working a successful strategy in their lives. Specifically the study explores how managers with supervisory responsibilities successfully fulfil those and other duties while working in a way which reduces their face time in the work place. This includes exploration of their perceptions of the relationship between their flexible working pattern and their work life balance.

There has been a great focus on teleworking in the literature and only more recently has the debate been widened to a more diverse range of flexible working options. Thus a substantial part of the literature which has been reviewed for this thesis has been on that topic. In a useful review of the teleworking literature, Bailey and Kurland (2002:390) pointed out that there are various questions which have remained unanswered: namely "*who teleworks, why and what happens when they do*". However the question of most relevance to this thesis is the question which they suggest has been overlooked: "*How do people telework?*" (Bailey & Kurland, 2002:390). They go on to recommend a grounded approach which they suggest will lead to a greater understanding of the outcomes and relationships from the changes in people's working practices.

Practitioners are interested in the wider range of working patterns which are covered by work life policies within their organizations and this thesis will focus on types of flexible working which reduce face time in the workplace. Calls which relate more specifically to flexible working include one from Avery and Zabel (2001) who suggest that more research is needed to establish how to make flexible work arrangements work well. Similarly, Lewis, (2002) has suggested that further investigation is needed of the strategies used by individuals who have adopted flexible working arrangements. In this way, organizations can continue to address the barriers which prevent the successful use of flexible working policies. Kossek and Lambert (2005) indicate that little is known about men's roles in managing work-family responsibilities and there is concern in the literature about the perception of flexible working as a women's issue (Smithson, Lewis, Cooper & Dyer, 2004; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). This study will therefore include both women and men in the sample.

1.1.4 The research questions

The overarching research question which has been identified through the literature review is:

How do managers construe and experience flexible working arrangements?

Supplementary questions are as follows:

How do managers use their flexible working arrangements to continually meet demands from both the work and the non-work domains?

How do managers who work flexibly perceive their work life balance?

What is the relationship of their flexible working arrangement with their career?

1.2 Outline of thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the flexible working literature, examining the varying definitions and terms which are used in the wide ranging literature across different fields, before arriving at a definition which will be used in this thesis. The organizational perspective is examined, looking at the business case and the challenges in the implementation of flexible working policies. The role of the manager is briefly discussed before presenting what is known about managers who work flexibly, including those who work fewer hours than a standard contract. The question of gender differences is also considered. The relationship of flexible working with the harmonization or integration of work and life is examined, with particular reference to the management of the boundary between the work and non-work domains.

Chapter 3 explains my chosen philosophical perspective of social constructionism and the accompanying method of semi-structured interviews. The challenging issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research are addressed. I go on to discuss the field work including details of selection of participants and data gathering for both the pilot

study and the main study. A grounded approach was adopted and template analysis with the use of NVivo software is explained.

Chapter 4 contains the findings from the pilot study and explains the change in focus for the main study which resulted. The need to acknowledge and explore the unique working patterns of the participants was highlighted, as well as the importance of exploring both the formal and the informal aspects of flexible working. The constructs of consistency and adaptability emerged as part of the process through which managers make their flexible working arrangements actually work. The issue of supervisory responsibilities emerged as an important aspect of the managers' experiences, warranting further exploration in the main study.

The findings from the main study are presented in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 presents the findings and discussion which relate to flexible working in the greater context of managers' whole lives, and further support was found for the constructs of consistency and adaptability. The strategies used by managers for maintaining their flexible working arrangements are discussed, including the coordination with, and support of, other family members. Changes to flexible working arrangements over time were part of an ongoing adjustment to the demands from the work and non-work domains. Chapter 6 continues with the findings from the main study, focusing on the work aspects of flexible working. Issues which arise regarding the supervisory relationship with staff are discussed, followed by the experiences of these managers with regard to promotion. Finally, the personal organization of work, including the changes in approach to time management and levels of focus and concentration, is discussed.

Chapter 7 presents the contributions of the thesis. The map illustrates the conceptual structure of managers' experiences of working flexibly. The model of consistency and adaptability is explained in greater depth and four distinct clusters are described, which emerged from further analysis. This explanation is supported by individual case studies. Finally, chapter 8 concludes the thesis with the aim of the research, implications for practice, limitations, and directions for further research.

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the thesis, explaining the aim of the research and how my interest in the subject began. Background information has been provided to position the research in the current working practices of the UK and the research gap has been briefly introduced. An outline of the thesis explains the format and the content of each chapter.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2 Literature Review

Workplace flexibility has a variety of meanings and can be driven by a number of factors. The focus of this thesis is flexibility for the individual as part of the drive by organizations to support their staff through the use work-life policies. In contrast, practices such as work design, job rotation and job enrichment are examples of efficiency driven initiatives with no thought given to the impact on the lives of employees. Although there is a clear recognition that organizations (and therefore the individuals within them) benefit from integration of the efficiency driven perspective **and** the work life perspective, or mutual flexibility (Sheridan & Conway, 2001), this study focuses on flexibility *for* the employee (Alis, Karsten and Leopold, 2006). A key tenet of this type of flexibility is the choice available to employees regarding where, when and how much to work. This thesis examines the experiences of managers who themselves work flexibly.

Section 2.1 examines the plethora of terms which are used in the existing literature to refer to flexibility for employees, arriving at a definition which will be used for the purposes of this study. In section 2.2 I examine why organizations offer flexible working arrangements and the implementation of policies. Section 2.3 explores the role of manager and then section 2.4 considers what is known about managers working on a flexible basis, looking at experiences and outcomes. This section includes a review of managers working on a part-time basis. The relationship of flexible working with the integration of life and work is discussed, addressing the debate over the language used in section 2.5, and the final section (2.6) examines the issues of organizational boundaries and individual boundaries with regard to flexible working.

2.1 Flexible working

In practitioner literature flexible working often refers to patterns of work which differ from traditional working times of nine to five thirty, five days a week, and provide an element of choice to the individual concerned, particularly regarding time and place of working. Yet there has been little agreement on the use of terms within the academic literature which covers flexible working and consequently a lack of clarity

regarding definitions of flexible working practices. The aim of this section is to review the extant literature and the range of labels used to describe these different working patterns.

The same phrases have been defined quite differently adding to the confusion within the field. For instance, the Sloan Institute (Marler, 2004) described "alternative working arrangements" as employment arrangements other than those involving a direct contract between the individual and the employing organization. This sort of working is more usually referred to as "contingent work", referring to arrangements such as temporary work, seasonal work and work which involves a fixed term contract, as well as independent contractors or freelancer workers (Marler, Barringer & Milkovich, 2002; Connelly & Gallagher, 2004). The confusion is compounded when such contingent work is described as employment flexibility or involving flexible employment contracts (Guest, 2004).

The phrase "alternative working arrangements" has also been used to describe working patterns for employees with an employment contract, which offer temporal or spatial flexibility, including full time hours and compressed work weeks, as well as part-time and seasonal work (Frank & Lowe, 2003). This study specifically compared the performance of accountants who had traditional working patterns with those who worked flexitime or telecommuted. "Alternative work schedules" described similar patterns (Fallon, 1997) and "distributed work arrangements" referred to the use of satellite offices and home based working (Belanger & Collins, 1998).

Many journal articles used the terms teleworking, telecommuting or homeworking, with some authors using them interchangeably (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997) and others providing clear differentials. For instance, Ellison, in her 1999 examination of telework research, cited Nilles (1998:341) as defining teleworking as *"any form of substitution of information technologies for work-related travel"* and telecommuting as *"periodic work out of the principal office, one or more days per week, either at home, at a client's site, or in a telework centre"*. So teleworking referred to an event such as a teleconference with colleagues in a different location, but the defining feature of telework was that it was done outside the central office, but in a place where employees were co-located i.e. a satellite office. Homeworking referred merely to the fact of working in the home, regardless of the use of communication

technologies. For still others, it was that very usage of telecommunications which helped define the workers being studied. Madsen (2003:38) described teleworking: *"it often involves electronic processing of information and always involves using telecommunications to keep the remote employer and employee in contact with each other"*. Riley & McCloskey (1997:133) offered a similar description, referring to telecommuting as *"a means of using technology so that work can be completed without regard to physical location"*. For Kurland & Bailey (1999), the telecommunication link was an important part of the definition but could simply have been a telephone.

Other researchers introduced a time element into their definition with telecommuters working away from the main office one or more complete days per week, (Hartman, Stoner & Arora, 1992; Duxbury, Higgins & Neufeld, 1998). The importance of this factor was mentioned as one of the limitations in a study by McCloskey, Igbaria & Parasuraman (1998). They noted that the majority of the telecommuters in the study worked in this way for only one to three days per month and the authors acknowledged that results may differ if employees telecommuted more frequently.

Some clarity was offered by Hotopp (2002:312) with regard to the UK Labour Force Survey which referred to "all teleworkers" and "TC teleworkers" to differentiate between those who could work without a telephone or computer and those for whom such equipment is essential. The term "all teleworkers" included *"people who:*

- *mainly work from home in their main job, 'teleworker homeworkers'*

- *work from home in various locations but use their home as a base, 'home-based teleworkers'; and*

- *do not usually work at home or use home as a base but did so for at least one day in the reference week, 'occasional teleworkers'."*

Shin, Sheng & Higa (2000) focussed particularly on telework, defined as working from home or a satellite office to reduce commuting time. Their definition specifically excluded self-employed people operating businesses from home and also employees who only worked from home when putting in additional hours such as in

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the evenings. So they highlighted the importance of both the location of work and the contractual arrangement.

Yet other studies have used the term "family friendly" emphasizing the outcome of working patterns which allow individuals to manage their working practices in a way which gives them greater time with their families, and particularly young children (Dex & Scheibl, 1999; Dex, Smith & Winter, 2001; Chantal, van Doorne-Huiskes & Schippers, 2003).

So there are certain criteria which affect the use of the different terms above and are relevant to arriving at a definition for this study. These are work location, contractual arrangement, the reduction of commuting time, use of technology, and time spent away from the office. These factors are reflected in more recent studies which used the phrase "flexible working" to describe a range of working patterns which differed from traditional office hours usually thought of as a seven to eight hour day, five days per week (Almer, Cohen & Single, 2003; Houston & Waumsley, 2003; Smithson, Lewis, Cooper & Dyer, 2004). There are still many different working patterns included under this umbrella such as reduced load or hours, flexitime, part-time working, homeworking, teleworking and telecommuting. Temporal and spatial flexibility emerge for permanent employees as key elements of such patterns, allowing people to work at different times, for varying amounts of time and in different locations. However the search for agreement continues and a very recent publication prefers the term "workplace flexibility" defining this concept as:

> *"the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks"* (Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin & Pitt-Catsouphes, 2008:152).

2.1.1 Formal and informal flexible working

The final element to consider with regard to understanding the term flexible working is the level of formality of the flexible working arrangement. It has become increasingly important to differentiate between formal and informal flexible working. For instance a Danish study focused on the use of both formal flexible arrangements and informal flexibility in the organization's aim to offer a family friendly workplace. Flexible working was positioned as a means of supporting individuals who were

striving to meet caring demands from the non-work domain. The authors defined flexible working hours as:

> *"working hours which may be varied by individual employees in accordance with their own or their family's needs, thereby enabling parents (albeit to a varying extent) to fulfil certain fundamental care needs within the family"* (Holt & Thaulow, 1996:82).

Formal arrangements were those which were agreed in advance in some level of detail whereas informal flexible working was described in terms of the cultural norms which allowed individuals freedom to vary their working hours, adjusting times of working within an hour or so of the formal expectation. However, informal flexibility can also be more of a permanent arrangement, but not reflected in any contractual agreement. Hall and Atkinson (2006:376) reflect both of these elements in their definition of informal flexibility:

> *"being able to alter planned working time on an ad hoc basis at short notice or agree personal start and finish times to apply on a routine basis to accommodate commitments outside of work, such flexibility being agreed at local level by the immediate manager, without recourse to senior managers or HR specialists and requiring no need to amend an employment contract".*

Arguably the only working arrangement which necessitates a contractual change involves reduced hours. Yet homeworking on a regular basis can require formal approval and yet not be documented, indicating that the difference between formal and informal flexible working arrangements may be unclear.

2.1.2 Case relevant definition

In line with Sullivan's (2003) suggestion that the important factor in any definition of flexible working used in a research project was a clear rationale, I offer the following: my interest is in the potential for reduced face time, which refers to the time spent in the office during standard hours when work colleagues are also present, as opposed to the use of the term when specifically referring to client-facing time (Cohen & Single, 2001). Thus the term "flexible working arrangements" (FWAs) will refer to **a range of working patterns available to permanent employees who have been able to exercise some degree of individual choice in agreeing when, where and how**

much time they spend fulfilling their work responsibilities. Those arrangements may include:

- staggered hours (agreed start and finish times other than the standard)

- remote working (working for part of the working week either at home or at an office closer to home than the agreed base office)

- reduced hours (contractual arrangement to work fewer hours than included in the standard working week)

- compressed working (total standard working hours worked over fewer days than the norm such as a 4 day week or a 9 day fortnight)

- flexitime (individual discretion over start and finish time)

All of these types of FWA may reduce face time for the individuals concerned. As the focus of this thesis is on the **experience** of managers working flexibly, I will include those with formal and/or informal arrangements. The implementation of flexible working policies will be examined in the next section.

2.2 Organizational reasons for the introduction of flexible working

Flexibility within the workplace has been driven by both "push" factors and "pull" factors (Brewster, Mayne & Tregaskis, 1997). The push factors involve the drive from organizations to respond to economic pressures and developing technology which have required changes in the way work has been done. Pull factors, in comparison, have come from the labour market as greater flexibility allows individuals increased opportunities to participate in the workplace. Without that extra flexibility, some groups within the labour market would not be available for work.

But the division between those two sets of factors is not clear cut. The introduction of flexible working patterns has been part of the wider organizational response to the issue of work/life balance, along with other family friendly provisions such as on-site childcare facilities and extended maternity/paternity leave. Institutional pressures

such as the UK Work/life Balance Initiative and UK legislation regarding the right to request flexible working, as well as the increasing cultural expectation that organizations have some responsibility towards their employees' quality of life, and the desire to be an "employer of choice" have all contributed to the prevalence of such policies. Initiatives to promote flexibility aim to encourage employees to consider where, when and how to work in order to suit their own particular needs within the framework of meeting business needs.

Although availability of flexible working arrangements in the UK has increased significantly since 2003, take-up of formal arrangements has not increased at the same pace. In fact, the take-up of working from home has declined from 22% of organizations in 2000 to 15% in 2003 and again 15% in 2007 (Hayward, Fong & Thornton, 2007). There is an acknowledged scarcity of flexible worker role models at senior levels and the recognition by organizations that this in itself is an inhibitor of staff adopting such working patterns (Romaine, 2002). Yet media articles, government reports and practitioner literature perpetuate the idea that these senior individuals hold back from participation in such schemes because of fear of career death (Flexecutive, 2002; Flexecutive, 2004; Roberts, 2004) and there is ongoing concern about the level of take-up of such initiatives (Kodz, Harper & Dench, 2002).

2.2.1 A business case for flexible working

Business benefits such as increased productivity, lower absence rates, a wider pool of available skills and talents, greater staff morale and improved retention rates are considered to be the result of the implementation of flexible working practices within organizations. For instance, Dex et al (2001) found significant correlations between family-friendly policies and above average financial performance, above average labour productivity, improvements in quality performance, rising sales value and reduced labour turnover. However they stressed that they were not highlighting a causal link as they were dealing with cross-sectional data. Dex et al collected data from both managers and employees but only used the managerial data in their report. Interestingly, they commented that inconsistencies emerged in the data between the replies from managers and employees regarding individual entitlement to relevant policies, indicating different perceptions from those who actually want to use these

policies and from those who implement them and manage their use. Different types of policies offered were considered by Glass & Estes (1997) who examined those they termed "low cost" such as introduction of flexitime and others which were "high cost" such as compressed hours and home working. They specified the objectives of workplace family initiatives to relate to *family well-being, worker satisfaction, or organizational productivity"* (Glass & Estes, 1997:292). Another benefit for organizations is becoming an "employer of choice" with the increased retention of valued staff members (Bailyn, Rayman, Bengsten, Carre & Tierney, 2001) and attractiveness to job applicants (Rau & Hyland, 2002).

2.2.2 Implementation of Flexible Working Policies

Discrepancies between the rhetoric and the reality, or the existence of policies and the actual implementation may occur due to a number of factors. Despite the understanding of the business case for work-life policies, the purpose behind their introduction is often unclear, a factor which in itself can lead to inefficiencies. Organizations which undertake work-life programmes without full knowledge of the potential impacts may have to deal with unanticipated problems. For instance, homeworking may result in higher productivity due to greater concentration as a result of fewer interruptions and distractions. However, other staff who maintain a traditional working pattern may be resentful if they have to pick up some of the responsibilities no longer undertaken by their absent colleagues without appropriate accommodation being made. Organizations may be reluctant to invest in training of part-time staff, expecting their full time colleagues to provide informal instruction about new procedures or ways of working, again leading to resentment and frustration (Tomlinson, 2006). Alternatively, increased stress can result if some individuals officially work reduced hours but end up doing the same job, making up the time outside their contracted hours.

Lee, MacDermid, Williams, Buck and Leiba-O'Sullivan (2002) questioned an organization's primary concern when implementing a work/life programme, in a study examining the success of flexible working among managers and professionals. For instance, the introduction and maintenance of such a programme would have different components and emphases if the main driver were to retain valued

employees rather than to offer improved client service or to decrease absenteeism. Lee et al's findings indicated that the alternative work arrangements were successful with facilitating factors including individual characteristics and behaviours as well as contextual factors related to job content, work group and HR policies and practices.

Bailyn et al (2001) described a pilot project carried out over a year which explored workplace innovations with two explicit goals; improving work and business outcomes **and** helping people to integrate work and family lives. Thus, they recognized the dual nature of job redesign which can contribute to both of those corporate goals.

As the integration of work and life has become increasingly relevant, it has been recognised that the conventional career path involving a sequence of progressive promotions through one organization is now highly improbable (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). Downsizing and recurrent redundancies are a feature of life. Efforts to reduce the future financial penalties of downsizing have encouraged organizations to increasingly adopt what Pfeffer & Baron (1988) identified as three ways in which the attachment between firms and workers may be decreased. Reduced locational attachment, with staff working from locations other than the main office, has been facilitated by developments in technology allowing rapid information transfer. Reduced temporal attachment can occur, such as job sharing and term-time contracts at professional levels, as well as the often lower-paid part-time or short-term contracts historically lacking other benefits and job security. Finally, there may be reduced administrative attachment, illustrated by the use of temporary workers on the payroll of an agency, contractors who may be independent or agency workers and of course the use of offshore workers.

Reduced attachment leads to reduced costs but also loss of control for the organization and this loss of organizational control fits in with the notion of boundaryless careers where the individual makes decisions about their career independently of ties to the organization. But flexible workers want to maintain attachment in terms of benefits, including career opportunities. Pfeffer and Baron (1988:274) suggested that organizations offered "*careers and continuity in return for loyalty and commitment*". Those who seek to maintain their employment contracts through a flexible working pattern which allows them to meet other life demands still

apparently desire "careers and continuity". Long term employment still indicates commitment and loyalty. On the one hand, organizations want the reduced costs associated with reduced attachment, but flexible working does not offer them reduced costs, so they still want demonstrated commitment. They are buying the retention or commitment of their workers by offering flexible working, yet then questioning their commitment because of the other demands on their non-work time from the non-work domain.

It is interesting to consider that these methods of reducing attachment between an organization and its workers were put forward in 1988, just as organizations began to pay serious attention to the work/life balance issue. Much has been made of the fact that organizations are recognizing their social responsibilities, yet it could be that this is a way of packaging the decreased attachment mentioned above, in order to portray organizations more favourably.

Considering why work life policies (which include a flexible working offering) falter, it is helpful to consider that the specific strategic response to institutional pressures depends on a number of factors, including the congruence of institutional norms and organizational goals (Oliver, 1991). So legislative issues and cultural expectations may encourage the introduction of FWAs, but there may not always be a clear idea of how they will contribute to organizational goals. For instance, is the primary aim of a family responsive policy: to achieve excellence in client service, or to have the ability to attract and retain key talent, or to increase individual job satisfaction and performance? (Lee et al, 2002)

Another factor which may be relevant in policies being less than successful was highlighted in a study of 2000 managerial employees at a large telecommunications company in the U.S. by Kossek, Barber & Winters (1993). They found that employees were less likely to accept the use of flexible working arrangements if they felt that the company was introducing them for external reasons such as copying competitors rather than a genuine desire to benefit the employees. Weick (1979, cited in Gainey, Kelley & Hill, 1999) argues that decision-makers in organizations may encounter problems when implementing new programs because sufficient thought has not been given to the potential consequences. It would seem that organizations are still seeking reassurance about a sound business case for the introduction of

work/family practices and so expected efficiency gains must be apparent when board members are considering implementation of these programmes.

Inconsistencies in implementation may arise from other factors, such as poor communication methods which fail to make all members of staff aware of available options (Dex et al, 2001). Work/family responsiveness can therefore be defined as not only the formal policies and practices, but also the informal managerial attitudes and support that contribute to an accommodating work environment or organizational culture (Bardoel, 2003) which is consistent with a rational choice perspective. Contrary to institutional theory, smaller organizations were more likely to have workplaces which would welcome flexibility (Bardoel, 2003).

Various factors have been found to affect the take up of flexible working practices, such as gender (Kossek, Barber & Winters, 1999; Almer, Cohen & Single, 2003), family considerations (Hartman, Stoner & Arora, 1992; Stanworth 1999; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002; Almer et al, 2003; Branine, 2003), and acceptability within the workplace culture (Romaine, 2002; Watad & Will, 2003). The general organizational response to many of the work/family issues currently being raised has therefore been to offer a range of options, such as on-site nursery facilities, flexible hours, home-working, job sharing, reduced hours and term-time working. These responses all acknowledge the role conflict experienced by individuals when they face competing demands from the different domains in their lives. However we know little about how the role of manager is enacted by someone using a FWA. The next section will examine the role of manager before I review the limited research on managers working flexibly.

2.3 The role of manager

Much has been written about what managers do and the skills and competencies which are required for the successful execution of the role of manager. In contrast, very little has been written about managers who work flexibly and this may reflect the fact that formal flexible working is a recent innovation within the general workforce and the uptake by managers is still low. This section will review some of the classic literature on the role of manager.

The classical functions of management were identified by Fayol (1988) as planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. These functions have provided the basis for many text books in management and organizational behaviour as well as higher education programmes around the world.

Mintzberg (1975, 1990) criticized the management functions as being too simplistic, claiming that they did not actually inform us about what managers spend their time doing. Mintzberg (1990) offered a description of managerial work, based on his own review and a synthesis of other research, which consisted of ten integrated roles. He defined a manager as having "*formal authority over an organizational unit*" (Mintzberg, 1990:168) which resulted in three interpersonal roles of figurehead, leader and liaison. The network of contacts which arose from the interpersonal roles led to the informational roles of monitor, disseminator and spokesperson as the manager processed the vast amount of information received. These six roles then enabled the manager to perform the decisional roles of entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. Mintzberg emphasized the amount of job specific knowledge which managers carry in their heads and the importance therefore of being able to verbally interact with their subordinates in order to share information and convey images and impressions. This also contributed to the "*dilemma of delegation*" (Mintzberg, 1990:173) as it could take longer to hand over a task, with all the necessary information, than to complete the task themselves. Unsurprisingly, effectiveness was greater for those managers who understood and responded to the pressures and dilemmas of their jobs and Mintzberg described a crucial balance between a rational or cerebral approach and being insightful.

Katz (1955, 1974:91) focused on the skills and competencies required to be an effective administrator (defined as "one who (a) directs the activities of other persons and (b) undertakes the responsibility for achieving certain objectives through these efforts."). He defined three sets of essential, inter-related management skills: technical skills (specialized knowledge or expertise), human skills (ability to work with, understand and motivate others) and conceptual skills (analysis and diagnosis of complex situations), indicating that managers at all levels require some competence in each of them.

In contrast, Stewart (1974) suggested that there had been too much emphasis on the similarities of the behavioural demands of jobs, such as the levels of responsibility and the types of knowledge and experience needed. She felt it was more useful to compare the *different* ways in which individuals may do their jobs, considering factors such as the relationships, the social skills needed, the need to deal with crises and the ability to plan. Although flexible working as a concept did not exist in the same way in the 1970s, she also compared aspects of work patterns and the effects of the job on the job-holder's private life in her analysis of managerial jobs. Time deadlines and the extent to which the day was fragmented through the need to switch attention from one subject to another were part of the focus on the work pattern. Although these do not match with the current understanding of flexible working, they are certainly relevant to the way managers who work flexibly organize their time and Stewart was the first of the researchers in this field to make a connection between the role of manager and any impact on the job-holder's private life. She talks about the choice available to the manager:

> *"Choice refers to the opportunities that jobs provide for the incumbent to work on the task of his choosing at the time of his choosing."* (Stewart, 1976:27)

Thus a managerial role would seem to lend itself to flexible working which extends this choice to where, when and how much to work.

Luthans continued the discussion about what managers actually do (Luthans, 1988; Luthans, Hodgetts & Rosenkrantz, 1988), again with the focus on difference, studying a wider range of managers at all levels and from different organizations. Their work distinguished between successful managers, described as those who were rapidly promoted, and effective managers *"the ones with satisfied, committed subordinates turning out quantity and quality performance in their units"* (Luthans, 1988:127). Four managerial activities were identified which included some of the findings of earlier researchers. Communication included the exchange of information either through direct interaction with others or by telephone, memos, reports, bookkeeping etc. Secondly, traditional management consisted of activities such as planning and organizing, defining tasks, monitoring performance, decision making and problem solving. Human resource management covered motivating, staffing issues, managing conflict and training and development, while the fourth set of activities was

networking consisting of socialising and informal talking with colleagues within the organization as well as interacting with external stakeholders such as suppliers and clients.

Findings indicated that "successful managers" (i.e. those who were rapidly promoted) were spending significantly more time on networking activities than the less successful ones, and did not concentrate on the traditional management activities. In contrast, effective managers focused on communication and human resource management compared to less successful ones. So successful managers were not undertaking the same activities as the effective managers. Luthans acknowledged the difficulties of defining success and effectiveness in these circumstances, but the argument does seem a little circular. If effectiveness is measured by the factors above and includes the satisfaction and commitment of staff in order to get the job done, then it is not surprising that communication and motivation, listening, giving positive feedback etc are the activities which lead to these outcomes. However despite this, Luthans' work was valuable in that it led to a much greater focus on measuring performance as a means of appraisal leading to the promotion of effective managers, rather than the greater emphasis on networking and political skills.

Although Mintzberg's typology forms the basis of information on managers in many textbooks and management courses, it too has received criticism, although more limited. Some authors have expressed concern at his methods of behavioural observations of a mere five chief executives (Carroll & Gillen, 1987), but provided a useful integration of the conceptualisations of some of the early writers on management including Fayol, Mintzberg, Katz, Stewart and others. This model incorporates the classical functions of management emphasizing the importance of goals (both their own and those of other managers). Planning and management of time are necessary to facilitate the achievement of those goals and may involve many of the thousands of activities (noted by Mintzberg) which are necessary to progress towards completion of a given project. The knowledge base or subject expertise which managers bring to their roles is also included in this integrated model along with an acknowledgement of the skills or competencies necessary to enact those roles.

Drucker (1988) considered the management of people to be a secondary element within the role of manager and placed greater emphasis on the contribution managers are required to make through five basic operations.

- Setting objectives for oneself and others

- Organizing and classifying work, breaking it down into tasks and assigning them to others

- Motivating and communicating with team members, peers, senior managers

- Measurement of performance at individual, team and organizational levels

- Developing people

Yet other people feature in every one of those operations, so it is possible to link back to Luthans' "effective manager" who talked of managers getting the work done to high standards by committed and satisfied staff. "Developing people" may be only one operation in itself, but the relationship with others is a necessary part of all of the operations described.

Kanter (1989) commented on the rapid change of managerial work, placing a greater emphasis on the communication and collaboration necessary across different functions and divisions, both within organizations and externally. Hierarchical position and authority have become less important than the skills and sensitivity to work with others, harnessing people's energies and efforts to maximize achievement.

Most of the work above has focused exclusively on men in the role of manager with authors such as Mintzberg continually referring to both managers and readers as "he" and "him" and relating the various descriptions of management to masculine characteristics (Bartram, 2005). This contributed to the enduring stereotypical association identified by Schein (1973; 1996) of "think manager, think male". At that time the idea of managers being female had hardly been contemplated and the concept of the "ideal worker" prevailed (this will be addressed in section 2.5).

Although the different approaches above all indicate that the human element of management is only one factor, it appears to be pervasive and an inherent part of all

aspects of the role of manager. Thus it is not possible to separate it out from the other functions, operations, roles or skills (depending upon the favoured theory). I will now examine what is known about the outcomes of having a FWA focusing on managers who work flexibly.

2.4 Managers who work flexibly

Effective managers proactively control their tasks and the expectations of their stakeholders, using their discretion to prioritise, and so becoming more productive rather than fire fighting ineffectively (Ghoshal & Bruch, 2004). This greater autonomy in the way they fulfil their responsibilities would apparently lend itself to adopting a pattern of work which differs from the traditional notion of full time work being undertaken in the workplace. Yet analysis of the 2004 UK Workplace Employment Relations Survey shows that managerial staff are less likely to be able to make use of flexible options involving time adjustments, such as flexitime, and part time hours (Nadeem & Metcalf, 2007; Hayward et al, 2007). However managerial staff are more likely than non-managerial staff to be eligible to use home working which involves spatial adjustment (Hayward et al, 2007).

Flexible working in one form or another has been the subject of many studies and the lack of agreed definition and mixed samples which do not differentiate between different levels of staff or different forms of flexibility limit the conclusions which can be drawn (Baruch, 2001; McCloskey & Igbaria, 1998). There has been limited research focusing specifically on managers who work flexibly. For instance, in a meta-analysis of the effect of flexible schedules on work-related criteria, only three of the 39 sub-studies focused on the grouping of "managers and professionals" (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright & Neuman, 1999). Similarly, in a qualitative study examining the effect of teleworking on communications within the organization, only 15% of the teleworkers in the sample were managers, amounting to five individuals, and the results were not broken down according to the different groups (Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999). Exceptions to this lack of research on staff at managerial level with a FWA have focused on teleworkers' experiences of managing the boundaries between work and home, when based in the home, and the challenges presented by such an

arrangement (Tietze, 2002; Tietze & Musson 2003; Tietze, 2005). These will be discussed in section 2.6 on boundary management.

Understanding the experiences of managers working flexibly and encouraging them to do so is important because of their impact as role models, demonstrating that acknowledging the demands from the non-work domain is acceptable (Kossek et al, 1999). They therefore have a role as change agents in removing the barriers towards acceptance of flexible working within organizational cultures. The attitudes of managers thus play an important role in the introduction and implementation of flexible working policies (Bardoel, 2003; Maxwell, 2005) and a negative attitude by those in senior positions has a detrimental effect on the take up by more junior staff (Nadeem & Hendry, 2003). This again brings into question the amount of individual choice which actually exists, given the associated negative perceptions of levels of commitment and ambition.

The following paragraph will discuss general outcomes of flexible working where managers were included in the sample. As mentioned earlier, increased organizational commitment (Scandura & Lankau, 1997) and job satisfaction (Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999) by those working flexibly are positive outcomes which have been highlighted, although a breakdown of satisfaction with different components of the job leads to differing results. For instance in Igbaria and Guimaraes' study, the greater autonomy and control over completion of work experienced by teleworkers was appreciated, whereas they also described less social interaction with colleagues, increased interference in mode of working and fewer career opportunities. Social interaction was described as an important part of the culture of an organization (Gainey et al, 1999) which can be weakened by a high level of telecommuting. Reduced social interaction causes concern with regard to informal employee development activities, with individuals potentially missing out on opportunities for progression and organizational rewards (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Similarly, when visibility was perceived as a key factor for promotion, teleworking was perceived less favourably (Lim & Teo, 2000). Thus good design of a telecommuting programme which includes some time spent in the office each week mitigates the possible adverse effects by allowing individuals to maintain their presence as valued employees (Riley & McCloskey, 1997).

Many organizations still have a culture of presenteeism where motivation and commitment are interpreted as a direct consequence of hours worked and particularly time spent in client-facing activities. Therefore long term career potential can be adversely affected where flexible working reduces the amount of time spent in the office (Frank & Lowe, 2003; Rogier & Padgett, 2004). However, in a study which focused on the career development of women managers (Maxwell, Ogden & McTavish, 2007), flexible working arrangements were indicated as supporting factors, although paradoxically, flexibility at senior levels was not found to be acceptable in the industry context (retail).

2.4.1 Reduced load or reduced hours

There is also limited research on part time workers at managerial level. Part-time work is generally accepted as an option which comes under the umbrella of flexible working when it results from a request from the employee, but historically it has been associated with lower status, less pay and fewer career opportunities (Rotchford & Roberts, 1982). Some researchers have sought to distinguish studies with samples of more senior employees working less than full time hours, by referring to them as undertaking "reduced hours work" or "reduced-load work" (Barnett & Gareis, 2000). This is also referred to as "new-concept part time work" (Hill, Martinson, Ferris & Baker, 2004). Others have focussed on the experiences of women who ostensibly choose to work part-time in order to combine paid work with family life (Tomlinson, 2007; Walsh, 2007). Research on part-time workers has been criticised for lack of differentiation between employees with regard to demographic variables and a typology of the part-time workforce (e.g. primaries – those who earn more than 50% of household income; single supplementers – earn 50% or less of household income from job in question and have other sources of income; students – job provides discretionary income etc.) allows for a more meaningful comparison of attitudes and patterns of turnover, (Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Senter & Martin, 2007).

Commitment

Part time workers can be perceived as less committed simply because they work fewer hours (Jenkins, 2004) although more recent work has suggested that there is no evidence to support this, describing it as one of the fallacies which exist with regard to

flexible working (Johnson, Shannon, & Richman, 2008). The response to requests for reduced hours is often to see it as a privilege being offered, rather than a management tool which enables retention of valued staff. In an overall measure of engagement, part-time workers scored very closely to full-time staff (Civian, Richman, Shannon, Shulkin & Brennan, 2008) although some differences emerged on some of the individual items. For instance, agreement with a statement regarding expending extra effort for business needs was scored slightly lower by part time workers. These scores were not highlighted as statistically significant, and given that the actual scores were 90% for part time staff and 95% for full time staff, it is questionable whether such a differential is worthy of comment with such a high proportion of total respondents agreeing with the statement. Resistance to flexible working sometimes emerges thorough the classification of jobs in terms of "can" or "can't" be done on a flexible basis and creativity is encouraged to explore the possibilities rather than risk the identification of "flexible jobs" which may then become associated with reduced commitment (Lee, MacDermid & Buck, 2000).

Supporting the fact that the number of hours is not related to commitment, long hours are not necessarily consistently productive. When working such long hours, employees spend a proportion of their time on work which does not greatly contribute to their effectiveness (Johnson et al, 2008). One attempt to change the working culture through the introduction of flexible working found that employees could reduce the extra hours they worked without damaging business results (Munck, 2001). The amount of working hours undertaken clearly affects the personal domain of employees, with a greater negative impact as the hours of work increase and flexibility being a mitigating factor in these circumstances (Johnson et al, 2008). These authors argue that flexibility is more than a tool for attracting and retaining valued staff and can actually be viewed as a means of "*building and sustaining employee engagement and productivity*" (Johnson et al, 2008:241).

Women working reduced hours

Professional women working shorter hours experience greater work and family balance than those on a full time schedule (Higgins, Duxbury & Johnson, 2000; Hill et al, 2004). However, those in more junior positions may find their limited hours to be disruptive. For instance, the requirement to work a small number of hours each

day can result in difficulties arranging childcare which is often easier for full days, and such difficulties are exacerbated by unpredictable but compulsory overtime (Walsh, 2007). Tomlinson (2006) found differences in the flexibility available to women at varying levels within an organization. Optimal working flexibility occurs when working time flexibility intersects with functional flexibility and this tends to occur among those with high perceived organizational value who are typically highly skilled and in senior grades. So senior women returners who negotiate flexibility and maintain their previous grade can access this optimal flexibility, whereas women with fewer skills prior to maternity leave and at lower grades are not in a strong negotiating position and experience restrictive working time flexibility.

Career and reduced hours

There is little consensus about the effects on career with specific regard to reduced hours. Although some women reported no adverse effects on perceived career opportunities (Hill et al, 2004) when working shorter hours, they talked about putting their career on hold with the understanding that they would be able to make significant progress once they worked full time hours once again. This was also reflected by Kropf (1999) in her description of the flexibility initiative at the US practice of Deloitte & Touche where a period of working reduced hours was deemed to stall the career but not affect long term potential. Similarly Maxwell et al (2007:364) found that women "*choose to self-limit their career progression ... due to positive choices to have a reasonable work-life balance*". So the language used is interesting as women deny that their career is affected but claim to "choose" to put it "on-hold" or to "trade-off" their career with their family. This reflects Tomlinson's (2004) observation that some managers seem to believe that part-time work is a freely made choice linked to lower commitment.

In contrast to these studies reporting no adverse effect, others found explicit evidence of the detrimental effect of reduced hours on career where career advancement to senior levels may only be available to those with a traditional working pattern (Stanworth, 1999; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley and Shakespeare-Finch, 2005; Walsh, 2007). This situation can arise because of the need for those working shorter hours to focus entirely on the specific achievement of goals with no time available for activities such as mentoring of junior staff or business development, which are

sometimes seen as necessary for promotion (Cohen & Single, 2001). Alternatively, part-timers may be given less opportunity to attend significant meetings, shadow senior staff or to be involved in strategy development (Edwards & Robinson, 2004). Similarly, returning to work on a part-time basis after maternity leave is more likely to result in a reduction in job status (Houston & Marks, 2003).

Part time management positions may be the outcomes of strategies to retain talented employees who had previously worked full time rather than to promote part time workers (Tomlinson, 2006). The transition to part time positions allows them to maintain status within an organization and women often recognize it as valuing the investment in their previous training and acquired skills. Thus it is important for women to reach senior levels before they have children to ensure access to their preferred FWA upon return (Tomlinson, 2004).

A retrospective study (Lee & Kossek, 2005) was carried out as a follow-up to qualitative research with a sample of managers and professionals working on a reduced-load basis. This provides scarce findings of a longitudinal nature and gives some support to the idea of a career plateau while working shorter hours. The sample included a small number of men and the aim was to learn how participants had continued to make choices about working and how their careers, family life and personal life had evolved in the intervening six years. Nearly half of the current sample was still choosing to work reduced hours and some of those who had returned to full-time had done so because they experienced lack of opportunities and absence of support for such a working pattern. Others who still worked fewer hours, valued the challenges, learning and developing which they were able to access, and appreciated the contributions they were able to make to both organization and family. A constant finding across the two studies was the high level of commitment to professional identity and a strong career orientation. However, these factors had contributed to some reluctantly returning to full time hours. Themes about career success had changed, with emphasis on being able to "have a life" being predominant in the first study, whereas "having an impact" and "peer respect/recognition" were more common six years on.

2.4.2 Gender differences in managers working flexibly

There is some indication in the literature of gender differences with regard to outcomes of flexible working. Work life policies, including FWAs, have often been perceived to be aimed at women and to be more prevalent in workforces with a greater proportion of women (Belanger, 1999). Women who perceived that flexible working was an available option reported higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment than women who did not have that perception (Scandura & Lankau, 1997). In contrast, the same study highlighted that men reported similar levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment whether or not they believe that their organization offers flexible working. Similarly, parents of children under eighteen years were found to have greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment if they believed that flexible working was an option.

Organizations have moved from family friendly policies to flexible working policies with a greater emphasis on work-life balance for all, in a bid to avoid being seen to offer preferential treatment to parents and particularly mothers. However, despite the careful use of gender neutral language when framing questions, findings indicate that flexible working is still predominantly seen as an option for women, particularly those returning from maternity leave (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

The reliance on the discretion of managers, who are often under pressure to meet performance targets, can sometimes contribute to the gendered effect when the majority of managers are men and the bulk of requests for flexible working or other work-life balance policies come from women (Hyman & Summers, 2004). This emphasis on women may contribute to the reluctance of both men and women with career aspirations to pursue a flexible working option. Yet men are taking advantage of flexible working in slowly increasing numbers and the UK Labour Force Survey (Spring 2005) indicates that one fifth of fathers use flexible working patterns. If flexible working is mainly considered to be a women's issue, women are likely to be seen as less than ideal workers when they adopt part-time hours, remote working, term-time working, compressed hours or other non-traditional working arrangements.

In a UK study examining the relationship between flexible working and the gender pay gap, Smithson et al (2004) discussed the gender neutral language of diversity and

choice which was used by the respondents in the qualitative interviews. Despite the careful use of neutral terms in the questions asked by researchers, *"flexible working practices are thus constructed* (by the respondents) *as an issue for women with childcare responsibilities"* (Smithson et al, 2004:122). They suggest that this language actually masks the gendered patterns of working and living which exist in the reality of today's society. Unsurprisingly, there were fewer men working part-time and they highlighted different priorities for choosing such a pattern, with no mention of fitting working hours around child-caring responsibilities, which was a frequent issue for the women in this sample. The men tended to be at a later stage in their lives, having reached higher positions and having older children and *"the problem of part-timers and promotion is explicitly linked to being family-oriented, rather than to the amount of time and commitment given to the organization."* (Smithson et al, 2004:125), further reinforcing the oft-held belief within organizations that flexible working is a women's issue.

Almer & Single (2004) have highlighted the different experiences of men who choose to work flexibly. They suggest that men anticipate less support from management, colleagues and clients for their working flexible hours because there is a greater stigma attached to men's involvement in family/domestic issues. A key element in the expected slowing of career progression is the factor mentioned earlier, of having less, if any, time to spend on business development or perfecting selling and presentation skills. A further experimental study (Almer, Cohen & Single, 2004) found that males working flexibly were viewed as less likely to succeed than females working flexibly. A rare piece of research focusing on fathers in managerial positions who worked flexibly found that they experienced high levels of work family conflict in spite of their access to FWAs (Allard, Haas and Hwang, 2007). The implementation gap between access to and use of such arrangements was again confirmed with just under half of those with access, not choosing to work flexibly. Similarly, Wharton and Blair-Loy (2002) suggest that men were much more likely to doubt the likelihood of their being able to adopt such a part time working pattern whereas women's greater interest in working part-time was linked to their greater perception of such a pattern being possible.

2.4.3 Summary of knowledge of managers working flexibly

Findings about outcomes of participation in FWAs are conflicting and often it is the perceptions which people hold that present the negative picture. There is evidence of managers' attitudes towards flexible working and concern particularly over the relationship of flexible working and career. Some gender differences have been reported and the perception of flexible working as an option predominantly for women returning from maternity leave continues to be problematic. Little is known about the actual experiences of managers working flexibly, particularly with regard to the positioning of flexible working within their approach to their whole lives. We know about the challenges of combining work and home within the same location and the different approaches which homeworkers may use as they grapple with the demands from the different domains (Tietze & Musson, 2003). The question of integration of work and non-work will be discussed in more detail in section 2.5.

2.5 Flexible working and work life integration

Organizations have responded to the pressure from the labour market for greater flexibility as part of the work life balance (WLB) debate, initially driven by those with children, but latterly coming from wider sections of the workforce (Casper, Weltman & Kwesiga, 2007). I have discussed the myriad of terms used to describe flexible working, and the language used to describe WLB has also reflected its socially constructed evolvement. Research emphasis has moved from "conflict" through "seeking balance" to "integration" (Burke, 2004). Similarly there has been a shift away from "work-family" or "family friendly" when referring to organizational policies to "work-life" in order to remove the emphasis on parents, especially mothers. "Work-life" has also received criticism with its suggestion that work and life are somehow separate (Eikhof, Warhurst and Haunschild, 2007), rather than work being a part of life.

The term "work/personal life integration" was offered by Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher and Pruitt (2002) who seek to acknowledge the importance of individual priorities and choices with the use of the word "integration", rather than "balance". They suggest that balance indicates an equal split of time between the two domains, which is an

unrealistic state of affairs, whereas integration focuses on a sense of satisfaction in both the work and non-work domains. But "integration" also suggests the blending together of work and personal life, and individuals do not always want to manage the two areas by merging them. Some prefer to keep them separate. The issues of blending and separation, or integration and segmentation, as they are more commonly known, will be addressed in section 2.6. Thus, authors have begun to refer to the harmonizing of work and the rest of life (Lewis & Cooper, 2005; Gambles, Lewis & Rapoport, 2006) to indicate their interaction in positive ways. In a different attempt to redefine the work-life balance construct, Ransome (2007:378) introduces the concept of the "*total responsibility burden*" which includes not just the labour involved in both paid work and household duties but also recreational labour or "*the realm of leisure, pleasure and enjoyment*" including voluntary work.

The demands from the work and non-work domains are not absolute and can not necessarily be easily measured. The demands vary, as do individual responses to such demands. It could be argued that people self-impose expectations with regard to performance of both work responsibilities and household and other non-work obligations (Quick, Henley and Quick, 2004). Managing such expectations can enable an individual to cope with conflicting priorities and Quick et al place more emphasis on the importance of energy in a given situation, rather than the amount of time spent there. So the argument moves away from a sense of balance or equality of the different domains, and acknowledges the relevance of timely emotional engagement within each domain and the ability to focus on situational requirements. But this still suggests a large element of choice, whereas Caproni (2004) argues that the language used in the WLB debate adds to the pressures experienced by individuals who are seeking to achieve this elusive state of satisfaction with both work and non-work domains. She describes the conceptualization of work-life balance as individualistic and achievement-oriented:

> "*setting us up to strive for one more thing that we cannot achieve and, in doing so, keeping us too focused, busy and tired to explore the consequences of our thinking and actions*" (Caproni, 2004:212).

The continual working towards balance can also imply a greater choice over life decisions than often exists. For instance, care may have to be provided for children or

for elderly parents, but the demands for such care are often unpredictable, due to combinations of circumstances, thus reducing the element of choice and control (Caproni, 2004).

However, not everyone agrees that balance has been about seeking satisfaction in both domains. A different interpretation suggests that one of the flawed assumptions in the work life balance debate is that work has been portrayed as negative and problematic, with individuals wanting to reduce the time spent at work as a result (Eikhof et al, 2007). These authors suggest that work life balance programmes ignore the possibility that people may gain satisfaction and fulfilment from work, and state that a common, and inaccurate, premise for FWAs is that "*work-life balance provisions are introduced to help employees reconcile what they want to do (care) with what they have to do (work)*" (Eikhof et al, 2007:327, brackets in the original). They argue that employees may want to work and that the work life balance debate tends to ignore this as a possibility. However, others talk about positive spillover (Kirchmeyer 1993) and the enrichment which takes place between work and family (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006)

Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport (2007:361) argue that there are in fact two overlapping WLB discourses; "the personal control of time" and "workplace flexibility" with both including a dimension of choice. The former indicates that individuals are able to make their own decisions about the priorities in their lives around work, career, family and other aspects of life, paying little attention to the gendered assumptions about commitment and competence which underpin the concept of the ideal worker (Rapoport et al, 2002). Flexibility discourses emphasise the choice available to employees, as described earlier, and again may not challenge the gendered constraints to adoption of FWAs. Additionally, women may view working as a financial necessity rather than a real choice (Houston & Marks, 2005) partly because of the huge effort needed to overcome the psychological and practical barriers in order to work. This does not, of course, preclude the experiencing of some satisfaction as a result of working.

Managers and professionals are particularly susceptible to the "ideal worker" norm of domesticity and the subsequent doubt over their commitment to their employer and their career if they stray from that ideal by adopting a pattern of work which involves

less face time. The ideal worker has historically been seen as someone who can give their time unstintingly and willingly to their employing organization, and have no conflicting demands on their time (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek and Sweet, 2006). Alongside this is the assumption of the existence of another adult based full time in the home to attend to domestic and caring responsibilities. In the 21st century many families do not have such a structure of full time breadwinner and full time homemaker (Marks, 2006) and households may consist of different mixes of number of adults, age and number of children or no children, and presence or absence of elderly dependents (Ransome, 2007). The assumption of gender neutrality which is implicit in the WLB debate is similarly hidden in the discussion around flexible working. Although policies have moved from being "family friendly" in an effort to emphasize availability to all, the socially constructed reality in many organizations still involves flexible working as being seen as a benefit for women with children who are the main users of work-life policies (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

2.6 Management of the boundary between home and work

Home and work are generally considered to be different spheres. Organizations have traditionally been defined by their limits; the spatial barriers of walls, office doors and buildings which have been "guarded" by receptionists and personal assistants or by swipe card entry systems and the temporal barriers of working hours and shift patterns (Scott, 2003). In organizations which embrace flexible working policies, activities may no longer be bounded by such spatial and temporal markers as the very nature of flexible working means varying hours and place of work. The absence of such familiar boundary markers can cause difficulties with adjustment as shown in a study of organizationally enforced teleworking with home as a full-time base (Harris, 2003). Workers experienced tensions resulting from unclear boundaries between work time and family time. So previously discrete entities of work and home had become blurred without the gap which is needed to affirm separate identities (Zerubavel, 1991) Although teleworking is normally considered under the umbrella of employee friendly flexible working, Harris' study illustrated the emphasis on organizational objectives with a corresponding absence of individual choice.

Pearlson and Saunders (2001) detail some of the inherent paradoxes which can be found in telecommuting, from the perspective of the manager of teleworkers. These paradoxes arise specifically from the lack of traditional boundaries, and centre on the different perspectives of the manager and the teleworker. For instance, the teleworker may appreciate the increased temporal and spatial flexibility available from working at home, but the manager may have to add new structures to ensure sufficient interaction between the remote worker and the on-site workers and to keep track of work outputs.

A major consequence of homeworking is to change the boundary between home and work which may allow more flexibility in responding to issues which arise, but equally it can result in the expectation of an ever-present response to demands from either the work or home: *"a protective barrier between work and home has been removed – protective against the spillover of problems from one domain to the other"* (Baruch & Nicholson 1997:20). The same theme is discussed by Mirchandani (2000) who describes the integration of work and family activities as a threat, suggesting that organizations are reinforcing the status quo which assumes that organizational needs take priority over family demands.

If a homeworker chooses their work hours outside conventional office hours, the organizational expectation is likely to be that they are still available for work phone calls during traditional hours and the danger is that the work hours just expand. This is particularly common for those in managerial and/or professional situations, with their apparent autonomy but internal control and high responsibilities which can lead to "*ever-availability*" (Tietze & Musson, 2003:444). Self discipline and effective time management may mitigate this effect as well as a separate area in the home to be used solely for work, which has been recommended (Riley & McCloskey, 1997) but may not always be possible.

However, it is not just those who work from home who may wish to maintain boundaries between the work and the non-work domains. Young professionals create and maintain their own unique boundaries between the two domains as a means of simplifying and ordering the complex environment in which they work and live (Wilson et al, 2004). Such distinctions allow them to identify and separate the claims on their attention as the meanings of the work and the non-work domains emerge

from the differences between them (Zerubavel, 1991). But the differences are socially constructed and actually aid the individuals in knowing how to behave according to the social norms in each domain.

Successful flexible working, therefore, may depend on the establishment and management of newly defined boundaries which are acceptable to both employer and employee. So a continual re-negotiation of boundaries may be necessary as the demands from the work domain and the non-work domain change over time. Such boundaries may be established and manipulated using a clock-based approach when time constraints are adhered to or through taking a more task based approach which allows for the prioritization of the jobs which need to be done at a given time (Tietze & Musson, 2003).

2.6.1 Boundary theory

Boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1995; Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000) and border theory (Campbell-Clark, 2000) explore the idea of segmentation and integration of work and non-work domains and how the transitions from one aspect of life to another can be managed. In boundary theory Ashforth et al (2000) describe the psychological and/or physical movement between roles as a "boundary-crossing activity" and focus on the transitions people make in the course of a normal day, between work and non-work, and between different roles within the work place. Working flexibly, especially in the form of remote working, potentially adds additional, non-work roles (such as spouse, parent, neighbour etc.) to those of boss, colleague, client, supplier etc which may be enacted during the working day, as the roles vary according to those with whom one interacts. Work–family border theory explains the ways in which individuals manage the work and family spheres in order to achieve balance which Campbell-Clark (2000: 751) describes as '*satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict'*. Campbell-Clark considers work and family to be two distinct domains with different associations of behaviour, values and rules.

Zerubavel (1991) describes the partitioning of time and space as the process of establishing boundaries, yet the very placement of boundaries suggests the possibility of overlap between domains. Overlap can occur through the permeability or the

flexibility of the boundary (Hall & Richter, 1988). A boundary is said to be permeable if psychological elements from one domain can enter another. Nippert-Eng (1995) refers to permeability as more specifically the mental transitions between different domains, indicating that as the domains become more similar, the boundary becomes more permeable. Campbell-Clark describes this as "psychological flexibility", being able to think about work when in the home, or about home when in the workplace. However, Hall and Richter's (1988) original definition distinguished flexibility of a boundary as dependent on the extent to which the temporal and spatial markers of a domain are moveable. So the temporal boundaries between work and non-work are very flexible when individuals can freely choose their hours of work. Similarly the spatial boundaries are flexible for those who can work in whatever location they choose. According to Campbell-Clark (2000:757), blending occurs when there is a high level of permeability and flexibility leading to integration and what she describes as "*a sense of wholeness*".

Ashforth et al's (2000) work introduces a continuum of segmentation to integration, where segmented roles have inflexible and impermeable boundaries and integrated roles have boundaries which are both flexible and permeable. They described role transitions as individuals moving or crossing from one role to another, describing the micro-transitions which occur through the day as we interact with different people and different situations in many roles as client, manager, supplier, parent, spouse etc. Such crossing of role boundaries can be more challenging when required to enact a role in a domain more commonly associated with a different set of roles, as is the case for those who work from home. Integrated roles have low contrast between role identities with a completely integrated approach being the result of total overlap in attitudes, thinking and behaving with little difference in either domain. Boundaries tend to be flexible and permeable, allowing high levels of accessibility from others with whom one interacts.

Nippert-Eng (1995) adds a useful distinction between segmentation and integration, suggesting that the direction of the transition is the key factor. When roles or categories are clearly segmented, transitions tend to be uni-directional at any given time. So the commute to work at the beginning of the day or entering the home office and shutting the door behind you can indicate similar levels of segmentation as they

are both moving away from the non-work domain and setting the scene for the focus on work.

Integration is indicated by less distinctive and less direction-linked transitions because of the similarity of the categories. So an individual who is working from home and attends to tasks such as putting on the washing machine or making tea for the decorators whilst writing a report has an integrated approach, just as someone who does their supermarket shopping on-line whilst sitting in the office before going to a meeting to discuss future sales strategy. When the boundaries are permeable in this way, individuals may find it easier to make that mental shift between different domains. However, it can be argued that such a mental shift may not be that easy because of the ambiguity and uncertainty which can arise when the boundaries between the two domains are no longer in place. Tietze (2002) suggests that such ambiguity occurs because of the bringing together of the two distinct discourses of home and work, particularly in the case of individuals working from home on a regular basis. She found evidence of the coping strategies used by individuals and their families when work was brought into the home which included new decisions being made and ground rules established which allowed for the pursuit of both work and family lives with the minimum of conflict. Thus homeworking is not just about the person with the FWA but about the need for the other householders, usually family, to address "*how they want to live*" (Tietze, 2002: 388).

2.7 Conclusion

The literature on flexible working lacks clarity with regard to definitions and understanding of the specific context. Many different phrases are used to describe the multitude of alternatives to a traditional working pattern which involves going to the workplace at set times for a set number of days in a week. The traditional pattern tends to be thought of as something similar to nine o'clock in the morning to five thirty in the afternoon at the workplace. FWAs are often considered to involve individual choice in changing those hours and/or place of work (Hill et al, 2008). There is an established business case for the introduction and implementation of flexible working policies within organizations but individual use of FWAs varies and this is affected by legislative and cultural issues.

Managers contribute to organizational effectiveness through the enactment of a number of functions, operations, roles or skills, with communication and interaction with other people being key features of their role (e.g. Drucker, 1988, Luthans, 1988; Mintzberg, 1990). A high degree of autonomy exists in managerial roles which allows the exercising of choice in allocation of time to an array of tasks (Stewart, 1974) and this lends itself to a flexible approach to work. Yet the number of managers who work flexibly remains low and this contributes to the lack of knowledge for this group. The evidence which does exist regarding the outcomes for staff working flexibly remains inconclusive, although the positive effects on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and retention of valued staff have become more accepted. The effect on career is still uncertain. Some gender differences have emerged with women being more likely to make use of FWAs, but increasing numbers of men are doing so.

Flexible working is often seen as a factor in achieving the elusive concept of work life balance, which is itself the centre of a debate about the language used to describe the interplay between the work and non-work domains. Little is known specifically about how people managers experience flexible working as an effective strategy for fulfilling their responsibilities in the work and non-work domains. We know that individuals may segment or integrate their roles and the activities in those domains but we do not know how they construct meaning into those activities in the context of flexible working. Findings to date have tended to result from mixed samples of staff at different levels or with different contractual arrangements. This study aims to extend knowledge with regard to the actual experiences of managers working flexibly, and specifically focus on those who have a FWA which results in reduced face time.

The main research question is:

How do managers construe and experience flexible working arrangements?

Supplementary questions are:

How do managers use their flexible working arrangements to continually meet demands from both the work and the non-work domains?

How do managers who work flexibly perceive their work life balance?

What is the relationship of their flexible working arrangement with their career?

The following chapter will explain the proposed methodology, explaining the reasoning behind my choice of a social constructionist perspective and the selection of semi-structured interviews as the means of gathering data. The pilot study and the main study will be introduced, detailing the selection of participants, data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3   Methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter will explain the link between theory and research and the other influences which affect the choice of research design. Contrasting philosophical positions will be introduced in section 3.3. My own philosophical perspectives will be explained leading to the choice of social constructionism in section 3.4 as the appropriate perspective for this research. Section 3.5 discusses the research strategy and design, including validity and reliability and the choice of semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork will be described in sections 3.6 and 3.7 and information on data analysis is explained in section 3.8.

3.2   Theory and research

Social enquiry can have several purposes including exploration, description, explanation and evaluation. In doctoral research projects such as this a major emphasis is placed on the contribution to knowledge which is to be made. Whetten (2002) distinguishes between scholarly description and scholarly explanation which allow for conceptual contributions and theoretical contributions respectively. So scholarly description is informed by theory but limited to insights regarding **what** is happening whereas scholarly explanation extends understanding regarding **why** something is happening (Blaikie, 1993) and is necessary for a theoretical contribution. Sutton and Staw similarly describe theory in this way:

> Theory is about the connections among phenomena, a story about why acts, events, structure, and thoughts occur. (1995: 378)

At a simple level a theory is used to explain observed regularities but the link between theory and research is more complex and Bryman (2008) differentiates between grand theories and middle of the range theories. Grand theories tend to be more abstract such as symbolic interactionism or structuration theory, whereas middle of the range theories are more likely to be used for empirical enquiry and therefore to guide research. The

latter theories tend to be deductive which means that the researcher formulates hypotheses based on existing knowledge and then gathers data to test those hypotheses. Whetten (2002) claims that a theoretical contribution can be made through the incremental development of these theories. An inductive approach to research is an alternative where theory is the outcome of the research with theoretical ideas being derived from the data (Bryman, 2008). Both approaches can be used as strategies for building theory. Studies on flexible working are often criticised for being atheoretical and Silverman (2000) points out that the collection of data depends upon the research question, which in turn should be theoretically informed.

3.3 Philosophical approach

Research seeks answers which involve understanding and such understanding will depend on the methods of investigation chosen. Various philosophical issues affect the satisfactory achievement of outcomes from research and a researcher needs to understand a range of philosophical assumptions. It has therefore been necessary to examine my own philosophical beliefs in order to clarify an appropriate research design. The basis of philosophical positions includes the ontological and epistemological assumptions which a researcher considers and these will guide the choice of method chosen for the investigation.

Blaikie (1993:6) describes ontology as referring to:

> "the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality – claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other."

The ontological debate usually centres around whether the social world is something which is external to individual actors or social constructions that people fashion through their perceptions and actions (Bryman, 2008). Blaikie (1993:7) describes epistemology as referring to:

> "the claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality, whatever it is understood to be; claims about how what exists may be known."

So the ontological shapes the epistemological and different philosophical positions thus lend themselves to different research methods and designs. Several authors have summarised the range of philosophical positions and Table 3.1 (overleaf) shows an overview by Morgan and Smircich (1980) of the relationships between ontology, human nature, epistemology and methodology. I will then explain the position of this study with regard to those aspects.

Table 3-1 Network of Basic Assumptions Characterizing The Subjective – Objective Debate within Social Science

	Subjectivist approaches to social science					Objectivist approaches to social science
Core ontological assumptions	Reality as a projection of human imagination	Reality as a social construction	Reality as realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as contextual field of information	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a concrete structure
Assumptions about human nature	Man as pure spirit, consciousness, being	Man as a social constructor, the symbol creator	Man as an actor, the symbol user	Man as an information processor	Man as an adaptor	Man as a responder
Basic epistemological stance	To obtain phenomenological insight, revelation	To understand how reality is created	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To map contexts	To study systems, process, change	To construct a positivist science
Some favoured metaphors	Transcendental	Language game, accomplishment, text	Theatre, culture	Cybernetics	Organism	Machine
Research methods	Exploration of pure subjectivity	Hermeneutics	Symbolic analysis	Contextual analysis of Gestalten	Historical analysis	Lab experiments, surveys

Morgan & Smircich, 1980:492

3.4 Positivism versus interpretivism

Considering the extremes of Table 1 in particular, objectivism is an ontological position which claims that social phenomena are independent of social actors and so there is a reality that is external to us as researchers (Bryman, 2008). An objectivist ontology leads to a positivist epistemology which supports the methods of the natural sciences in the pursuit of the human sciences, in terms of collection of data and explanation, with an emphasis on the empirical analysis of relationships in the external world.

At the other end of the continuum, Morgan and Smircich (1980) place the subjectivist view of reality as being a projection of human imagination. However the less extreme, yet still contrasting ontological position of constructionism is the one with which I have the most affinity. Constructionism asserts that:

> social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. … (They) are not only produced through social interaction but are in a constant state of revision. (Bryman, 2008, p19).

A constructionist ontology leads to interpretivist epistemologies which claim that the study of human sciences focus on the understanding of human action, rather than seeking to provide explanation. So rather than seeking to explain why individuals may work flexibly, looking at cause and effect, this study explores how managers of people construe and experience flexible working. In this way I will focus on the analysis of the processes through which reality is created, particularly with regard to the use of language.

Before attention is given to a number of interpretivist epistemologies, I will briefly explain positivism.

3.4.1 Positivism

Logical positivism takes the view that all we can describe is that which we know from our own observations of the world (Williams and May, 1996). Verification of a fact can only be confirmed through observation of phenomena. Reality exists

independently of researchers, and their enquiries seek to explain a universal reality which is unaffected by their perceptions, beliefs or biases and can therefore be considered objective. Positivist researchers hold that observational rigour, efficient methods of investigation and the use of precise terminologies and classifications lead to knowledge production, just as in the study of the natural sciences. Language is considered to be merely a means of communication, not to have any effect in shaping our perception of reality (Chia, 2002).

However it can be argued that methods which are appropriate for the study of natural sciences may not be suitable for the exploration of social reality. I will now turn to interpretivist epistemologies.

3.4.2 Epistemological stances for qualitative enquiry

Qualitative enquiry is often justified by the use of epistemologies at the other extreme, including interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism (Schwandt, 2003). I will examine each of these in turn before explaining my own choice.

Social enquiry is an iterative activity and the process of gathering and analysing qualitative data requires an element of critical reflection which questions the constitution of knowledge and affects the aims and outcomes of that process. In order to find meaning in actions, the researcher has to interpret them in a particular way. Schwandt (2003) describes four ways of defining interpretive understanding using the concept of *Verstehen* (the German word for understanding) which originated with neo-Kantian German philosophers such as Dilthey and Weber. The first of these, empathic identification, involves relating to the thoughts, motives and beliefs of the person under scrutiny, so understanding their intentions and their own definitions of the situation. Phenomenological sociology offers a second way of making sense of interpretive understanding, looking at how the everyday world is constituted through the interactions of different parties. Thirdly, interpretive understanding can be represented through the analysis of language, which has its own norms and rules in different cultures, with human action having meaning through the systems of meaning to which it belongs.

Schwandt suggests that these first three ways of interpretive understanding make up the tradition of interpretivism and portray two levels of *Verstehen*. At the primary level, *Verstehen* is the process by which we interpret the meaning of our own actions and those of others. But it is also the process by which social scientists seek to understand those meanings which individuals have themselves constructed. Following this argument would suggest that it is not sufficient to observe human actions as would be the case using a positivist epistemology. Interpretivism assumes that the ways individuals make sense of their actions are themselves constitutive of those actions. In this way interpretivist epistemologies are hermeneutic and the notion of the hermeneutic circle explains the need for the researcher to move from the detail of a specific action to the bigger picture of the overall context including an individual's intentions and beliefs, and back again (Blaikie, 1993). In this way, the researcher seeks to make sense of the individual action and utterances through the understanding of the whole, which is itself dependent on the constitutive actions. Throughout this process of understanding, the researcher can maintain a level of objectivity and remain unaffected by the interpretive process.

Philosophical hermeneutics is the fourth way of representing interpretive understanding (Schwandt, 2003) and challenges the idea of the objective observer remaining external to the interpretive process. From this perspective, understanding is an integral part of the human existence which embraces the traditions, values and beliefs which influence our interpretations rendering a lack of bias impossible (Gadamer, cited in Blaikie, 1993). Instead, this approach challenges the researcher to examine the biases and prejudgements which we bring to the interpretive process engaging with them as we aim to make sense of that which is to be interpreted. The use of language is fundamental to this engagement and involves participation and dialogue through question and answer. Understanding evolves through that dialogue rather than as a result of the analysis by an interpreter. So rather than human action having meaning which can be determined by the researcher, "meaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation" (Schwandt, 2003:302). Such negotiation can take place through the interaction of the researcher with text. Interpretation grows, develops and changes as we acquire more knowledge and learn to ask different questions. Thus, there is never a final correct interpretation.

Before moving on to discuss social constructionism, it is necessary to explain the use of language in logical positivism and logical empiricism. From these perspectives, knowledge is viewed as a correct representation of an independent reality and "language and reason are understood as instruments of control in discovering and ordering the reality of the world" (Taylor, cited in Schwandt, 2003:305). As will be explained in the next section, language is used very differently in social constructionism.

3.4.3 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is an interpretivist philosophy and therefore considers knowledge not as something to be discovered, but as something which is created by the sense making processes of people sharing their experiences and interpreting their interactions and ongoing relationships, particularly via the medium of language (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002). Consequently, constructionist writers such as Potter, Gergen and Denzin reject the idea that meanings are fixed entities which can be discovered and are independent of the interpreter (Schwandt, 2003). They emphasize the use of language as essential in our understanding of the world. Some key assumptions of a social constructionist approach are highlighted by Burr (1995) although she stresses that there is no single definition. So a position may be classed as social constructionist if it is founded on one or more of the following premises.

- A critical stance towards understanding the world is necessary, particularly to challenge taken for granted knowledge which is often based on a sense of an objective external reality. Social constructionism indicates that the divisions or categories which we as humans ascribe to the world are created in a manner which could be seen as arbitrary. Burr (1995) gives the example of gender, categorising human beings as men and women, and questioning why so much importance has been placed on this division.

- The way in which we view the world is culturally and historically specific and dependent upon the current social and economic arrangements in which we live. So we cannot assume that our knowledge and ways of understanding are any closer to "truth" than others. Gergen urges caution in the way we arrive at

moral and political conclusions which are firmly based on evidence and values from within existing traditions: "our 'considered judgements' are typically blind to alternatives lying outside our tradition." (Gergen, 1999:50). Existing constructions of what is "good" or "acceptable" and alternatives which have already been rejected lead to the perpetuation of similar conclusions.

- Knowledge is sustained by social processes, through the daily interactions between people, with language playing a key part in the creation of our versions of reality. Our common ways of understanding the world are constructed between us and we use language according to the accepted rules in the "language game" (Wittgenstein, 1978, cited in Gergen, 1999). Wittgenstein likens the way we use words to the way individual pieces are used in a game of chess, with both explicit and implicit rules, and meaning acquired through the positioning in the overall game. For instance, teenagers over the last decade or more have given new meaning to the words "cool" and "wicked" using them interchangeably to signal appreciation in a way that would have been simply confusing half a century ago. One of the challenges of this study has been to establish the meaning of the phrase "flexible working", particularly as it is sometimes viewed as referring to exactly the opposite - a rigid pattern of work.

- Knowledge and social action go together – the negotiated understandings result in numerous social constructions of the world which allows for different agentic actions. So before the Equal Opportunities legislation in the UK it was considered acceptable for women to be dismissed from their work when they became pregnant, as it was assumed they would stay at home to care for their child and no longer be committed to a job or career. Current social action allows for maternity leave and flexible working which enable women to maintain their careers once they have had children. Although it can be argued that there are still many difficulties facing mothers in the workplace, the social action now is very different from the early 1970s.

To conclude, this research uses a social constructionist perspective with the focus on the feelings and thoughts of the participants, both individually and collectively, examining their differing experiences, rather than searching for reasons to explain their behaviour.

Easterby-Smith et al (2002: 30) offer a useful summary of the contrasting implications of positivism and social constructionism which supports my choice of social constructionism as an appropriate perspective for this research (see table 3.2).

Table 3-2 Contrasting implications of positivism and social constructionism

	Positivism	**Social Constructionism**
The observer	Must be independent	is part of what is being observed
Human interests	Should be irrelevant	are the main drivers of science.
Explanations	Must demonstrate causality	aim to increase general understanding of the situation
Research progresses through	Hypotheses and deductions	gathering rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Need to be operationalized so that they can be measured	should incorporate stakeholder perspectives
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to simplest terms	may include the complexity of "whole" situations
Generalization through	Statistical probability	theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	small numbers of cases chosen for specific reasons

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe (2002: 30)

3.5 Research strategy and design

The choice of research strategy and subsequent design is dependent on the issues discussed above, namely the relationship between theory and research, ontological considerations and epistemological considerations. Bryman (2008:22) provides a basic comparison between tendencies in quantitative and qualitative research with

regard to each of these issues offering further support for the choice of a constructionist perspective (see table 3.3).

Table 3-3 Fundamental differences between quantitative and qualitative research strategies

	Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive: testing of theory	Inductive: generation of theory
Epistemological orientation	Natural science model, in particular positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism

Bryman, 2008:22

Little is currently known about how managers work successfully when using a working pattern which differs from the traditional arrangements, and so the aim of the study is to increase understanding. So this study will focus on the exploration of the experiences of the individual managers in order to understand those different experiences: "Human action arises from the sense that people make of different situations." (Easterby-Smith et al, 2003:30). Contrasting and contradictory evidence will be included as "effective criticism of background assumptions requires the presence and expression of alternative points of view" (Longino, cited in Schwandt, 2003:309). In order to understand the experiences of managers working flexibly, I have to explore the meanings which constitute those actions, considering the context and the intentions. Thus the study lends itself to a qualitative approach taking a social constructionist orientation and using semi-structured interviews. This approach allows exploration of the differing experiences of individuals, thus enabling a greater level of ontological understanding as the reality of the respondents is explored and socially constructed through the interview process. As a researcher I take responsibility for not just reporting what has been said, but for interpreting what has been heard, observed and socially constructed.

Callero (2003) points out that much social constructionist research focuses on the social production of the personal self (self meanings, self understandings, self concepts), but he suggests that it should also be about the meanings and

understandings associated with the public self, the self which is visible and known to others. I am interested in each respondent's socially constructed reality of flexible working within their experience of the workplace. This social construction will have taken place through their interactions with significant others (partners, boss, colleagues, children) and will continue through the interview process.

3.5.1 Reflexivity

The final consideration regarding research design is that of my own values and biases as a researcher. Given my adoption of a social constructionist approach, with its inherent belief in the emerging social world which people are continually fashioning, I need to acknowledge not just my philosophical assumptions, but also to take responsibility for the context which I bring to my theorizing (Cunliffe, 2003). Researcher bias is a contentious issue with qualitative research and the very fact that I have chosen to carry out research in this particular field, means that I have an interest and also existing ideas which prove independence impossible. Such personal interest will inevitably have contributed to the shaping of the research and my own experiences as a working mother and of working flexibly will have affected the decisions and choices I have made (James & Vinnicombe, 2002). My personal interests and perspectives will be reflected in my interpretation and representation of the results of my research. The very process of selection of material to include or discard, to highlight or ignore will be affected by my own background and experiences. Through the adoption of a reflexive approach I will question the limitations which I may impose on myself and others (Cunliffe, 2003). I will attempt to use my own experience as a point of departure, rather than as an inherent part of the study (Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland, 2006) and will be mindful of Alvesson's caution that a reflexive approach can lead to " *a preoccupation with the researcher self"* (Alvesson, 2003:25). He explains his specific use of the term reflexivity with the emphasis on viewing the data from a number of different angles, challenging any initial interpretation to provide rich and alternative viewpoints.

3.5.2 Validity and reliability

The design of a research study has to address the criteria of validity and reliability in order to ensure the quality of the research findings. The issue is not simply to be able to justify that the research is legitimate, accurate and lacks bias, but also to provide standards (Miles and Huberman, 1994) such that the question "How good is this research?" can be answered.

Silverman (2000) cites Hammersley (1990, 1992) when he provides definitions of these terms.

> Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions. (Hammersley, 1992: 67 in Silverman, 2000:175)

> By validity, I mean truth; interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers. (Hammersley, 1990:57 in Silverman, 2000:175)

Miles and Huberman (1994) acknowledge the use of a range of terms, distinguishing between external reliability or objectivity, and dependability or auditability of methods. They suggest a number of questions which can be asked of a qualitative study to ensure both of these types of reliability have been addressed. For instance, with regard to objectivity or confirmability, has sufficient detail been provided about the methods and procedures adopted? Do the conclusions follow from the data which has been presented? Have contrasting and contradictory points of view been included? Key issues with regard to dependability are consistency and stability over time and these can be addressed through questions on clarity of research questions and alignment of research design, comparable data collection from co-researchers and coding checks.

Similarly, they distinguish between internal and external validity (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Internal validity addresses the crucial issues of credibility and authenticity with emphasis on checking and questioning. Thus relevant queries include whether an account appears plausible and makes sense to the reader; did the researcher seek negative evidence; have areas of uncertainty been identified?

Transferability refers to the external validity, or the questioning of the importance of conclusions to a wider context. Addressing this issue includes the provision of information about the sample to allow comparison with other samples as well as providing appropriate context.

Underlying assumptions of social constructionism make conventional notions of validity and reliability problematic. I have attended to these questions of validity and reliability throughout the study and the use of rigorous and transparent analytical techniques should minimize personal bias. At the same time I acknowledge that my own philosophical assumptions lead to the assertion that personal bias is an inherent part of the research process. I am seeking to extend understanding of the experiences of managers who work flexibly and will clearly differentiate between issues which pertain to a general theme, and those which are specific to just one individual.

3.5.3 Choice of semi-structured interviews

The choice of method follows from the philosophical perspective and the research question, as a researcher aligns these factors in order to build a robust study. Silverman (2000) suggests that similar techniques can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research and it is the way they are used which is important. Observation, textual analysis, interviews and transcripts can all lead to a deeper understanding of social phenomena when used by qualitative researchers. For instance, Silverman indicates that quantitative research could use textual analysis and adopt content analysis, involving counting of researchers' categories. Qualitative research using the same method would focus on the understanding of participants' categories (Silverman, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate method when seeking "*to understand the constructs that the interviewee uses as a basis for her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation*" (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002:87). They therefore seem to be the most appropriate choice of method given the aim of seeking to understand how managers with a different pattern of work construe and experience flexible working. However, the social constructionist perspective which I have outlined indicates that rather than reflecting an external reality of their experiences, the interviewees will have constructed reality through the interview process (King,

2004a). Semi-structured interviews allow a wide range of topics to be explored and it is possible through the interview process to challenge taken for granted knowledge and established notions of issues such as power and gender.

Understanding the issues raised in an interview is not necessarily straightforward and requires skill on the part of the interviewer (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). Although new to interviewing in a research context at the start of this endeavour, I have many years experience of conducting interviews in a variety of contexts, such as selection, exit, performance appraisal and development situations, and thus felt confident that I would bring a sufficient level of competence to my chosen method of data gathering. Through the use of open questions I was able to explore the topics based on the research questions, obtaining in-depth information through listening and probing and encouraging the interviewees to provide detailed and rich answers. The questioning framework provided a structure for each conversation and ensured that the research questions were addressed, enabling the same broad topics to be covered with all interviewees, yet without forcing the interviewees to comment on topics that may not have been salient for them (Lofland et al, 2006).

With the permission of the participants each interview was recorded and then transcribed to give a full and accurate account of what had been said. The use of recording technology also allowed interaction with the interviewees, engaging with them, rather than focusing on taking notes to capture the content of what was being said.

This semi-structured and interactional nature of the interviews allows researchers to remain open to what the interviewee felt was relevant, with both parties mutually monitoring each other's input (verbal and non-verbal) so that the output or the conversation was collaboratively produced (Rapley, 2004). However, it can be problematic to view interview data purely as a resource as this does not take into account the fact that the interviewee is not just giving a reflection of their view of "reality outside the interview" (Rapley, 2004:16), but the content may also include a portrayal of themselves as "an 'adequate interviewee', or as a 'specific type of person in relation to this specific topic'.". So the data may be more about the actual encounter between the researcher and the individual rather than the topic under discussion.

The wider context in which the interview is situated is also a factor in the construction of knowledge which emerges. The views of individuals are based not only on their own immediate background and experience, but also on the social context of the current debate on flexible working. This debate is within their own organizations but also at a societal level through the ongoing discussion with regard to legislation surrounding both the right to request flexible working, and the possible sharing of maternity and paternity leave.

Because of these factors, Alvesson (2003:14) describes the interview as "existing in a field of tensions between different logics" proposing a reflexive pragmatic approach be taken to maximise the learning gained from complex and rich qualitative interviews. Such an approach allows for different ways of understanding data and working with multiple interpretations, while recognising that time and other constraints may require the delivery of knowledge and therefore the need to compromise. Alvesson suggests that interpretation should not necessarily be restricted by epistemological beliefs and suggests a self-critical consideration of favoured assumptions to achieve "a dynamic, flexible way of working with empirical material" (Alvesson, 2003:26).

3.6 Fieldwork

3.6.1 *Rationale for including women and men*

Organizations are reporting increases in the number of men who work flexibly, and although official figures in organizations show that women are still in the vast majority, it is important to explore both women's and men's experiences. The notion of separate spheres for men and women, with men in the workplace and women in the home, has become less relevant as women joined the labour force in increasing numbers in the final decades of the twentieth century (Gerson, 2004). The corresponding changes which are emerging in the dynamics of gender roles continue to demand further investigation and this study will help to provide more complex and accurate understanding of the lives of women and men who adopt a flexible working pattern. In this way, this study will look beyond stereotypes and allow the analysis of

diversity among the women and men who participated, acknowledging the possible convergence of their experiences (Gerson, 2004).

The changing role of fathers is of interest to policy makers, particularly when organizations are keen to emphasize that requests for a flexible working pattern will be considered from all staff, rather than being available to a favoured minority. As a feminist, I am interested in the possibility of gender differences in the experiences of managers working flexibly.

3.6.2 Phase one – the pilot study

Phase one of the research was exploratory and was therefore undertaken with a number of aims. Firstly, I wished to ensure that the interview questions would yield appropriate data which would contribute to the study of flexible working. The questions were derived from the research question and discussions with the researcher's supervisor and a member of the PhD review panel. Two pre-pilot interviews were conducted with individuals who had worked flexibly for several years at senior levels[1]. This ensured that the questions were appropriate and would reveal relevant information. The pre-pilot interviews were not included as part of the analysis as they had been chosen for convenience. Another aim of the pilot study was to clarify the variables to be used, establishing the relevance of sex, age, parental status and managerial responsibilities. I took a grounded approach to the analysis of the data which resulted from the interview questions, and the feasibility of the research methods also needed confirmation.

This stage of the research was conducted in one large UK firm in the energy sector, where flexible working had previously occurred only where specifically required by the nature of the job. However in the preceding eighteen months, a major review of all jobs had taken place, driven by the decision to reduce office space. Jobs had been categorized such that employees were considered to be homeworkers, office workers

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[1] As a result of discussion after these pre-pilot interviews, I decided to use the phrase "work life balance" within the interview schedule as the interviewees used it themselves and, when asked, preferred it to "integration" or "harmonization".

or mobile workers (expected to be in the office no more than forty per cent of the time). At the time of the research, the organization was in a period of adjustment, with some of the managers having been involved in piloting the scheme with their teams.

3.6.3 Phase one: Selection of participants

The sample consisted of four women and four men working at middle management or above, in order to address the issue of flexible working at senior levels within organizations. Thus a purposive approach to sampling was used (Silverman, 2000) which involved choosing individuals on the basis of their pattern of work, which is the central point of interest in this study. Additionally, the organization was chosen because of its stated commitment to its highly developed work-life balance policy so that the researcher could explore how those who work flexibly construe and experience their different pattern of work, in what is ostensibly a culture which supports flexible working.

The aim was to interview individuals who worked "full time" according to the EOC definition of full-time working which is described as "hours of work in excess of 30 hours a week". This was intended to exclude those who work part-time hours, but include those who may work a compressed week or are home based for two or three days per week. Those who work from home on a constant basis were excluded, to control for the professional isolation which would be a major factor in that scenario. In this way the study focused on full time workers who have at least some access to informal and formal development opportunities and networking and mentoring activities because of their presence in the workplace.

Six of the interviewees fitted the original criteria and an additional two individuals were included. One had a variable pattern of work between university term time and holidays and this manager added value to the study because of her demonstration of a very different flexible working pattern at a senior level within the organization. The data from the final interviewee provided an interesting contrast as he worked standard full time hours and described his flexibility in terms of location only, as he regularly worked eleven hour days from Monday to Friday. However he clearly positioned himself as someone in a senior position with managerial responsibilities who worked

flexibly, explaining the value of spatial flexibility in terms of the range of offices where he worked. In this way the sample evolved in a way that Miles and Huberman (1994) describe as conceptually-driven sequential sampling. Inclusion of the latter two participants was decided upon as issues emerged to allow comparison. Access was gained through the Diversity Director who had been instrumental in rolling out the company wide evaluation and re-classification of jobs.

3.6.4 Phase one: Data collection

A key objective of the research was to extend understanding of the experiences of managers working flexibly, and semi-structured interviews, allowing in-depth probing, were chosen as the most appropriate method for data collection. Use of an interview schedule enabled the researcher to maintain consistency with each interviewee, whilst allowing sufficient breadth for the respondents to raise issues of particular relevance to themselves. Personal reflection by the interviewee was thus encouraged in order to obtain necessary depth.

The introduction involved the positioning of the research and assurances of confidentiality. The interview questions were then grouped into four key areas for discussion. (see appendix 2 for the interview schedule) The first topic was the actual flexible working arrangement used in order to understand the experiences specific to the individual. The second set of questions explored the individual's perceptions of the relationship between their pattern of working and their work-life balance, and also sought to establish how significant others in their lives viewed their flexible working. The topic of career was approached in two ways; investigating any perceptions of a link based on their experiences between flexible working and their career, and secondly asking about their career history including motivations for change and barriers or obstacles. Finally some demographic details were requested: age, sex, parental status, and time since starting to work flexibly.

3.7 Fieldwork – phase two

This stage of the research was part of a larger study across seven organizations examining flexible working and individual performance. As a result of the findings from phase one the research question for the main study was adapted with less emphasis being placed on career. A greater emphasis emerged regarding the supervisory relationship of the managers with their staff.

3.7.1 Phase two: Selection of participants

The organizations in the larger study all had well established policies regarding flexible working and other work life issues. Research was conducted sequentially, completing the research within one organization before starting in the next. Access was gained through the HR department of each organization. They approached staff who worked flexibly and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed as part of a review of the flexible working practices within each organization, explaining that a number of other organizations were also participating in the overall research project. Although this approach has the potential for bias, as it could be argued that the organization would not offer those with negative views for interview, it was hoped that the guarantee of confidentiality would encourage the respondents to speak freely. In each organization the HR representatives were keen to increase their knowledge about the actual experiences of people working flexibly and professed to include those who may have been less happy with their working arrangements.

A purposive approach to sampling was taken in selecting the data set for this thesis as the individual manager was the unit of analysis. Managerial participants have previously been defined as those responsible for the work of three or more direct reports (Buck, Lee & MacDermid, 2002) and this was used as a starting point for selection of participants in conjunction with a working pattern which involved reduced face time in the workplace as defined in section 2.5. So the sample for this thesis consists of managers who worked flexibly and had responsibility for staff within the first four of the organizations involved in the main project, totalling 34 participants. An additional factor in sampling is the limited number of people at senior levels who acknowledge that they have a flexible working pattern. So the sample is not intended to be representative as I am not seeking to generalize from the

findings and my concern is with the conditions under which the construct of flexible working operates (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although the individual participants came from four organizations, the unit of analysis is the individual and no attempt was made to compare across the organizations. The organizational contacts assisted in the arrangements for the interviews, most of which took place at the base office for each individual although four interviews were conducted over the telephone. The sample of 10 men and 24 women highlights the lack of men working flexibly at managerial levels.

3.7.2 Phase two: Data collection

The interview schedule was adapted as a result of the findings which emerged from the pilot study and because of the focus of the larger project. (see appendix 3 for the interview schedule). Therefore, the relationship between flexible working and individual performance was included as a topic. Other changes included a question about participants' current role in order to understand the nature of the job and how they experienced that whilst working flexibly. Participants were specifically asked about their responsibilities towards their staff as managers of people, given that they were working flexibly and therefore had reduced their face time in the workplace. The questions on career focused on the interplay of career and flexible working, rather than the more generic questions about career to date which had been asked in the pilot study. Semi-structured interviews continued to be used as they had been successful in phase one for revealing rich data about the participants' constructions of their experiences as managers working flexibly. For the larger project a co-researcher and I interviewed a wider range of individuals, including some at different levels, co-workers of flexible workers and managers of flexible workers. The majority of the interviews with managers who themselves worked flexibly were conducted by this researcher to allow for the completion of this thesis.

3.8 Data analysis

3.8.1 Transcription, coding and analysis

The same approach to analysis was used in both phases of the study. Permission was gained from each respondent to record the interviews, explaining that confidentiality would be maintained and in this way all relevant information was captured to allow thorough analysis and accuracy of reported findings. The recordings were transcribed[2] and a thematic analysis was carried out using NVivo software. Because of the lack of theory and consequent lack of frameworks, I have adopted a grounded approach allowing a model to emerge through an iterative analytic process. Initial coding resulted in an increasingly long list of nodes due to rigorously referring back to previous transcripts to check for instances of additional examples. The categorization of data therefore, avoided being linked simply to the questions asked. Initial attempts at a model were refined using a series of questions examining frequencies and magnitudes, structures and processes, and causes and consequences (Lofland et al, 2006). In this way I engaged with the data allowing my interpretation to develop as I asked new questions in an iterative process.

3.8.2 Template analysis

Template analysis refers to a group of techniques which are used for the organization and analysis of textual data (King, 2004b). The key feature is the use of hierarchical coding with themes being divided into sub-themes with several levels of coding. King indicates that it can be used with a number of epistemological positions including social constructionism, as it allows for multiple interpretations of data. Thematic analysis has its roots in phenomenology, allowing a researcher to see the world afresh, and it is the ability to go beyond taken for granted approaches which sits well with the social constructionist perspective which I have adopted. Another important tenet of a social constructionist approach is the emphasis on the use of

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[2] Symbols used: (.) indicates a brief pause; = indicates the break and subsequent continuation of a single utterance; (…) indicates text not included in quotation

language in the construction of reality, and I therefore aimed to maintain the uniqueness of individual experiences whilst establishing a structure of how themes related. Template analysis thus allows a summary of emergent thinking and I acknowledge that I did not reach **the** final template – it simply does not exist.

There are clear tasks involved in template analysis

1. preliminary coding

2. clustering codes

3. producing an initial template

4. modifying the template

5. interpreting findings

6. quality checks

I read through each transcript whilst listening to it, without coding, but highlighting material of possible interest. For the pilot study preliminary coding was based on two of the interviews and then a template was produced and modified as explained below. Coding was done solely by me and included a discussion with my PhD review panel about the emerging template. Analysis for the main study followed a similar process, with some input from my co-researcher. After the research in the first organization had been conducted, four transcripts were chosen to use for the initial template, aiming for a range of respondents, for instance of women and men, with differing patterns of work. Themes were identified which were features of participants' accounts which characterized particular perceptions and/or experiences which were identified as relevant to the research question. As a constructionist, having two people coding does not necessarily illustrate reliability, as the very nature of this approach would indicate different interpretations. However, my co-researcher and I read through the first four interviews and we discussed our thoughts regarding themes which were emerging, allowing reflection and exploration of differing perspectives as the initial template took shape. After each subsequent organization had been visited we exchanged initial thoughts about our experiences. We repeated the discussion process with two transcripts from each organization and also any remaining

interviews not conducted by me, thus developing the template. I then coded the interview transcripts, using NVivo software to organize and categorize the data through coding, identifying themes as nodes. Clustering of themes took place, focusing on what was meaningful, rather than necessarily logical. With this in mind, quotes which did not fit the emerging themes were also noted, rather than forced on the basis of logic. The emphasis on the importance of language was maintained, using the words of the interviewees to name themes. Template analysis supports the hierarchical organization of codes. For instance, "visibility", "promotion" and "own performance measurement" were all incorporated into a single higher order node of "career". King (2004b) cautions against having too many levels of coding which can be counter-productive and not lead to greater clarity which is the aim of analysis.

After production of the initial template, it was modified continually as more interviews were analysed and new themes were inserted, unwanted themes were deleted, and the scope of themes was adapted where appropriate. Interviews which had been initially coded were revisited as themes developed. Defining and organizing themes was recognized as the first step in interpretation. Themes were listed and prioritized, judging what was important, with continual referral back to the research questions. While I recognize that there is no absolutely final template, it is necessary to stop at some stage, and the template or code listing in its current form is available in appendix 4. I found parallel coding to be particularly useful, allocating the same excerpt from an interview to more than one code. For instance, the following extract was allocated to several nodes: travel demands, home/work interface and referring to team members.

> Just really trying to maintain the contacts and have regular face to faces with those people, I think will mean that I'll continue to travel. I think it's just figuring out what's the right number of trips per year, so that it doesn't impact too much on home, my home life.

During the analysis process, I sought to maintain awareness of the need to be open to the unexpected or surprising things which were said, and reference was also made to notes made during the series of interviews.

3.8.3 Use of NVivo software

NVivo is a set of software tools which assists researchers in the analysis of qualitative data. Primarily it is a data management tool which allows the organization of interview schedules, transcripts, field notes, demographic details and other material which is collected during a research project. Ideas during analysis can be captured through the use of journals and memos and easy reference can be made to contextual information. Questions can be asked of the data and the results saved to allow a developing enquiry process. Graphical models can be developed to show concepts and relationships within the data and reports can be generated to portray the outcomes of queries and analysis.

Through these procedures, NVivo **supports** the analysis of data, rather than actually conducting the analysis (Bazeley, 2007). The ability to familiarise oneself with the data through coding, and access to data through the retrieval of coded text, provide a level of closeness (Bazeley, 2007). Conversely, modelling or generating queries or summarizing results allow for distance, and the resulting ease of movement between the general and the specific and back again offers the opportunity for different interpretations to be explored. I found the query option particularly useful in exploring possible connections between, for instance, aspects of the demographic information and emerging themes. As an example, I looked for patterns between full time and reduced hours participants and the overarching themes of career, work life balance, attitude and managerial responsibilities. This sort of exploration of the data allowed for greater familiarity with the data as I approached it from different angles, asking new questions and trying out hunches.

3.8.4 Presentation of the findings

The following three chapters discuss the findings of this research. The presentation of results aims to illustrate and support the process of data analysis which has occurred.

Chapter 4 considers the findings of the preliminary stage of the research, which was exploratory in nature and this chapter represents the first stage of analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the findings from the main study. The overall model of managers' experiences of flexible working is presented at the start of chapter 5.

Chapter 4 An exploration of managers' flexible working arrangements (FWAs)

4 An exploration of managers' flexible working arrangements (FWAs)

The aim of the pilot study was to examine the experiences of male and female managers who have a flexible working arrangement. In this context, the overarching research question is:

How do managers who adopt a flexible working pattern perceive the relationship between flexible working, work life balance and career?

This chapter reports the findings of the first stage of the research, carried out amongst eight managers at EnergyCo, as described in Chapter 3, section 3.6.2, to section 3.6.4. As explained in Chapter 2 the term flexible working and other similar phrases refer to a wide range of working patterns and there has been only limited research which focuses specifically on managers working flexibly. Organizations have expressed concern about the relatively low numbers of managers working flexibly, yet little is known about how they experience flexible working. The pilot study aimed to focus on managers who worked full time hours and had a formal flexible working arrangement (FWA) and to explore their experiences and perceptions of flexible working with regard to their work life balance and their career. Most of the previous research has been on telecommuting or teleworking and this research examined different forms of flexible working.

Section 4.1 provides the demographic details and the managers own experiences, highlighting the variation in FWAs amongst them. The interviews revealed the unique nature of the FWA for each respondent and the continuous tension between consistency or routine (as a response to needs from the work and non-work domains) and adaptability (as a way of continuing to meet those needs). Section 4.2 addresses the issue of work life balance, examining the participants' social constructions of the concept and highlighting themes of boundary management and reciprocal exchange. Themes from the discussions on career are covered in section 4.3, including desire for further progression, performance measurement, and visibility/invisibility within the organization. The additional area which emerged from the interviews was the handling of supervisory relationships and the influence of one's own FWA on the

working patterns of direct reports (section 4.4). Findings will be discussed in section 4.5, before concluding with the directions for the research in the main study in section 4.6.

4.1 Demographic details

One of the challenges in understanding the nature of flexible working has been the mixed samples used in studies. Baruch (2001) pointed out that generalisation from studies of teleworking was limited through the inclusion of permanent and agency staff in the same study, or staff at differing levels such as those in junior positions and senior managers and I was keen to avoid such mixed samples. The very nature of flexible working results in a number of different patterns such as staggered hours, remote working, reduced hours, flexi-time and compressed hours. As explained in section 3.6.2, this study focused on managerial staff in an effort to understand their experiences of flexible working. The original aim had been to interview managers who had worked flexibly for at least a year, but in order to get a reasonable sample those doing so for six months or more were included. Although FWAs were becoming more prevalent in this organization, some managers still had very limited experience and so were excluded on that basis. Therefore there was a limited number of managers working flexibly. It was not possible to limit the range of FWAs under scrutiny, as this would have reduced possible interviewees even more. An additional factor was the social constructionist perspective which allows for the construction of reality through the interaction between researcher and participant. As will be shown, Alan construed his flexibility through his ability to work in different locations and to manage his hours in a way that he had not done previously.

The managers ranged in age from thirty to forty five and had been working flexibly for at least a year, with the exception of Hazel, who had been doing so for six months. In fact, five of them had had an informal FWA for over five years. All of the four women and one of the men had children, with three of the women having at least one child under five years. Three of the respondents had Masters' degrees, and a fourth was about to begin studying for an executive MBA. The other four all had Bachelor's degrees. Table 1 provides demographic details and the contractual agreement and

actual number of hours worked by each manager, indicating the excessive hours worked by some.

Table 4-1 Demographic details

Name	Age	Sex	Actual weekly hours and contractual agreement	Any children?
Adrian	33	M	**40 hours per week**, including two regular days at home (standard contract)	No
Alan	38	M	**60 hours plus per week** – five 11 hour days plus extra at weekends (standard contract)	No
Barry	30	M	**40 hours per week**, including two days at home which varied from week to week (standard contract)	No
Laurence	45	M	**60 hours per week** over four and a half days and weekends (standard contract)	Yes
Hazel	33	F	**45 hours per week** – four days of 9 to 5, plus one day at home, then as needed in the evenings (full time hours)	Yes
Jackie	39	F	**40 hours plus per week** (Contractual agreement of 34 hours over 4 days)	Yes
Gayle	41	F	**44 hours per week**. (0.8 contract, worked as four days in the office)	Yes
Louise	39	F	**Two and a half days per week** during term time. (22 hours) plus a weekly unpaid day at college **Three and a half to four and a half days per week** during university holidays. (28 – 35 hours)	Yes

4.1.1 Consistency and adaptability

In this section I will examine the concepts of consistency and adaptability with regard to individual approaches towards FWAs, themes which emerged from the analysis of the findings. Consistency can be demonstrated through presence in the office on set days (meeting business needs) or leaving the office at set times on given days (meeting non-work needs). Adaptability occurs when the individuals adjust their daily schedules over and above that consistency. Meeting ongoing demands is the over-riding and consistent approach, and then adaptability ensures that fluctuating demands from both the work domain and the non-work domain can still be met. Without adaptability, consistency becomes rigid with associated negative perceptions.

Amongst this small sample of managerial staff the FWAs were unique to each individual as shown in table 1. "Flexible working" can be seen as a misnomer when it is used to describe a pattern of working which does not fit the traditional office hours but details different yet rigid working times. In order to add greater understanding of the actual practice and individual experiences of flexible working, these interviews explored the level or degree of flexibility through discussion of the patterns worked and the attitudinal approach of each manager. This revealed variations in the levels of spatial and temporal flexibility evidenced and the explanations given. These variations were examined for aspects which demonstrated any consistency of approach to FWAs, as well as the adaptability individuals applied in order to fulfil the demands of their work.

One variation is flexibility of location. Both Adrian and Barry worked from home for two days a week, but Adrian did this on the same two days each week,

> I find it works better to have fixed days when you work from home (.) because then people get used to you not working on those days and don't try to arrange meetings for you on those days and then when you say, if they do, and you say 'No that's one of my home days,' then there isn't the 'Oh well, can't you just….?'. (Adrian, no children)

whereas Barry chose to vary the days.

> I am able to work both from home and any of the other office locations and the nature of my job tends to take me into London so my flexibility is normally

location as opposed to time. (…) I tend to both manage my flexible working around my life, and also around my job if that makes sense. So if I need to be at home at any particular time, or for doctors or dentists appointments or something like that, it's really, really useful. (Barry, no children)

Alan also talked of flexibility of location. He was always office based, choosing to work in any one of a number of the organization's offices and even different office space at the same location, depending on the nature of the work he was undertaking at a given time.

> I tend to be more flexible in terms of office location than working from home. (…) Because we've got laptops which are wireless enabled, so I could come down here and my laptop will work here. So I don't even have to sit at a desk. And that again makes it work quite well. So flexible working doesn't just mean different locations, it can mean different places within the same location. A good example is I might get one of those offices over there, if I want to do something, to think about something. I'll just do that rather than sit at my desk. (Alan, no children)

The individual descriptions indicate the differing constructions of flexibility, rather than simply examples of working in a different way. For Adrian and Barry their reality of flexible working involves choices regarding the days they worked at home whereas homeworking was clearly outside Alan's personal experience as he was always office based. Barry and Alan made ongoing decisions about where they would work, coming in on a given day or working at a particular office, whereas Adrian had determined that the consistency of having fixed days working from home was important.

Time was also important for Hazel, as well as location, and consistency was seen in her leaving the office promptly at five pm, which was necessary because of her carefully balanced childcare arrangements.

> I employ a nanny, and legally I'm not to employ her for more than fifty hours a week so my nanny does fifty hours a week, so by the time I leave the office and by the time I get home, that's my commute time as well, so that's why I have to work nine to five in the office. So the main benefit is that I can juggle my hours, and when I work from home, she comes in at nine and she leaves at five, and

> then the other four days a week, she works an extra half hour or hour. So I
> juggle it so she only works fifty hours a week. (Hazel, parent)

She also worked one day a week from home and she explained how she changed her
day and put in additional time to meet the demands of her role.

> I now work from home one day a week, and I do a nine to five on the other days
> of the week, so I'm always out of the office by five o'clock in the afternoon, and
> I will generally pick up emails and that kind of thing later on in the evening after
> my child's gone to bed so there is some flexibility around. (…) I do juggle which
> days I work from home, depending on my diary, so it's not always a Monday.
> It's whatever day actually fits. (Hazel, parent)

The nature of Hazel's construction of flexibility emerged through her repeated use of
the word "juggle" with its connotations of dealing with several things at once in a
precarious fashion. Her description involved some rigid timings and she recognized
this through her comment "there is *some* flexibility around" when she described
working later in the evening.

The other four managers in this study each had a consistent pattern which involved set
days in the office. However, within these individual arrangements it is possible to
identify the ways in which they adapted their behaviour demonstrating degrees of
temporal flexibility towards their roles. For example, Gayle worked Monday to
Thursday and regularly extended those days in the office in response to her heavy
workload, but she questioned whether she worked flexibly, despite meeting the
criteria both for this study, and, more importantly, within the organization.

> In a funny sort of way, my work pattern is actually quite rigid. You know, it's
> four days a week. In that sense, it's not flexible. (Gayle, parent)

Rather than working late in the office as Gayle did, Jackie chose to work at home in
the evenings to put in the extra hours necessary to fulfil her responsibilities at work.
She was just about to change her working pattern which was an important part of her
construction of flexible working – the ability to respond to the demands in her life
outside the workplace.

I'm contracted to do a minimum of thirty four hours per week. It's not really very part time, but I do that over four days currently so I have Wednesdays off at the moment. Our little boy is about to start school in a month's time and what I'm planning to do is spread my hours over five days but finish fairly early (…) so that I can pick him up from school so I'm going to lose that day at home but (…) go home early and then probably log on later. (Jackie, parent)

This extract illustrates how Jackie's agreed pattern of days in the office was determined partly by what was motivating her to work flexibly. For her and the other women the driver was primarily the family, although in Louise's case it was also to study for further educational qualifications. Laurence is the remaining manager and his main driver was to enable regular participation in sport. The other determining factor was the nature of the work itself including the demands of the role. Laurence explained how he would vary his start and finish times in the office depending on his presence being necessary at meetings. This allowed him to work more from home and to commute at less busy times, thus saving himself time and stress. So a gender difference emerged as the men chose to work flexibly to fit in with work demands and personal needs whereas the women chose their FWA so that they were able to attend to the demands from home and family. However, it was not just a response to a need (as with Hazel's nanny) but they also acknowledged a desire to spend time with their children, which will be further explored in section 4.3.

So the construction of flexible working includes temporality and space for these managers and it is necessary to know about the wider context of their lives to understand how they position and interpret their own working pattern with regard to flexibility. There is evidence of both consistency and adaptability which emerge from either the work domain or the non-work domain, rather than a fixed or rigid schedule with no possibility of adjustment outside of the agreed FWA.

Five of the respondents worked full time hours according to their contractual agreements although the number of working hours was not specified by the organization.

Our contracts basically say that we don't have any working hours in our contracts. (…) You will work as long as it takes to get the job done. (Alan, no children)

In fact, only one person (Jackie) had hours detailed in her contract, and the two who worked less than the organization's definition of full time hours (Gayle and Louise) worked a set number of days, rather than hours. This reinforces the necessity of including managers with a range of FWAs as the unspecified hours and the expectation that staff work as much as necessary to complete their responsibilities results in the unique patterns such as those found in this sample. This lends support to the concept of consistency in terms of the agreed expectation with a level of adaptability necessary to meet the job demands and raises the question of whether flexibility is a real choice (Lewis et al, 2007).

4.2 Work life balance (WLB)

The interviews explored how the individuals' experiences of FWAs affected their understanding of work life balance. The interviewees expressed a range of views about flexible working and work life balance. Most saw their FWA as a key factor in their achievement of balance and for the five parents, this related to the time available to spend with their family.

> I think for me, the part time working is the way in which I achieve a work life balance that I'm comfortable with. (Gayle, parent)

> It really has affected my relationship with my wife and kids because I see them so much more often. I can honestly say that it's changed my life, because I'm just so much more relaxed. (…) I feel that it's given me more freedom and definitely given me more of a balance. (Laurence, parent)

Gayle suggests awareness of different meanings of WLB and so specifies it in terms of something which suits her, recognizing that it may be different for others. Laurence's working pattern facilitates more time with his family but also leads to him being more relaxed and in control. Louise sees things slightly differently as shown in the following extract where she expresses appreciation of the overall impact which working flexibly has on her life. For her flexible working is part of a holistic satisfaction which includes her rationalisation of the way in which her children benefit from her absence each week.

> I think I've got the life of Riley if I'm honest, I really do. I've got a good job, I work for a good company, I've got a great husband, my kids – yes I don't see them (3 days a week) but they, I actually think that they benefit from being cared for by somebody else. (Louise, parent)

Louise had planned to stay at home with her children on a full time basis but she made the conscious decision to return to work but with a shorter working week.

Hazel was clear about the satisfaction she obtained from her job and explained how work-life balance was not the only motivator in the choices she had made, and points out that for her there is a difference between the concepts of "job" and "career" when considering what is commonly termed work-life balance.

> I think I am very lucky in that I'm doing a job that = you could always find a job that fits your work-life balance, but then you compromise on the quality of what you do, and I haven't. So from a = you know, the reasons why I wanted to return to work, because I have a career, because I enjoy working, enjoy my job, it's very positive and from the perspective that I am able to work from home and I am able to leave at a certain time and I do get to see my child for an hour at each end of the day. (Hazel, parent)

For those without children, flexible working can have a positive effect on lifestyle, as evidenced by both Adrian and Barry. Barry had a clear sense of the role of his work within the greater context of his life, rather than seeing them as competing for his time and energies. Work life balance had always been important to him and so his FWA had not made a big difference.

> Work life balance has always been very important to me, and I see it as (a) being able to leave work at work, and (b) being able to do all the things you want to outside of work. That's a balance enough for me. (…) I think what's happened is it's made my working life better and helped a little bit on some minor cases of work life balance, but it hasn't changed it considerably because I've always been quite good at leaving work at work and leaving at a decent time. (Barry, no children)

However, despite the fact that flexible working is often offered by an organization as part of an overall work life policy, it will not always make a positive difference. For

instance, Jackie found it difficult to stop thinking about work on the Wednesday when she supposedly had a day off and this affected her view of her work life balance.

> (Work-life balance) is pretty terrible really. I don't think I've really got it right. (Jackie, parent)

Alan also explained that flexible working had not enabled him to improve his work life balance.

> I don't think I've got work life balance sorted out. So I tend to see flexible working as adding to the day rather than moving the day around so I think that's probably the biggest issue for me. (Alan, no children)

In contrast to Jackie, Alan seemed comfortable with his working pattern and articulated some of the changes he had made since flexible working had been formalised, such as: blocking out time at the start and end of the day to deal with administrative duties rather than being available for meetings; booking time with a personal trainer twice a week; arranging to begin studying for an Executive MBA. So there was a self-contradiction as he apparently had some ideal picture of work life balance ("I don't think I've got work life balance sorted out") which did not apply to him but nevertheless he expressed satisfaction with his career and the things he was able to do outside work.

So there are some interesting contrasts within the group. Gayle, Hazel and Laurence talked about the additional hours they had to do in order to complete their duties whilst maintaining their chosen FWA, revealing some stress and pressure, yet expressed satisfaction with their work life balance. They were clear about the reasons for choosing to work flexibly and appreciated the benefits of time with their families (all three) and time for sport (Laurence). For Gayle and Hazel work life balance was synonymous with time with family. Gayle did long hours and experienced pressure from others regarding her part time status, but her three day weekend meant balance to her.

> I work four days, normally I work late, sometimes I might get away a bit earlier, and I've still got my three days off at home with family. (Gayle, parent)

Hazel had a very difficult relationship with her manager who was resistant to her FWA, yet again, work life balance meant the ability to spend some time with her child every day, even if it was just five minutes on some occasions.

Adrian, Barry and Louise also spoke positively about their work life balance, and work hours which were close to their contractual agreement, and did not indicate stress associated with their current FWAs. However, the remaining two (Alan and Jackie) both claimed that their work life balance was not good, but in very different ways. Alan's social construction involved him not achieving work life balance because of his long hours so he seemed to have a picture of what work life balance should be. Yet because of the way he talked, with great satisfaction about the way flexible working worked for him, he seemed contented with what he was able to achieve at work and at home. But that contentment was not something he associated with work life balance. For him work life balance seemed to relate directly to time, particularly to the idea of fewer hours spent at work, and yet he did not talk about fewer hours being important to him. Flexible working, however, was about location, giving him greater freedom to work where he chose.

4.2.1 Boundary management

The different interpretations of the relationship between FWAs and work life balance involved the management of boundaries between the work and non-work domains. Several of the interviewees officially worked from home at least one day per week and they discussed the way this affected both their work and their home life.

Adrian had worked flexibly for about five years and talked about the change in his working pattern over that time, moving from doing very long hours in a reactive mode to managing his hours in a way more in tune with office hours.

> It's very easy to be drawn into doing far too much. (…) People think that because you're at home it's ok to ring you at seven o'clock in the morning or eight o'clock at night and there's also more of an expectation to work into the evenings and the weekends and so on, because you've got the stuff there to do it. I said to someone the other day, I probably do ten or fifteen hours a week less now than I did when I first started doing this because I was doing too much. I was sitting down regularly on Saturdays and Sundays doing it. (Adrian, no children)

Similarly, Barry also talked about the need for personal discipline to manage and even limit one's workload when working from home.

> "(Some flexible workers) find that if they're equipped at home so it's as good as being in the office, they will work into the evening unnecessarily and Sunday nights start checking stuff, emails, whereas if they had everything at work, they wouldn't do. So for some people I think it's maybe had a negative impact, but that's just about being disciplined and (…) I've always been disciplined. (Barry, no children)

So the issue was one of stopping work rather than continuing when the previously clear signals of end of work day and travelling home were no longer in place (Scott,2003). This difficulty with managing the boundaries between the work and non-work domains can be compounded by the expectations of others, particularly one's immediate manager. The challenge can be to reach agreement on the boundaries which is satisfactory to all concerned. Several respondents talked of the determination needed to maintain their chosen working pattern and not bow to pressures from colleagues or management. Hazel described the difficult relationship with her relatively new manager who did not approve of the previously agreed arrangement which allowed her to have one day working from home.

> He has the perception that if I'm working from home, I'm not doing a full day's work. (…) I think it's a general thing that he just doesn't like me working from home, but it's worsened by the fact that because I'm working from home he can't see exactly what I'm doing. When I work from home, I mean I genuinely do a full day's work, but I play with my hours. I mean, I may do some work before seven in the morning and I may be with my child from nine until ten. I may work through lunch and I may finish at four and then do stuff in the evening but I still do what I have to get done, and I think that bothers him, because if I don't pick up the phone immediately, you know, I'm not there, I'm not working. (Hazel, parent)

She was conscious of her commitment to the organization and her work, but saw the day at home as a chance to 'play with her hours' or to organize her day in a different way, She liked to shift the boundaries in order to maximize time with her young son, and this was the main driver for her choosing a FWA. The lack of trust on the part of her manager was a cause of obvious stress as she made reference to it several times.

In contrast, other interviewees placed great emphasis on the importance of separating the time spent at work and at home, again demonstrating the consistency or routine in their approach. They felt that their particular arrangements allowed them to maintain the split between the work and non-work domains, even when extra hours were subsequently required. This was an important aspect of the arrangement for Gayle whose volume of work necessitated eleven hour days on Monday to Thursday to facilitate that one day off.

> It allows me to focus completely on the different aspects of my life when I'm in it. So I think that's quite important for me. It is important that I have this kind of divide, that the two don't mix very much. (Gayle, parent)

Interestingly, although both two of the men and two of the women evidenced this clear division of time spent in either the home or the office, they did so for very different reasons. Laurence explained how he managed his workload to enable him to play golf regularly on a Friday afternoon.

> So what I do is, I've set myself Thursday nights, are my sort of late nights, so I'll work probably until about two or three in the morning on a Thursday, just purely because it means I can start Friday largely speaking, having done most of the emails that I would need to do, and I use Friday then, very much, well I'll probably be tired from the night before and looking forward to my golf, and very much in teleconference mode and so I will make sure I talk with every single person in the team, you know just catch up with what they're doing and those sort of things, so just the way I have that sort of flexibility of approach, which just works well for me. (Laurence, parent)

Similarly, Adrian chose to work at home on a Tuesday so that he could play for his local cricket league. So in this small sample of just eight managers the women have their set working hours or days for family and childcare reasons, and the men have varied reasons including sporting activities.

Not all of the respondents managed the boundaries in the way that they would have liked. For Jackie, the day at home was described as supposed to be a day with her children, but she explained that she took phone calls from her team throughout the day, despite her awareness that such action meant that work was still present.

I suppose when the laptop is sitting in the study, I think oh well, perhaps I'd better just go and check. I'm not very good at completely shutting down from it. Even on a Wednesday I always have my mobile on all day so I don't switch it off because I think I ought to be accessible. So my team do ring me up on a Wednesday; I do take work calls. (…) It's harder than I imagined to detach myself from work. It's not really a day off. It's a day where the focus is on the children and work is secondary rather than the other way round, but it's still there. (Jackie, parent)

So there was evidence of internal conflict as Jackie talked about "(not being) very good at shutting down" and "I ought to be accessible". Use of such phrases indicated an internal dialogue involving what she would like to achieve, or thought she should achieve and yet she was not able to "detach" herself or put boundaries in place to prevent work encroaching on what she would like to be family time. At this point I think it is important to mention the actual interview process itself. Jackie was clearly in some distress during our conversation evidenced by the content of what she said, but also by her eyes filling with tears several times as she talked about how difficult she found it to manage her demanding job and the role of involved mother which was clearly very important to her. The process of having a working pattern which involved doing three hours less than a full working week over four days was not one which she could describe as making her life easier. The reality of her FWA constructed through our conversation was also a result of the fact that she had recently been promoted and also had a new boss who she did not know very well. But despite the angst and confusion expressed throughout our conversation she concluded positively.

I'm tired and overworked but basically I'm happy. It works for me. On the whole it works for me and I think the company probably gets a good deal out of flexible workers, who are actually pretty dedicated most of the time. You probably work harder than if you're sat in an office from nine to five. (Jackie, parent)

Boundary management for Alan was evidenced through his description of the use of phones as a key way to avoid interruptions when individuals were not working, simply by switching them off.

One of the things we agreed actually which is a bit of a hot topic is around mobile phones and what we said is, if your mobile phone's on then you're available. (…) If for some reason you're not available, if you're out in the afternoon, and you decide you're going to work in the evening then turn your phone off. (Alan, no children)

Discipline emerged here as a key strategy for managing the boundaries between work and non-work, coupled with the autonomy which these managers had, allowing them to choose how they carried out their responsibilities on an ongoing basis. The expectations from bosses and others also influenced their behaviour.

4.2.2 Reciprocal exchange

A clear gender difference emerged regarding the language used when describing their FWAs and the way they affected their lives both within the work and the non-work domains. The women talked of bargaining and negotiation, which were not mentioned at all by the men. As all four of the women were parents, this could be due to parental status, rather than gender differences, although Laurence (the other parent in the sample) did not use similar language. The women obviously had their contractual arrangements with the organization, which detailed the benefits they received and the agreed hours of work, but they also described a reciprocal exchange, where there was no specific agreement, but just expectations of an unspecified exchange between the individual and the organization.

Louise described her quite complicated arrangements involving part time study for a degree which was necessary for a role the company wanted her to undertake. The company were not funding her course or paying her for the days she spends at college.

Louise: Well, I've had to go and do the degree because my first degree is in Engineering, so in order to accommodate that, during non term time I work three and a half to four and a half days a week in order to pay for the childcare. … I go for a day a week and I often have to go for labs or whatever through the week, during term time.

DA: And is the company paying for that?

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Louise: No, because I wanted them to let me work the extra day, because the cost of the course is peanuts in comparison with the cost of the childcare to do it. (…) When I work outside of college time, that money pays for (the nanny) for the whole year. (Louise, parent)

So the exchange involved her funding her course and putting in the study time, and in return the company "lets her" her work additional days during university holidays in order to pay for her childcare on those study days. Louise was very positive about her life in general, feeling that she was in the privileged position of being able to choose to work.

I'm so grateful for my position (of choice), grateful that I've had the chance to achieve what I've achieved, and you know, I feel valued. (Louise, parent)

For both Gayle and Jackie, the exchange consisted of the organization "giving" them a FWA and they "gave back" by doing full time hours and receiving a reduced salary and other benefits.

I have just changed managers and my previous manager did say to me why don't you take full time hours for full time pay, but I've always been a bit nervous about that because I'm worried about = I'd almost be losing that negotiation power. At the moment I say I'm a part timer. I don't work Wednesdays, and I do come in on Wednesdays sometimes; if there's a special meeting or something, I put my children in nursery for an extra day and I come in and I claim the nursery fees. But I feel that if I was being paid for full time hours then I would lose that bargaining power to some extent. (Jackie, parent)

I guess for me there is something about really wanting to protect that Friday as definite my time. I can create hopefully a complete divorce between my working life and my home life on a Thursday night when I leave work, and I think it works ok for me. (…) So I haven't pushed for any kind of recognition of full time working because I actually think it works quite well for me and I'm comfortable with that working pattern. (Gayle, parent)

The exchange involved more than the employment contract: They both valued the option they had to control that extra day. Gayle was able to 'protect' it and keep it as a completely work free day, whereas Jackie regularly worked on that day but

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maintained the option to focus on her children, even though she rarely did so to the exclusion of work.

During the interviews they both continually referred to being "part-time" and I questioned their use of this phrase, given the hours they actually put in. This obviously resonated as they commented that it had been raised by others within the organization, but they were steadfast in the view that their working pattern worked for them.

Flexible working clearly led to positive outcomes for six of the managers in terms of more time with family or time for sport. Different strategies were adopted to achieve the satisfaction with work life balance and examples illustrated the different approaches of either segmentation or integration of time and activities. The women engaged in an emotional exchange including the sense of feeling valued and expressed the need to protect family time.

4.3 Career

The original aim of the interviews was that the examination of the relationship between FWAs and career should be of primary interest as a result of the research gap highlighted by the first draft of the literature review. But the exploration of the experiences of each person's FWAs revealed other interesting findings as already noted. With regard to their careers, the respondents spoke in positive terms, with the need to avoid boredom and the consequent desire to seek new challenges being important factors to all in the decision to move to new positions. They described their hierarchical progression as having resulted from taking advantage of challenging opportunities which arose. There was a general view that flexible working had not adversely affected their career to date.

> I don't think it's had any negative impact on my career going forward. (Barry, no children)

However, there was greater uncertainty expressed by the women regarding the possibility of making more progress with their current working pattern and the realisation that the demands of the role might require different approaches.

> The higher up you go, the less likely it is that you can have something like a part
> time working arrangement. (Gayle, parent)

Three particular issues emerged with regard to FWAs and careers: their own desire for further progression, methods of performance measurement within the organization, and the importance of visibility as part of the promotion process.

4.3.1 Desire for further progression

The respondents talked in mixed terms about their own desire to progress further. Several described themselves as not very ambitious, qualifying this by talking about subjective rather than objective measures of career success.

> I'm not interested in climbing up the hierarchy, going for promotions, as long as
> I can take on a role which I'll find challenging. (Laurence, parent)

For the women, there had been a definite shift in the priority given to their career as a result of having children. Taking on a FWA was part of a life choice which involved saying 'career is on hold' yet there was still an emphasis on pursuing challenge and the accumulation of knowledge.

> I do kind of see myself going through a period of 4 or 5 years where my career is
> = I'm not going up and up the track like I have done (…) But it is still about
> personal progression and challenge.   It's about expanding my knowledge
> laterally, whereas before I was always pushed to think about moving forwards.
> (Hazel, parent)

Another paradox thus emerges where the accumulation of knowledge and the positive response to challenge is seen in career terms as standing still, rather than moving forward or up the hierarchy. However, it was not just about personal choice: the likelihood of progression whilst working flexibly was questioned, particularly by those who saw themselves as part time.

> I only anticipate to move sideways and bang about within the realms of where I
> am I think. Maybe get co-opted on to a few groups which has happened before
> but I don't actually think that my salary or any type of progression will happen in
> that sense. (Louise, parent)

Some participants talked of the difficulties they anticipated in acquiring the necessary skills and experience to make that step to the next level, whilst working flexibly. Such acquisition was perceived to involve doing extra things above and beyond their existing duties. For the women, who worked flexibly in order to spend more time with their children, they simply did not have the time to take on those extra responsibilities.

> Sometimes you have to do that bit extra and be that bit more efficient in order to get to the next stage and I haven't got the space in my head to do that. (Hazel, parent)

The issue, therefore, is not simply about time management, but about the overall construction of the demands in a more holistic sense.

However, there was also an indication of the resistance to flexible working within the culture of the organization, as explained by Gayle.

> There are at least three different female senior colleagues that have indicated that I'm closing some options by remaining part time or that I would be more successful if I worked full time in terms of career. (Gayle, parent)

This is a very clear message that progression to the highest echelons of the company is not possible on a FWA, something which the interviewees all seemed to recognize.

4.3.2 Performance measurement

Measurement of their own performance and the performance of their teams were topics mentioned by all of the interviewees. Views differed on how effective the company was at measuring output. Adrian was clear that "it's a results driven culture here" but others expressed different perspectives.

> If you were to read about performance management in EnergyCo, it would tell you that it's entirely based on output but I think the reality is that you are appreciated for or recognized for the amount you put in. (Gayle, parent)

Hazel reinforced this focus on input when she related her personal experiences with her manager, which also indicated a lack of trust.

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My boss can't really criticize what I've achieved because I'm doing fine, achieving and delivering, but I'm not expecting him to rate me as any better than mediocre. (…) He can't separate my actual performance and what I do, and how well I do it, from the fact that I'm only working nine to five on four days and then one day at home and he can't see what I'm doing all the time. (Hazel, parent)

4.3.3 Visibility/invisibility

The importance of visibility for career progression and yet the desire to blend into the work force and not draw attention to one's own particular working pattern emerged during the discussion about flexible working and career.

Jackie described the challenge she had in attempting to achieve full time goals in her "part time role" of 34 contracted hours per week. There was a sense of having to continually prove her capability and competency in order to protect the flexibility she felt she gained from that contractual arrangement.

I get the same objectives as anyone else so I'm trying to do as much work as anyone else, in a restricted period. In a way I think that's quite positive as they don't see me as someone who's got a limited capacity because I work part time. And I almost don't want it be an issue. I want it to be basically invisible, because I think the more focus I put on it, the more likely it is that it could become a problem. (Jackie, parent)

So although she openly talks about working on a part-time basis, paradoxically, she also wants it to be invisible, so that she is not marked down or thought less of in any way. This theme of invisibility emerged during the interview with Louise who was concerned with being able to achieve and deliver without unspecified others realising that she worked flexibly.

The biggest accolade to me is when people turn around and say, 'Oh, I didn't know you worked part-time' and then they say, 'Oh, I didn't know you had kids' and I would think, 'Yes!' And that's when you think it can be done, it can be done. (Louise, parent)

So these women want to be recognized for their achievements and for their working pattern to be irrelevant, lending credence to the importance of performance being measured on output. This is clearly desirable for those on a FWA which does not involve reduced hours, but for part time staff there is the potential danger that they will either be expected to complete full time responsibilities in fewer hours or will attempt to do so to 'hide' their FWA. This is especially likely when an individual maintains the same role and negotiates a shorter working week which means that women returning from maternity leave are especially vulnerable.

In contrast to the desire for invisibility amongst the women, there was some discussion amongst the men about the view that visibility is a key factor if you want to progress up the ladder within any organization. Opinions were divided about whether this was the case in this particular company and how this related to flexible working.

> I do have a concern that I'm not as visible as I always have been in the past. And that does give me some cause for concern, but then I think that, well, I am around four days a week in all the various offices where I need to be and need to be seen. So then I wonder, well, am I really any less visible than I ever have been, but it's just something that niggles away at me. (Laurence, parent)

Adrian was certain that visibility was not necessary to achieve his objectives, but equally clear that senior managers may ostensibly support that view, yet they rarely work flexibly themselves.

> You go up on to the top floor. You won't find any of the directors working from home. You'll find very few of the heads of departments working from home. They're all sitting upstairs there. (…) I think, yes, they like to be visible. (Adrian, no children)

The alternative viewpoint indicated that a level of visibility was necessary to maintain appropriate relationships through informal networking and as part of the process of managing one's own career within the organization.

> I think that career advancement is a function of who you get to know, it's about networking. I mean at my level, if you see a job advert internally, then you know there's already someone in mind, that's just the way it works. And I'd be

naïve if I thought any differently - it's about making connections and networking. (Hazel, parent)

The reduced face time inherent in these managers' and others' FWAs, results in the need for a greater emphasis on making oneself known. The place of work is less important than the opportunity to be around others and have those informal conversations as a means of establishing relationships. Relationships and visibility are entwined within the socially constructed view of progression through the hierarchy.

4.4 Supervisory responsibilities

These managers were chosen because of their managerial role in an attempt to access individuals with some seniority. However, this led to an exploration of the supervisory relationship, as all but one of the group had current supervisory responsibilities and they talked positively about the way they managed their teams. Flexible working often involves reduced face time in the office and they explained how they managed staff when they were not present in the office at the same time as their staff. For some of them, the whole team worked on a flexible basis and so their managerial approach dealt with the challenges of not always being together as a matter of course. This was not necessarily a change to previous ways of working, as the nature of the work to be undertaken had always required flexibility.

> We're lucky because the type of work the customer experience team does, is very much individual project type work and we need to interface with the operational parts of the business so (flexible working) just fitted with the type of activity we do. (Alan, no children)

One key factor for the managers was the need to know where people were at any given time and they all seemed conscious of a need for team interaction to be maintained on a regular basis, putting arrangements in place to provide this.

> I think it's important that we are together as a team for a lot of interaction, and what I was worried about in some ways was losing that but I think we've done quite well. (…) I was worried that, you know, that we'd lose a bit of the team

spirit but we are together, and I make a point of having regular team meetings and so far everything's worked pretty well. (Barry, no children)

As part of the implementation of flexible working some teams developed their own "team charter". Managers indicated that this helped to empower the team and develop individuals as the team was thus accepting more collective responsibility for their achievements than had been asked of them previously.

The other thing was on a team basis, to get them working on a team charter to understand how they would make it work for their team. (Gayle, parent)

The managers in the sample had teams of very different sizes, but all talked of the need to maintain regular contact with their direct reports, something which had become more important particularly in the teams where most people were working flexibly.

I have four direct reports and then people under them. (…) I try and stay in touch with them every day. I speak to them all once a day, because I think that's really important when everyone's working flexibly because you don't have that forced daily contact where someone is sitting around you. (Jackie, parent)

So there was evidence of greater structure being used to ensure that team meetings, individual quarterly reviews and development plans, and regular one-to-one meetings took place in a timely manner. Thus there is another paradox of flexible working: greater flexibility throughout the team requires a structured approach to maintain successful achievement of team objectives and the maintenance of team spirit.

Managers were cognizant of the impact which their personal working pattern may have on the team, particularly when this involved working late in the evening or at weekends.

I do get a little bit worried about the guys who are flexible, because they have tended to, almost mutate into doing the same sorts of things that I do. So I find it quite disconcerting sometimes, that I can be doing emails at eleven or twelve at night, and I'm getting replies back from them, and have I caused that or would they do that anyway? (Laurence, parent)

Similarly Alan explained that he often stays late in the office and was concerned that his team were following his example.

> One of the real challenges I faced was the fact that the team were all following the way that I worked. I said to them, 'Why are you all here at this time of night?' and they said, 'Well you are!.'. (Alan, no children)

Having identified themselves as role models for their team, several of them took steps to change their own working habits as a consequence, or at least to disguise their own hours, for instance, by writing emails and saving them to send at more traditional office hours. This concern over the influence on team working patterns conflicts with the desire to 'prove' one's own diligence to others. Laurence's practice of occasionally sending out emails late at night was a deliberate strategy to demonstrate that he was still putting in long hours, despite his FWA which involved working from home on a Friday morning and finishing at lunchtime.

> It's a stupid thing, I know (…) but psychologically there's something that says you're being perceived as slacking and therefore you need to show you're not slacking and emails are an easy way of showing it. (Laurence, parent)

An alternative viewpoint was provided by Louise, although she was the only interviewee without current managerial responsibilities. She was particularly convinced about the difficulties of managing staff whilst working flexibly.

> Louise: You can't manage staff effectively on a part time basis. You probably can in a job share, but at certain levels I don't think job share works. (…) So that's the first thing, managing staff.
>
> Interviewer: So what are the difficulties, then, of managing staff on a part time basis?
>
> Louise: Well, when they have to come to you, it's because their job has stopped, and I can't say, 'Well hang on to that thought until Tuesday when I'm next in!' Do you know what I mean? It doesn't work. It's not fair on them. (Louise, parent)

Yet there was also recognition from some, of the independence which could develop as a result of their absences and the positive response from their team to the increased

autonomy and empowerment. Most were happy to be contacted when they were away from the office and also made it clear who else could be contacted when necessary.

> I think they are encouraged to be quite empowered and quite independent so that they're not in fear of making the wrong decision, or at least they would know where to go if I wasn't there so they could escalate to my boss, for example, or to my colleagues, talk to one of my colleagues, so I don't think they ever feel completely isolated. (Gayle, parent)

With regard to supervisory responsibilities, therefore, the managers used a variety of strategies to ensure satisfactory completion of this aspect of their role. For some, the nature of their role and the function of the department had always involved the team being dispersed geographically and so reduced face time was not a significant issue for them, but merely part of the enactment of their job. However, there was acknowledgement of the importance of having strategies in place which ensured managers and team members could engage together as well as maintaining a sense of teamwork.

4.5 Discussion

Several of these managers had been involved in piloting the flexible working scheme and so I was mindful of Rapley's (2004) caution that for them the interview may not have been just about their own experiences, but about positioning themselves as supportive of their team or successful in managing a flexible workforce. This particular background will have been an important factor in the social construction of knowledge which emerged.

As explained in Chapter 2, much of the previous research in the context of flexible working has included different definitions and mixed samples which do not differentiate between levels of staff or forms of flexibility. One of the key factors to emerge from this pilot study was the need to acknowledge and explore the unique working patterns of the participants. Although seven of the eight managers had formal FWAs, there were also levels of informality in the enactment of their flexibility, something which is under-represented in the literature. This finding builds on definitions of informal flexibility (Holt & Thaulow, 1996; Hall & Atkinson, 2006)

extending the definition to reflect the adjustment which participants made in response to demands from the work domain, not just the non-work domain or extending working hours as found previously.

Exploration of working patterns suggested the existence of individual consistency and adaptability within each unique arrangement. This combination of consistency of pattern and adaptability is similar to the "*latitude for adjustment between working life and family life*" (Holt & Thaulow, 1996:85) which is described as a mix between the formal and informal flexibility used by individuals and is dependent on the workplace culture and the organization and content of work. Latitude for adjustment involves the flexibility necessary to meet one's own needs (specifically parental in the cited study) within the wider context of the needs of colleagues. Consistency and adaptability add to the understanding of how managers actually make the adjustments necessary to successfully carry out their roles as well as meeting needs from the non-work domain.

Consistency and adaptability also relate to boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1995; Ashforth et al, 2000) and border theory (Campbell-Clark, 2000) and the ways in which people segment or integrate their lives. The use of integration as a means of responding to demands from the work place is supported in the literature, and within these findings there is an indication that high levels of integration may relate to a lack of self discipline which can result in work becoming all-encompassing supported by the notion of ever-availability in existing literature (Tietze & Musson, 2003). The segmentation of the work and non-work domains was also evident as in previous studies (Wilson et al, 2004) including the need to protect the boundary between work and home (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997).

The findings also provide support for the shift away from emphasis on family. Holt & Thaulow (1996) specifically talked about varying working hours among a sample of parents, whereas here participants talk of other benefits which they experience, unrelated to family. The finding of a motivating factor for flexible working such as sport is supported by Ransome (2007:378) who proposes the widening of the concept of work life balance to include recreational labour, which he describes as "*the realm of leisure, pleasure and enjoyment*". Although the respondents seemed comfortable using the phrase "work life balance", the findings reflected the discussion in the

literature about the need to move away from the word "balance". Some felt that their work life balance was satisfactory or better and this depended on the ways in which they managed the spatial and temporal boundaries between work and non-work. Flexible working was an important part of the overall approach to managing the demands from all aspects of their lives. This study puts flexible working at the centre of people's endeavours to manage their various priorities. The finding regarding the company expectations for managers to put in whatever hours are needed, is supported by the questions raised by Lewis et al (2007) over the real level of choice within the flexibility discourse.

In an organization, the knowledge and skills which individuals bring to a job are formally rewarded with pay and promotions, but social exchange theory (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964) may explain other aspects of the behaviours exhibited by many in the workplace. Blau suggests that the feelings of obligation, gratitude and trust which are part of social exchange are in addition to economic exchange which in this instance is represented by the formal employment contract. The women in the sample talked of gratitude whereas it was not mentioned at all by the men. The very nature of social exchange involves trusting that others will fulfil their obligations. When considering the social relationship of an individual and their employing organization, usually represented by their immediate manager, trust becomes a key issue. This was demonstrated particularly in Hazel's case where the issue of whether her boss believed she was actually working when she was at home was a real source of frustration and anger for her. The element of flexibility introduces unspecified obligations in this relationship which sit alongside the economic exchange elements.

It is useful here to refer to the work of Molm, Peterson and Takahashi (1999) who focus on the distinctions between negotiated exchange and reciprocal exchange. Negotiated exchange allows for actors to reach agreement in advance about the benefits which will be available to both parties. Reciprocal exchange, however, involves no specific agreement, with each party offering benefits with only an expectation of future benefits being available to them. The rate of exchange thus develops over time with the emphasis on the longer term relationship rather than the specific transaction which tended to be the focus of the earlier theorists. So it would seem that the women in this sample placed greater value on flexible working being a

lasting part of their employment relationship. Such findings of gratitude are consistent with the greater loyalty among women with school aged children found in Roehling, Roehling & Moen's (2001) examination of work life policies through a life course perspective.

Career was a less important issue for some of the respondents who talked of the need for challenge in their work, yet did not interpret this as progression up a hierarchy. The literature supports this finding in that there is an acknowledgement of reaching a plateau (Kropf, 1999; Hill et al, 2004; Lee & Kossek, 2005) but this would suggest that the relationship is more complex as the managers seemed to view success more in terms of the internal criteria of accomplishment and achievement (Sturges, 1999).

The ability of the organization to accurately assess people's performance was questioned by some, considering whether it was measured through results or time input. Linked to this was the discussion around visibility and invisibility. Visibility was seen as important for future promotion by some of the respondents with the emphasis on the ability to develop and maintain informal relationships (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). However, gender differences emerged here with the women actually not wanting their working pattern to be uppermost in the minds of others because of the concern that motivation and commitment are still assessed, however informally, through the amount of time spent in the workplace (Munck, 2001).

The unexpected theme to emerge was supervisory responsibilities. Discussions focused around the impact of their working pattern and the actions they took to ensure that their team were not disadvantaged because of the managers' own reduced time in the office/time with their team. This is a topic not discussed in the current literature and as a result of this (explained in section 3.7), the interview schedule for the main study was adapted, with questions introduced about their role as a manager. The managers talked of using a more structured approach to their interactions with their team members and this reflects similar findings in the literature when managers *of* flexible workers introduced new structures to ensure sufficient interaction (Pearlson & Saunders, 2001). The finding of impression management tactics such as sending out emails to demonstrate that an appropriate amount of work is still being done, is supported by the literature which finds that individuals may feel the need to convince

significant others that they are in fact working, particularly when at home (Haddon, 1998).

4.6 Directions for research in main study

The findings from the pilot study have given some clear indications of direction for further investigation in the main study. Firstly, the unique pattern of each person's FWA and the emergence of the concepts of consistency and adaptability warrant further exploration to understand the ways in which managers negotiate the boundaries between the work and the non-work domains. Secondly, the supervisory responsibilities of managers who have adopted a flexible working pattern which results in less face time in the workplace will be investigated in greater depth. Parental status emerged as a possible differentiator when considering the way these managers constructed flexible working within their whole lives. Age and educational qualifications did not appear to be relevant and so these data were not collected in the main study.

Chapter 5 Findings (part 1)

5 Findings (part 1)

The aim of this thesis is to examine the experiences of managers with a flexible working arrangement. In this context the main research question is:

How do managers of people construe and experience flexible working?

This chapter presents the first part of the findings from the main study which was conducted amongst 34 managers from four organizations, as described in Chapter 3, section 3.7. The study was informed by and aims to build on the results of the first stage of the research reported in chapter 4. A map of managerial experiences of FWAs is presented (see figure 5.1) which represents the overall findings from the study. Findings will then be dealt with in two chapters.

Figure 5-1 Map of managers' experiences of flexible working
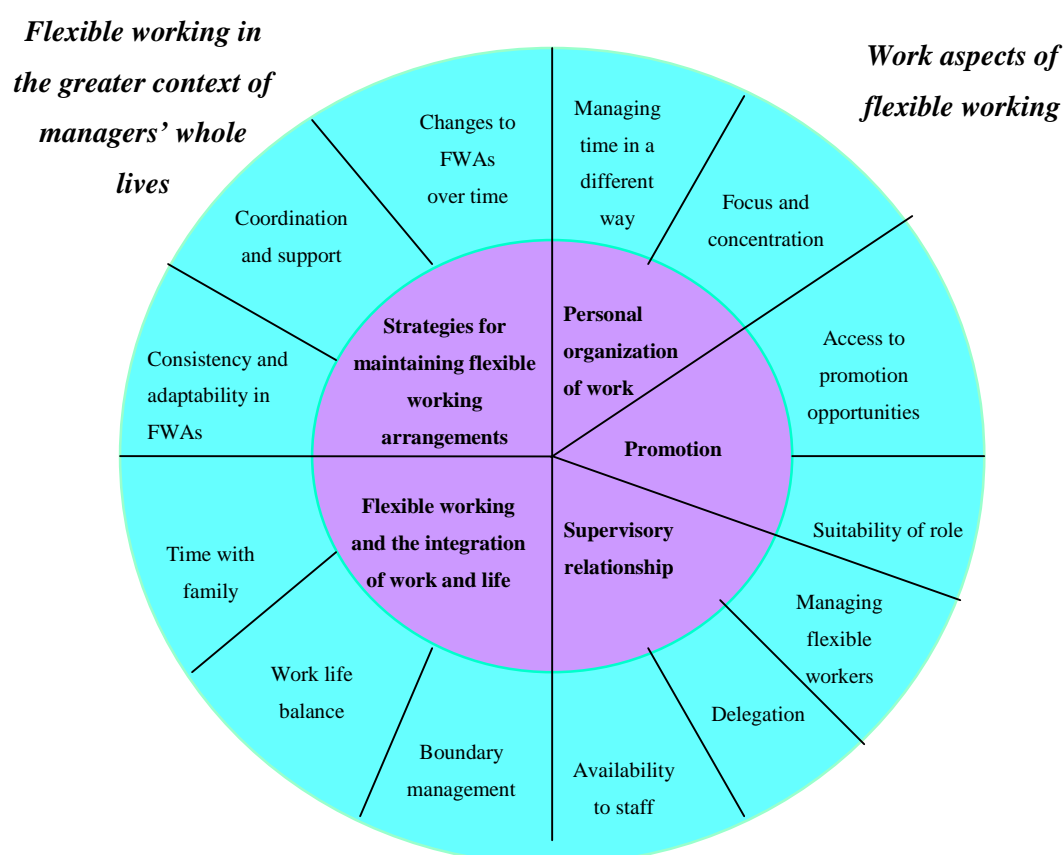
This chapter reveals the findings with regard to the relationship of flexible working in the greater context of the managers' whole lives (the left hand side of figure 5.1) and chapter 6 will cover flexible working in the work context (the right hand side of figure 5.1). Section 5.1 reports on the demographic details of the 34 participants and the variation in flexible working arrangements among them. Strategies used to maintain those FWAs successfully are discussed in section 5.2. The concepts of consistency and adaptability, which emerged from the pilot study, will be further developed in section 5.2.1 as factors which affect the FWAs of the managers in the sample. The importance of coordination with, and support from, family members (section 5.2.2) proved to be crucial in enabling many of the managers to fulfil their roles using a FWA. Respondents reported that FWAs had evolved over a period of time as different issues emerged in the work and/or non-work domains (section 5.2.3). In section 5.3 the integration of work and life will be explored. The importance of being able to spend time with family is discussed in section 5.3.1 and the personal conceptions of work life balance are examined in section 5.3.2. Finally section 5.3.3 will address the issue of the management of boundaries between work and home.

5.1 Demographics

The sampling strategy was adjusted as a result of the findings from the exploratory study. Rather than just focusing on senior flexible workers, I chose to include specifically those who had staff reporting to them. So the sample consists of those with a working pattern which reduced their face time during traditional office hours within the organization **and** had roles which involved supervisory responsibilities. This had emerged from the exploratory study as an important part of the flexible working experience and is an under researched area. Flexible working patterns included staggered hours, remote working, compressed week or fortnight, flexitime and reduced hours.

In the interviews reported here the managers began by describing their own flexible working pattern and the strategies they used to maintain their FWA. Many of them talked about adjustments they had made to their pattern and style of working since commencing such an arrangement. Table 5.1 gives a breakdown of the individuals and their working patterns. Given the gender differences and differences of parental

status which emerged from the exploratory findings, these details were also recorded, with parental status being noted by the ages of children (only pre-school age, both pre-school and primary age or only school age) or no children.

Table 5-1 Individual working patterns [3]

Interviewee number	Staggered hours	Remote working	Compressed hours	Flexi-time	Reduced hours	Amount of time in contract	Parental status
1	*	*			*	4 days +	Pre-school
2	*				*	< 4 days	Pre-school
3					*	< 4 days	Pre-school & primary
4		*		*	*	< 4 days	Pre-school & primary
5	*				*	< 4 days	School
6		*			*	< 4 days	School
7				*	*	< 4 days	School
8		*			*	< 4 days	School
9	*	*			*	< 4 days	School
10			*			100%	Pre-school
11				*		100%	Pre-school
12		*				100%	Pre-school
13	*	*				100%	Pre-school
14		*		*		100%	Pre-school & primary
15	*	*				100%	Pre-school & primary
16		*		*		100%	School
17	*					100%	School
18		*		*		100%	School
19			*			100%	No children
20		*		*		100%	No children
21		*	*			100%	No children
22		*	*			100%	No children
23		*		*		100%	No children
24		*		*		100%	No children
25		*			*	4 days +	Pre-school
26					*	4 days +	Pre-school
27					*	4 days +	Pre-school
28	*	*			*	4 days +	Pre-school
29		*			*	4 days +	Pre-school
30		*			*	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
31	*				*	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
32		*			*	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
33	*				*	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
34					*	4 days +	School

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[3] Interviewee numbers have been used to preserve confidentiality and are consistent with the numbers used in Appendix 5 which gives respondents' descriptions of their roles.

The interviews revealed various idiosyncratic adjustments to each FWA resulting in each one being unique to that particular individual. The only similarity was between those who worked compressed hours, with two respondents working nine day fortnights, and differing only in the day they chose not to work. A third individual took one day off per month and the fourth person with this pattern worked a four and half day week, giving an indication of the variation which can be found within the same category of flexible working. The other patterns of working were all totally unique with combinations of different types of flexibility. Those in this sample who worked reduced hours had contracts ranging from 50% to 90% of a standard contract in their organization. For some this included hours at home, either on a given day each week, or hours to be worked at their discretion. Both those working full time and those with reduced hours described patterns of staggered hours, including long days and shorter days. Some had a fairly set pattern of hours and others worked flexitime or differing hours.

This large range of FWAs supported findings from the exploratory study and they were classified according to amount of working hours: less than four days per week(< 4 days), four days or more but not full time (4 days +), and those with a full time contract (100% contract). These classifications were chosen because of the differentiation made by several respondents between working three days per week and working four days. The latter was perceived as more acceptable in ways which are discussed in sections 5.2.3 and 6.3.2. The categorisations of amount of time and parental status were used as part of the analysis process and also prove valuable in providing some context when referencing quotations throughout this chapter and the next. Table 5.2 provides a summary of these details and the range of working practices is discussed further in section 5.1.1.

It is noteworthy that the majority of the men tended to maintain a full time contract whilst working flexibly. In comparison the women were more evenly spread across the groups for contracted time at work. There were no gender differences with regard to parental status as both women and men either had children across the age ranges or did not have children. All of those without children had a full time contract. This illustrates how difficult it is from a research point of view to classify flexible working.

Table 5-2 Summary of demographic details

	Women	Men	Total (%)
Total participants	24	10	34
Contracted time at work			
Full time (100%)	7	8	15 (44%)
4 days + but less than 100% (4 days +)	8	2	10 (29%)
Less than 4 days (< 4 days)	9	0	9 (27%)
Ages of children			
No children	3	3	6 (18%)
Only pre-school age	8	2	10 (29%)
Mix of pre-school and primary school age	7	2	9 (27%)
Only school age	6	3	9 (27%)

5.1.1 Unique flexible working patterns

The interviewees explained their working patterns and some illustrative examples follow. Cerys explained her compressed work time:

> I do a nine day fortnight. So I'm still employed full time and I get paid a full time salary. I extend my hours in the nine days that I work to ensure that that covers me for the hours on the tenth day that I can have off. (Cerys, 100%, no children)

Others who maintained a full time contract had renegotiated their working hours, and this could include a day or two regularly working from home.

> I think the official contract is ten till seven on Mondays and Tuesdays, seven thirty to four thirty on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and I work from home on a

Friday. (…) Those are the hours that I spend in the office and that's it. I work either side of all of those hours. (Melissa, 100%, pre-school)

Remote working tended largely to be undertaken on both a formal and an informal basis and was often in conjunction with another form of flexible working such as flexi-time.

No two days are really the same in terms of start time and finish time and where I might be. (.) I'm quite capable of working in any of the TechCo offices or at home and, to some extent, even elsewhere. (Tom, 100%, no children)

In such cases, the choice to work remotely was obviously at their own discretion. Others agreed which days would be their home days.

Normal day is I arrive in the office at about nine-ish and leave between five and six, so if we agree that that's normal, in other words, I can say that Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are normal. Then on Thursday and Friday, I tend not to be in the office, rather to be at home. (Matt, 100%, pre-school)

So these managers constructed their own meanings of a full time job, challenging the view of such a job having to be undertaken in the work place during the traditional working hours of 9.00am to 5.30pm. Most of them openly talked about 'working flexibly' but one exception to this was Robert. He was less comfortable doing so, highlighting some uncertainty in his own personal social construction of flexible working, with which he does not quite identify. He explained that he did not have a formal flexible working arrangement, but 'just lock out the time in my diary'. He equated the term flexible working with part time working, and was thus hesitant to admit to working flexibly himself.

This is just something around the way that I work. I get the work done, but I arrange my time so that I can have a shortened = well not a (.) it's not a shortened day, I mean it's actually = it's a (.) that's why I'm saying it's difficult to describe it as a flexible working agreement, because it's actually not shorter than the standard = than the sort of guideline hours, but the point is somebody at my level would be expected to be flexible around that sort of thing and so I'm saying well the firm's going to be flexible around a Wednesday, rather than me. (Robert, 100%, school)

A paradox emerges here in terms of his reluctance to acknowledge that he worked flexibly and his observation that senior staff were expected to "be flexible". So he experienced flexible working as something which benefited the individual and came **from** the company, whereas senior staff were expected to **give to** the company. Later in the interview he did describe himself as having a FWA, making the following observation:

> I'm probably in a small minority of being a man with a flexible working arrangement. Most would be mothers with young children. (Robert, 100%, school)

This perception of FWAs being taken up by women with young children may be part of the reason he did not wish to include himself as someone with a FWA.

Although many people worked remotely, not everyone did so. Some people simply did not have the appropriate space at home which would afford them the necessary privacy or quiet. Only a few talked about working remotely in terms of offices other than their base office, a working practice which arose in the exploratory study. Many of those on a reduced hours contract, preferred to spend their time in the workplace. Jim, who worked 30 hours over four days, explained:

> To be absolutely honest, when I'm down to four days, and two of those are short days, I prefer to get in because it's the only chance I get to see people face to face. (Jim, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

For those with a pattern of reduced hours, a contractual change was obviously a prerequisite. Yet within those groups of people working either less than four days, or four days or more but not full time, there were still examples of flexi-time, remote working and the longer days associated with compressed hours. This range of combined FWAs is illustrated in the quotations below.

> I work twenty hours a week. And for me, I can choose when I do those hours. (…) During term time I work it over four days, so that I can go and pick up the children from school on time. And then during the school holidays I work it on three long days so that I have two days off each week with the children. (Jackie, < 4 days, school)

(I work) a four and a half day week with as much working from home as I can manage. (…) On a Monday I work four hours from home (…) I try to work from home on one other day. I probably manage that about 50 per cent of the time. It depends what's going on. (Sarah, 4 days +, pre-school and primary)

My formal arrangement is I work Monday to Thursday and (…) usually, I'm in at 7:30 and I probably rarely leave before 6.00. (Naomi, 4 days +, school)

The finding of unique FWAs which emerged in the exploratory study was supported in the main study as evidenced above. There are examples of variation in the total hours worked, the daily patterns of hours, and the division of working time between the home and the workplace. Many of the managers described formal arrangements as well as an additional degree of informal flexibility which will be discussed in section 5.2.1 where the concepts of consistency and adaptability are explored further.

5.2 Strategies for maintaining flexible working arrangements

This section will explore the strategies which the managers used to maintain successfully their FWAs. Figure 5.2 illustrates how this fits into the overall model of managers' experiences of flexible working.

Figure 5-2 Strategies for maintaining flexible working arrangements
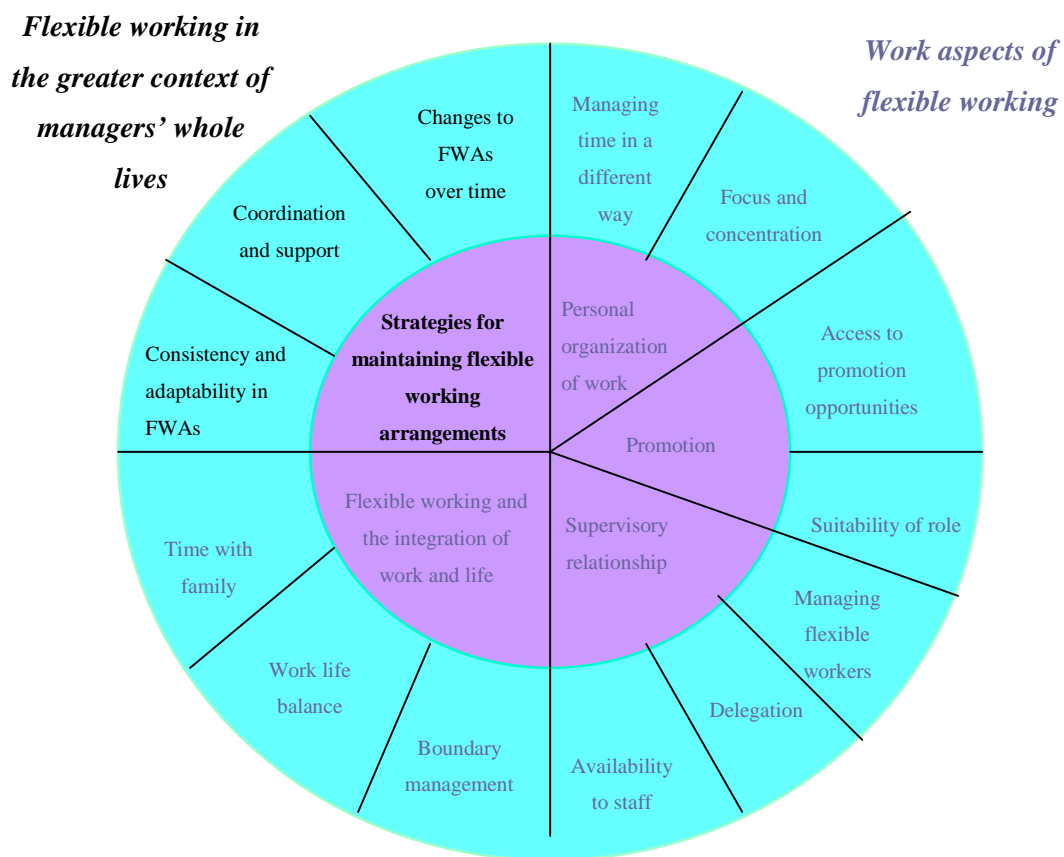
5.2.1 Consistency and adaptability in FWAs

Findings from the exploratory study indicated that the unique working patterns were maintained with varying levels of flexibility, demonstrating both consistency and adaptability in individual enactment of flexible working. There was a continuous tension between consistency or routine (as a response to fixed demands from both the

work and non-work domains) and adaptability (as a way of continuing to meet those needs as they fluctuate). The results of the full scale study provide further evidence of these concepts and a model has been developed which illustrates how these managers use flexible working arrangements to meet demands from both the non-work and the work domains (see figure 5.3).

As explained in section 4.1.1, consistency can be demonstrated through such actions as presence in the office on certain days each week (meeting business needs) or leaving the office at set times on given days (meeting non-work needs). These arrangements are often part of the negotiated agreement when setting up a FWA. Individuals thought through the requirements from both the work and non-work domains and proposed a pattern of work which met those needs. They were often required to complete a formal application, although in some cases this was a formality after the agreement had been arranged through discussion with their manager.

> I kept in touch with my manager throughout my maternity leave anyway. About two months before I came back, I approached him and just said look you know, I'd like to work four days a week. (…) I came back with a proposal and said I think this can work and he was in agreement so we just went through the process and it had to be = I was interviewed by an HR consultant. I think at the time they had a chat with me, made sure I was quite comfortable, I didn't have any concerns or anything about coming back part time, and just went through some forms to sign with HR. (Rosie, 4 days+, pre-school)

For those without children there may be other factors to consider, but in this sample the non-parents usually did it for lifestyle reasons or to respond to job needs. For instance, Rachel worked a compressed fortnight, taking every other Monday off.

> For me I found that I was actually working quite late anyway and I think one of the things about having that day is there are things that you can do during a work day that you can't always do at the weekends. Also my, at the time boyfriend, which is partly the reason why I guess I'm not so desperate to take it now, my boyfriend didn't live in London. So I'd go and visit and I mean he lived actually near where my parents were in Essex so it was quite nice. I spent quite a lot of the time when I had the extra Monday going down to Essex, so that was quite good as well. (Rachel, 100%, no children)

Adaptability occurs when the individuals adjust their daily schedules to meet the ongoing and changing needs from both domains. This is explained in figure 5.3. In order to meet the fixed demands from both the work and the non-work domains, there is a requirement from the individual for a consistent approach, within the scope of their flexible working arrangement. Adaptability from the individual, or the willingness to change arrangements to respond to changing demands, enables them to meet the overall demands from either domain.

Figure 5-3 Consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements

```
                    Meeting work demands
        requires         /      \          enables

 Consistency                            Adaptability
 A response to fixed demands    A response to changing
                Flexible working        demands
                arrangements

        requires                        enables
                Meeting non-work demands
```
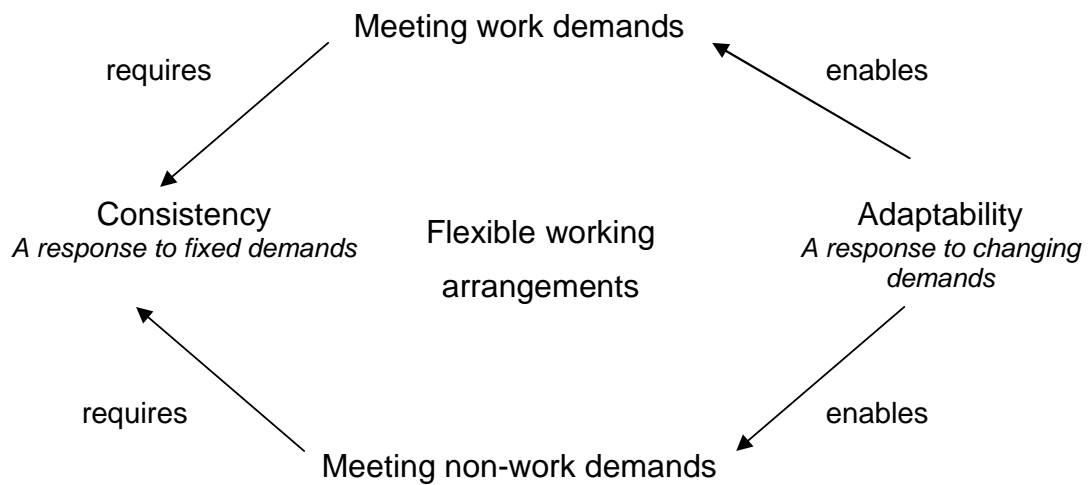
Consistency, or adherence to particular days or times for starting or finishing work, was a requirement for many people, often linked to childcare. Individuals may have agreed a later start time to allow for dropping children at school or nursery before arriving at work. Alternatively, they may have had to leave at a certain time to allow for collecting children or relieving a nanny. These arrangements allowed for little flexibility in themselves, but many of the respondents demonstrated adaptability when they explicitly talked about working on days which were not scheduled as work days to 'catch up' or 'keep on top of things'. A few made reference to working at weekends for the same reason. Consistency and adaptability are illustrated in the following quotations.

> On the whole, I manage to stick to the three days, although I do dial in, but I'm
> not generally having to send my children to nursery on Thursday, Friday because

I'm having to work. There are occasions when I do have to, and there are occasions where I've got an event coming up that's on a Thursday that I just need to go to. So I'll have to put my children in nursery for that, but it's not that regular. So to me, that's just part of being flexible for the job. (Sally, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

I often work if there's an event that I need to go to. Because of my role, I attend lots of marketing type events with lawyers or with Corporates or internally running it in the office here, which might mean it's an evening such as a dinner or a breakfast seminar, or something like that. So, in that situation I would need to work outside those hours. (Ruth, < 4 days, school)

In terms of the additional hours, some respondents pointed out that this mirrors the practices of many of their colleagues who do not have a FWA and also work hours in excess of their agreed contractual working week.

I guess I'm probably doing an additional, I don't know, I'm supposed to be doing an additional four hours from home, and it would probably be more like ten hours from home a week I do. And it really just reflects that the job is very busy. And I really like it as well. (…) It's really busy. I want it to succeed and I'd have to say that I don't think it's unique to the fact that I'm working reduced hours. So everybody on my grade, I would say that they don't stick to their 37 hours a week. They do more than that. And so it's pretty consistent with, I think, most of what my peers do as well. (Frances, 4 days+, pre-school & primary)

For some, adaptability resulted in changing the days they were present in the workplace, either because of meetings or courses or other specific events.

I work three days a week, or try to work three days a week, which is generally Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. If I have to be on a course or if there's any other particular reason why I need to come in, then I kind of try and either take a different day off, and come in on the Wednesday or the Friday, or I just end up working extra days, basically. (Carolyn, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

In the exploratory study there was an indication of gender differences regarding the motivating factors, which were not borne out here. The full-scale study showed that both women and men work flexibly predominantly for family reasons, wishing to

spend more time with their children. Only one person mentioned elder care as an issue. Several people talked about being able to carry out voluntary work, although only one person (with no children) worked flexibly specifically to carry out such work. Interestingly, nobody talked about the desire to participate in sporting activities as a driver for requesting a FWA, a factor which had arisen in the earlier study.

The model of consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements will be developed further in Chapter 7, section 7.3.

5.2.2 Coordination and support

As part of their description of their working pattern, many of those with children talked about the coordination of childcare provision with other family members. Such coordination was crucial in being able to maintain their unique FWA, and their working pattern was often presented as part of an overall logistical arrangement. For instance, childcare arrangements were varied with talk of nannies, nurseries and after school clubs and many gave examples of sharing the dropping off and collecting of children with their partners. Their own consistency or routine was often dependent on the complementary routine of their partner.

> I work three days a week, and I generally work Monday, Wednesday and Friday because that makes it easier in terms of managing workload, but it also fits with my personal circumstances as well, or rather me and my husband between us have managed our workload so that he can manage Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays and he works longer hours on a Tuesday and Thursday. (Gill, < 4 days, school)

There was some mention of the role of grandparents with regard to childcare arrangements. For instance, Liz felt that she was in a privileged position because her parents look after her young child and she was able to call on them at short notice, either to say that she would be home later than planned, or to facilitate her leaving early in the morning, or even having to work an extra day.

> My parents actually look after my son, so it's very easy for me to call up and say 'I'll be home late at 6.30.' 'I'll be starting tomorrow at 7.00', etc. But it's because of that that it works incredibly well for me, and I am in a fairly unique position, so it would be quite difficult to = if people didn't have that support to

sometimes exercise these flexible working arrangements. (Liz, 4 days +, pre-school)

Several others mentioned grandparents but more often saying that they lived some distance away and were not able to help. But even those who did have their own parents living locally did not necessarily want to rely on them.

My parents live close by, but they're not always there and I wouldn't want to call on them the whole time. (Eve, 4 days +, pre-school)

However a few parents mentioned that they called upon grandparents to help with the provision of additional childcare in the school holidays.

Some of the respondents talked about the travel commitments which are an inherent part of their roles, and the additional burden this could place on the family to maintain finely tuned logistical arrangements. Two parents, a man and a woman, explicitly referred to the difficulties they and their spouses face when they have to undertake overseas trips.

This year I've been to the US three times already (by mid-March), and it was at two week intervals. And so that was quite hard to arrange all the childcare coverage and leave my husband looking after the kids for the whole week, three times. (Frances, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

There are times when I simply have to go overseas and we don't have any other childcare other than the two of us and we share it. That's where the whole thing breaks. (…) My wife has to take time off work. So it obliges her to take holiday in order that she can cover the requirements of childcare, which is absurd. Partly our own fault for living where we do and having a child. We could have avoided the situation. I could take a job that didn't involve going overseas and so on and so forth. It is an interesting one. (Matt, 100/%, pre-school)

In the second quotation, Matt emphasized the joint responsibility for childcare and the decision he and his wife had taken not to involve anyone else. He was clearly aware of the impact of their decision and his use of language ('absurd', 'our own fault', 'could have avoided') suggested he was defending their choice from potential criticism through open acknowledgement of the difficulties it presented. This could be a reflection of the view that childcare is not being valued by society, but is of high

value to them. Some may see it as an individual/family responsibility that should have no consideration in the workplace. Individuals may have conflicting views over this, with a personal value system and deep sense of love which prompts involvement with children, and yet awareness that accepted wisdom suggests a conflict between work and family, especially if one wishes to progress hierarchically within an organization. These managers were very clear that they had made informed decisions about the care of their children. They were willing to deal with the consequences of those decisions without asking for additional support from their employers above and beyond their FWA. This will be addressed further in section 5.3.1 which discusses time spent with family.

Others also expressed the desire to be heavily involved in the parenting of their children. For instance, one woman explained how important this was to her:

> I have colleagues that don't see their kids at all during the week, and make a big fuss of them at the weekends, but they make that sacrifice. (…) I didn't have kids so that I didn't see them for five days of the week. (Melissa, 100%, pre-school)

Another explained the impact that her choice around parenting had on decisions she made in the work domain.

> Because of the sort of work that I do, and the fact that I am the principal person responsible for looking after my children, I clearly can't travel so I'm very limited in the projects that I do. The majority of our projects are outside of London, and significantly outside of London. So I am very limited by that. So that is a real drawback, but that is a decision that I guess I've made at the end of the day as well. (Philippa, 4 days +, pre-school)

As in Matt's comment above, there is evidence of the ownership of responsibility for the consequences of her decision.

For this sample it would seem that the motivating factor for the adoption of flexible working is predominantly to look after children and in this context the involvement of other family members is obviously a critical factor. Parents are not just balancing the needs of their children with the demands of their own job, but also having to take into account the demands of their spouse or partner's job when they try to adapt their working pattern to fit with unplanned issues which emerge.

5.2.3 Changes to FWAs over time

The interviewees who did not have children talked of a constant approach to flexible working, whether that approach involved a great deal of change and reaction, or whether it was a fairly fixed pattern. Their approach had not changed over time. They had a FWA for given reasons and had had no cause to change that. One exception within this group of non-parents was Morgan, who did highly skilled work in a different sector for half a day per week.

> It has been with a full time contract with (the company) but I have some time out one morning a week to do a session (in the other organization) and that time is essentially collapsed during the rest of the week. So it's kind of redistributed. For almost eighteen months or almost two years, I changed my contract whereby I went formally part-time and did more (of those) sessions. In that context I would say I was fully flexible if you like, because I was working three days here, one day (in the other organization) and I had one day to myself, that was a personal decision. And for the last twelve months I've gone back to a full time contract but with the flexibility in there to do (those) sessions as and when. (Morgan, 100%, no children)

Morgan is an unusual example as it is extremely uncommon for someone to work flexibly in order to carry out a role in a separate organization, although it is worth pointing out that there was obviously no conflict of interest between the roles.

Many of the parents in the sample also talked about the changes that had taken place to their FWA over time. Catalysts for change included the birth of a subsequent child, a house move resulting in a longer commute, changing to a non-client facing role, a promotion, and children going to school. The following quotations illustrate some of the changes which occurred:

> When we moved out of London to having the commute, that made me focus on the fact that if there were days when I didn't actually need to be in the office, wasn't it a good idea just to stay at home, not have the journey. (Sarah, 4 days+, pre-school & primary)

> It's varied a lot over the years. I first started working flexibly when my first child was born (…) when I came back to work. Then I did four days a week. It

was condensed time, so I did four long days. And that worked quite well when I had one child and fewer things to worry about. (…) I went on maternity leave again for the second time (…) and when I came back to work afterwards I did twenty hours a week to start off with, and I did, I think it was something like, Monday morning, Tuesday and Thursday. (Oonagh, < 4 days, school age)

This evidence of the changing nature of FWAs is a feature of the longer term reality of how flexible working fits into people's lives.

An interesting discussion emerged regarding the number of days worked and how sustainable this was. Several women returned to work after maternity leave having agreed to work three days a week. For some that was an arrangement that worked, but for others there were associated problems. For instance, Paula's experiences involved maintaining her full time role in three days, resulting in financial penalties as well as the stress associated with long hours.

I was easily doing full time hours. (…) They knew that there was no way I was only doing three days work. (…) In a sales environment, the irony was that those few years = both year ends that I went through in that situation, both years I hit my sales number even though I was only working three days a week and I = but I only got three fifths of my bonus. I only got three fifths of my salary. (Paula, 100% contract, school age)

Despite those experiences, she wanted to re-negotiate her contract to four days a week which she felt would allow her to have time with her children, yet increase her financial reward package. In fact her boss persuaded her to accept a full-time contract and increased the level of flexibility to allow her to time her working hours, so that she could meet demands from both the non-work domain and the work domain. In this way she was no longer penalised financially. Others talked in the same way about the optimum number of days to work and how this became apparent over time, almost through a process of trial and error. Three days were considered insufficient whereas four days at work and three days at home were seen as a possible way of attending to both domains in a satisfactory manner.

I find four days is a compromise between what I want and what I think I can make work. (Philippa, 4 days + pre-school)

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These managers were in senior positions with corresponding levels of responsibility and some felt that it just did not work to try and reduce those responsibilities to a level which could be achieved in three days. This was particularly the case when some of their team also worked on a reduced hours basis, simply in terms of being in the office together for some of the week in order to interact appropriately. Some face to face contact was clearly desirable, if not essential.

> I think if you work four days it's manageable. But I think once you get down to three days, you would start to struggle more, in terms of overlap. You would only have one day overlap, potentially. (Naomi, 4 days +, school)

As managers of flexible workers with patterns of reduced hours, they would simply prefer their staff to be around for more hours, suggesting that they probably accede to the social construction of a 'job' as being about 37 hours per week, in spite of their own FWA.

> Some of my reduced hours people are actually thinking about increasing their hours, for example, as their children start to go to school. And we would bite their hand off, really. Because they are very good and to have them for, instead of three days, to have them for four days would be great. (Frances, 4 days+, pre-school & primary)

Summary

Findings described in this section with regard to the variation of FWAs clearly indicate that they cannot be meaningfully categorised with regard to the different types of flexible working such as remote working, reduced hours etc. Such a categorisation does not take account of the concepts of consistency or adaptability which provide additional understanding to the social constructions of flexible working found in this study. Despite the apparent rigidity of the start and finish times of some individuals with FWAs, these managers demonstrated that huge effort goes into managing the logistical details of their overall lives. Continual adjustments were made to ensure they met the demands from both the work and non-work domains.

5.3 Flexible working and the integration of work and life

This section will discuss in greater depth how FWAs affect the integration of work into the whole lives of the managers in the sample. Figure 5.2 illustrates how this fits into the overall model of managers' experiences of flexible working.

Figure 5-4 Flexible working and the integration of work and life
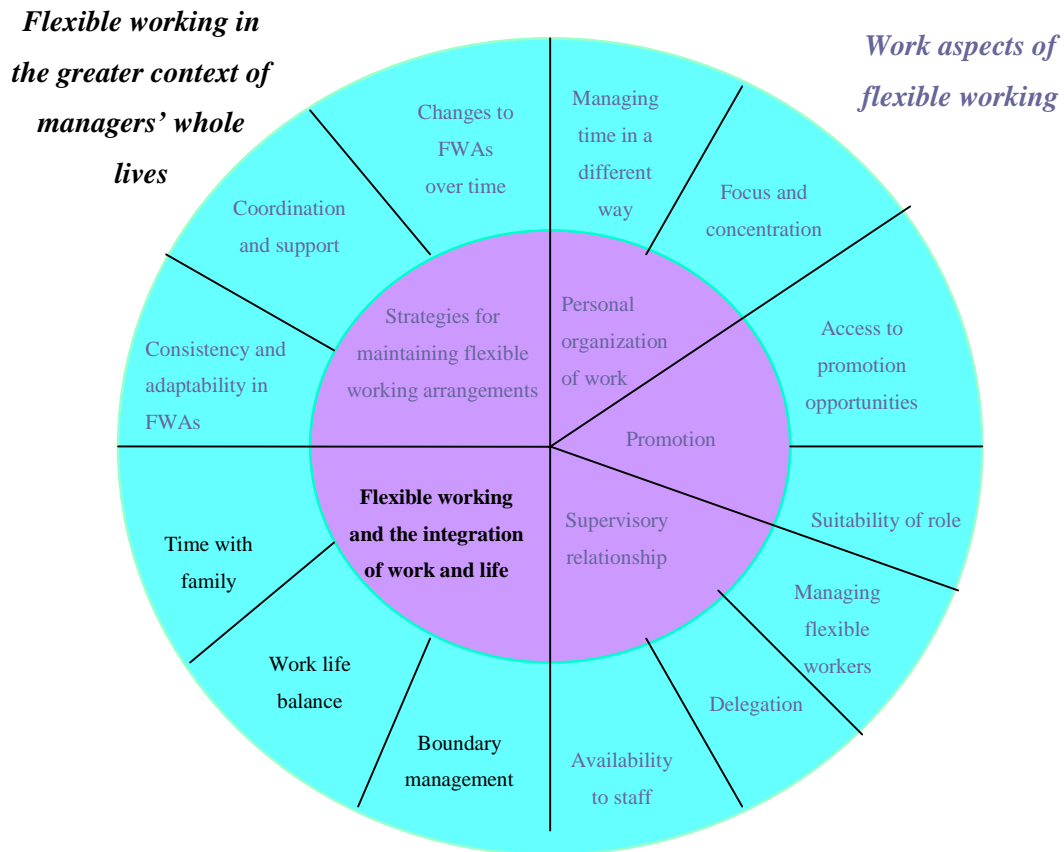
The focus of the interviews was the experience of flexible working and the managers therefore concentrated largely on the organizational and individual aspects of their lives although a few also mentioned issues such as voluntary work. As in the exploratory study, time to spend with family emerged as a key theme from the 34 interviews undertaken for the main part of this research. The respondents gave many examples of the interface between work and home and some talked about the blurring of boundaries between the two domains. Appreciation of the opportunity to maintain

a demanding job whilst enjoying parenthood was mentioned and some talked about the give and take which was necessary to successfully manage both.

5.3.1 Time with family

The ability to spend a greater proportion of time with their children emerged as a key reason for parents in the group choosing to work flexibly.

> I love having Friday's at home with my children, and that is just a big bonus for me. In terms of the hours, the hours gives me the flexibility to get home and see my children in the evening. So, I get home and I have time to bath them, and have a bit of time with them and put them to bed in the evening. (Philippa, 4 days +, pre-school)

Of particular interest is the way many of the managers positioned this specifically as time with their children, as opposed to the provision of childcare. Only one person actually gave the reason as "to take care of childcare" and he did talk later on about the benefit of working flexibly as "being with my children during the day" (Jim, 4 days +, pre-school & primary). So the parents amongst this group of managers clearly differentiated between childcare and spending time with children, something which they obviously deem to be of high value. For instance, Sarah has a nanny to look after her children but explained that:

> My journey into work is an hour and ten minutes. So that's two hours and twenty minutes of time at home with the children that I wouldn't otherwise have, just by working from home. So, and it means I can take my lunch break and have lunch with my son, who's still at home during the day. (Sarah, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

There is the clear suggestion that she structures her day in a similar way to when in the office, as she takes a break at lunch time and 'emerges from the study' to have yet more time with her son.

One woman described a complicated pattern of working which was an average of 24 hours a week over a four week period. This was designed to complement her husband's shift pattern within the same organization, and minimize the external childcare they needed beyond the two of them.

As mentioned in section 5.2.2, these parents have a deep desire to be with their children, beyond the provision of their physical and emotional well–being. These managers are in senior positions with the corresponding salaries and have arrangements with nannies or nurseries and after school clubs, so that their children are looked after in ways that they deem appropriate. In addition to this, they simply want to have time with their children and have a relationship with them. For some it was about being with them before they began full time school.

> My eldest child was getting towards the final year before school and I wanted to spend a day a week with them. So that prompted that move. (Vince, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

However it appeared to be equally important to parents of older children. Some of them worked less than full time and so talked of being able to collect them from school, but others, such as Tom, worked full time and still wanted to ensure he saw more of them than he might otherwise do, if not working flexibly.

> I can construct my day in such a way that I can be home, dinner with the kids, they go to bed, I carry on working. (Tom, 100%, school)

As well as the value placed on the extra time with children, something which is enabled by flexible working, there was also an emphasis on fitting in with their children's routines. Parents of younger children also talked about collecting them from nursery and being there for bathtime. For some of them these routines dictated the consistency of their flexible working.

There were also a small number who felt that they had not benefited from flexible working in terms of having more time with children, as they had hoped. Carolyn gave an account of her experiences of trying to work only three days a week.

> Carolyn: My days were long. I would be in at whatever, half past eight and if I went home before half past ten, eleven at night, that was amazing. And then I was on call on my days off, and I would have to be reading reports, and it was just everything became work. (…) Work totally dominated my life. (…) It got harder actually as it progressed, because when the kids were babies I could easily take a call at home, because I knew their sleep patterns. But now they've dropped all their sleeps, and, you know, when they're at home then the minute

you get on the phone it's a nightmare. (Carolyn, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

It is important to emphasize that Carolyn was talking about taking work calls on her days off, when she had planned to be with her children. So this is another example of adaptability and the wider restrictions and limitations which exist beyond the agreed pattern of work. She went on to describe how immensely distressing the situation had become, impacting on the whole family.

> Work was fantastic. Work was going brilliantly, but in terms of being a good mother, a good wife, a good daughter, well, I was just abusing and misusing everybody at home. So I had to draw a line. (Carolyn, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

This highly emotional statement demonstrates the extreme limits to which people may allow themselves to be pushed. Over a period of time Carolyn arranged a secondment to a less demanding internal role, which she had been doing for a year at the time of the interview. So for her the success of flexible working depended upon the demands of the role, as she prioritised those demands over any from the non-work domain.

Another woman had also faced difficulties with work demands intruding on her days off and she was in the process of changing her childcare arrangements so that her young child was at nursery for five full days. This was despite the fact that she had a reduced contract.

> My Friday was supposed to be the day that I spend with my child and I have found that that doesn't work, so I've = for the last two months, I've put them into nursery on a Friday morning so that I can either work if I have to, or have some time to relax, time for myself to do jobs and things that I need to do, but that = and that really has largely been eaten up by working practices. So that hasn't really worked either, so now I'm booking them into nursery full time. (Hannah, < 4 days, pre-school)

The aim of taking a cut in salary and planning to have "my Friday" at home had not been realised, showing that it is difficult to enact flexible working even when all the arrangements have been put in place.

Several women indicated that the ability to work flexibly (and the time that consequently allowed them to be with their children) was a critical factor in terms of their decision to remain with the organization since they became parents.

> If the organization wasn't willing to allow me to work in this way, then I would have to seriously consider whether to continue working for them. (Eve, 4 days +, pre-school)

> I don't think I could do my job and have two children without flexible working arrangements. (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

In the latter quotation the respondent makes the explicit connection between the difficulties of doing her job and having children. Flexible working has enabled this woman to combine career and motherhood. In contrast the fathers did not make any association with flexible working and retention indicating that for this sample combining fatherhood and careers is not an issue.

5.3.2 Work life balance

The language used by the interviewees was of particular interest because of the debate within the literature around this subject. The focus in this section is on the relationship between flexible working and the respondents' work and non-work domains. In one of the organizations, flexible working was described specifically as a work life balance policy and some of those respondents duly talked at the beginning of the interview about their expectation that "work life balance" was to be the main focus. But in the vast majority of cases, the individuals themselves used the word "balance" and the phrase "work life balance". What did emerge from the interviews was an interesting picture of how these managers consider the integration of the domains of work and non-work.

> I mean, it's just the work life balance thing. I think more than anything, I don't need to be flat out working all the time. (…) I think it just means being able to do other things apart from being at work literally the whole time; being able to look after families and houses and home and everything. I think for women it's particularly difficult because everything falls on you and you just need some breathing space at times and to do other things. (Ruth, < 4 days, school)

Ruth uses the word 'balance' yet she does not suggest any equal split of time between work and non-work. Instead there is an indication of simply having *some* time to do something other than work, although that appears to be 'families and houses and homes and *everything*' (author's emphasis). Having some time for oneself was important to many of the women and Ruth alluded to this when she says 'breathing space'. The sense of control and actually being able to consciously manage demands from both environments were important to people.

> I think work life balance to me means that you're in control in both environments and it's, you know, your household = home responsibilities aren't mounting up (.) and that you have time to do things for yourself. (Anna, < 4 days, school)

> That Monday for me I felt like was real me time. Whereas you're sort of struggling sometimes to do things during lunch hours and all that, it's really nice to have a day off when normal business like banks and everything are working, (.) and I, and I found it quite useful. (Rachel, 100%, no children)

Although both mothers and women with no children talked about this topic, none of the men mentioned the importance of time for self, although Michael explained how balance for him is about his interests or passions and he was unconcerned about whether it was work or non-work.

> The fact that I think maybe reading about things or tinkering or whatever it might be, if it's in what you could describe as my personal time, doesn't matter that it happens to be associated with my job because it's also my interest in life. (…) For me, work life balance is the fact that what I'm passionate about in my personal life spills over into my business life and vice versa, and that makes it easier for me. So if I'm reading about things at home, I don't feel it's compromising my own personal time because it's something I choose to do. (Michael, 100%, no children)

There are no clear lines for him between work and home, although his use of the phrase 'spills over' suggests that he acknowledges some sort of boundary.

Household chores were mentioned by a number of respondents, in relation to flexible working. Attending to chores during the week freed up the weekends. Being able to

take deliveries or have repairs done on a day when working from home removed the need to take holiday. These were acknowledged as small details which actually made a big difference in easing people's lives.

> Stupid things like, really stupid things like, I can put the washing on, and then at lunch time I can put it out on the line. Things like that, which otherwise impact on my = they don't impact on my professional career but can add to the burden of trying to, being a working mother, actually ease the burden and therefore made me more effective, if you see what I mean. (Melissa, 100%, pre-school)

> I'm able to do a lot of the chores, like shopping I've been able to do on a Friday which means that when we're all together on the weekend there are fewer chores to do. (Vince, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

This is a good example of the way in which flexible working impacts on the wider lives of individuals. It is not just about the work, but enables people to attend to some of the minutiae of everyday living. These people do not fit the mould of the ideal worker who has in the background someone dealing with these aspects of their lives, but instead they have to manage not just their workload, but also the work associated with running a home and/or being part of a family.

However, a flexible approach is often accompanied by high self-expectations where individuals set themselves challenging goals to deliver in all areas of their lives. When these coincide into one short time frame it can become impossible to fulfil any in a satisfactory manner. This is encapsulated by the comment below.

> I'd got friends coming round for dinner on a Friday. I was trying to finish off my emails, feed the kids tea, the friends arrived early. And so it was all, it was just too much to try to cram in. And then later on, as I was cooking dinner and chatting to my friends, I had two phone calls from the US who really wanted to know something. And so there was that kind of caught between a rock and a hard place, really, with my husband saying, 'You shouldn't be working. You're in the middle of a dinner party.' But US colleagues really wanting to know something, and having your mind in two places. So it can, at times it can be a bit too much. (Frances, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

Of course, this may happen to individuals with a standard working pattern, but Frances spoke freely of her demanding role which requires longer hours than her contractual agreement. In this quotation the simple fact of the time difference and her reluctance to draw a firm boundary had resulted in overload on this particular occasion, evidenced by her repeated use of the phrase "it was just too much".

5.3.3 Boundary management

The managers approached the division of their lives into the two areas of work and non-work in different ways. Some were clear about wanting to keep them quite separate and the aim was to ensure that time outside work could be devoted to other things, which obviously included family, but also some of the tasks associated with everyday life.

> When I'm in work I focus 100% on work. I've learnt to just cut off and say, okay, when I'm at work I work, and when I'm at home I'm at home, although the Friday thing sort of blurs the edges of that. I do get very focused in on it and my husband has said things like "Can you phone the plumber?" and I'm like "No, I'm going to work". "You can do it lunchtime." "No, when I'm at work, I'm at work. I'll do the plumber on Wednesday." You know, I like to just keep those boundaries quite clean. (Oonagh, < 4 days, school)

This woman worked for five hours from home each week during term time, in addition to three days doing regular hours in the office, hence her reference to the "Friday thing".

Some of those with a heavy workload explained how they liked to complete work in the office, working late if necessary, so that the domains remained differentiated, but this could present difficulties.

> I kind of wanted to have left work behind, and that's partly why I ended up being in the office so late, because I wouldn't leave until I had finished for that day. Maybe a different way to do it would be to leave at like six o'clock and then pick it up again when the kids were in bed. I don't know, do you know what I mean, I'd have to try different ways. But that was kind of = my mental attitude at the time was I wanted to leave work and cut. But then on my = so I would often have to review a report, so I would log in, pick up an email, review it, be on the

phone sending back comments or sending back written comments. (Carolyn, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

In this extract Carolyn talks of wanting to create a definite boundary between work and home illustrated by her talking of "leaving work behind" and her use of the phrase "I wanted to leave work and cut", but she found it difficult to achieve that.

Many of the respondents talked about the difficulties of boundaries between the work and non-work domain becoming blurred, particularly when working from home, with some of them referring to the need for self-discipline which was mentioned by participants in the pilot study.

> One of the negative things about working from home is that I sometimes = there's not that clear break between the end of your working day and being at home. So I will sometimes work and at seven o clock I'm still working and I'm kind of thinking hang on a minute what am I doing, stop, you know, watch the telly or make some dinner. (Rachel, 100%, no children)

However, the additional control and autonomy which was a consequence of flexible working was valued by many and the decisions they subsequently made about how to organize their work were factors in the blurring of boundaries.

> The time is my own to manage. If I need to get something done, for example if I have a document to review and it needs to be done by midday on Monday, I could choose not to do it on the Friday or on the Thursday. As I said, well okay you know what, I'll leave it till Saturday. That's my choice to do it because the person that needs my input, needs it on the Monday. It doesn't really matter when it's done, it's up to me. (Morgan, 100%, no children)

There were contradictions in the way many spoke of this issue. Morgan clearly valued being able to manage his own time and make a choice to use non-work time to address business issues, but he also referred several times to the blurring of boundaries, which was an area of concern for him. He talked of sometimes putting in extra hours "*almost without realising*" simply because his quiet study in the home lent itself to becoming engrossed such that "*I might as well not have been at home*". However, Morgan's sense of his own approach to managing the boundaries between

work and life was positive and he positioned himself as successful in doing so, notwithstanding his earlier conflicting statements.

> I think the work/life boundary could be an issue. I found that challenging at some stages, but overall it hasn't been a problem for me. (Morgan, 100%, no children)

This sort of contradiction appeared in the conversations with several respondents. First they would express concern about the blurring of boundaries and give examples of how they themselves had worked beyond their hours or picked up work when at home, but then they would sum it up in terms of being satisfied, or in control of their work life balance. Sarah gave several examples of the way she adapted to the changing needs of her particular role (including breakfast meetings) explaining that this was required once every four or five weeks. However she then went on to say:

> In terms of my working hours during the week, I am very disciplined about working pretty much nine to five unless there is a good client related reason to be outside of those hours, and most of the time in the line, in the work I'm doing, that doesn't happen. (Sarah, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

Thus the interviewees rationalise their actions as they present themselves in a positive and flexible way.

5.4 Discussion

While it has been widely acknowledged that flexible working covers a diverse range of working patterns (Cohen & Single, 2001; Eaton, 2003; Van Dyne et al, 2007), there have been few studies which focus on understanding the complexities of how individuals experience the phenomena. The many definitions which have been used in the research have made it difficult to draw conclusions about what is known. This research therefore, has provided a useful addition to the literature as it has clarified the nature of flexible working at managerial level. One of the concerns about flexible working is the potential rigidity of people's arrangements. These findings demonstrate the variety of ways in which individuals attempt to maintain flexibility within their FWAs. This flexibility is endorsed in the literature which has attempted to reconceptualise the issue to that of workplace flexibility (Hill et al, 2008) which

includes flexibility of time or schedule flexibility, flexibility of location and flexibility of length of time to engage in work-related tasks. The range of options which is used by the managers in this sample illustrate this scope for flexibility.

Just over half of the managers in the sample worked on a reduced hours basis, and this necessarily required a contractual change in order to reduce the pay and benefits package. There was a huge variety in the amount of time which those reduced hours arrangements involved with managers working from 60% of a full time contract to 90%, working just one half day per week less than the standard contract. The recent development of a typology of part time workers (Martin & Sinclair, 2007; Senter & Martin, 2007) could be expanded to include, not only the reason for choosing part time work and earning position within the household, but also to include the amount of time spent in the workplace. This would enhance the more meaningful comparisons which can be made with the typology.

The required contractual change for a reduced hours flexible working pattern obviously is a formal arrangement. Some managers who had maintained a full time contract had a similar formal arrangement, detailing staggered hours, for instance of a compressed working week. But regardless of the length of time in the contract, there was a high degree of informality used by many, a finding which is consistent with the findings of Hall and Atkinson (2006) who pointed out the prevalence of such practices, despite the limited research in this aspect of flexible working. Similarly, Kossek et al (2005) focus on the need to understand more about the conditions under which flexibility is enacted rather than the formal access to policies.

Coordination of childcare arrangements and support from extended family members were key elements in enabling the parents in the sample to manage their FWAs successfully. FWAs are far from straightforward arrangements negotiated between one person and the organization. These managers bear little relation to the 'ideal worker' who has the support of a family member at home on a full time basis (Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek and Sweet, 2006). Instead, they deal with socially constructed realities which portray much more complex and finely tuned systems involving cooperation and coordination with others.

The parents in this sample placed great value on the ability to spend time with their children, rather than simply being able to provide childcare. Given their senior levels, it could be argued that their salaries would be sufficient to allow them to pay for high quality childcare, but their decision to work flexibly was often constructed as wanting to be with their children, as well as knowing that the children were well cared for when they were at work. These findings are reflected in the literature by Friedman and Greenhaus (2000:83) who described children as the "unseen stakeholders in the workplace" and the need for parents to be psychologically available to their children, managing both the physical and mental boundaries between work and home.

There were no differences found in the way parents of children of different ages spoke about the relationship of flexible working with regard to the integration of work and life. However, the research found clear evidence of the ways in which FWAs change over time. Many of the managers spoke of having worked flexibly for many years and of the evolvement of that working pattern, sometimes in response to events in the non-work domain, but also as a result of something in the workplace. This finding offers support for the study of flexible working using a life course perspective (Roehling et al, 2001).

The difficulties of deconstructing the concept of work life balance were evident from the interviews. Although there was a question specifically aimed at establishing the relationship between flexible working and work life balance, this was often prefaced by "*You've already touched on this to some extent but is there anything else you would like to say about the relationship ……. etc*" because inevitably the participants would have already discussed some of the elements involved in the integration of work and life. Many of them used the specific word 'balance' or the phrase 'work life balance' in the conversation before the question. Flexible working would therefore seem to be a major strategy in managers' constructions of work life balance. Among the group of parents, children were often the major reasons for adopting a FWA, and in fact there were only six out of the group of 34 who had no children. So despite the shift of language in the literature from 'family' to 'life' or 'personal life' (Burke, 2004; Lewis & Cooper, 2005; Gambles et al, 2006), family is a salient part of the concept of work life balance for the majority of these managers. However, family was not the only issue. For some it was simply about doing "other things" and

specific examples were given particularly with regard to attending to chores or receiving deliveries or having time to relax. This finding supports the ideas of widening the concept within the literature to include work, life and recreational labour (Ransome, 2007). However, the pursuit of a sport had arisen in the pilot study as part of the rationale for working flexibly and part of the constructed reality of work life balance, but this was not supported in the main study. The main differences were related to parental status, but one gender difference to emerge was the issue of "me time" mentioned by several of the women which again relates to Ransome's (2007:378) recreational labour or "*leisure, pleasure and enjoyment*".

Flexible working is clearly a part of people's constructions of their work life balance, but there is no simple link, as pointed out by Fleetwood (2007:388): "*we must avoid naively assuming that some undefined set of flexible working practices enables WLB*". Of course there is a separate literature on employer friendly flexible working which has not been addressed here (see for example Brewster et al, 1997) and such flexibility does not necessarily support work life balance, and certainly does not aim to. But even within employee friendly flexible working, as described in section 2.1.2, and experienced by these managers, the self-imposed expectations of performance in the work and the non-work domains can lead to stressful situations rather than any sort of satisfaction (Quick et al, 2004).

Remote working was the most common form of flexibility among the managers who participated in this research. Many of them commented upon the issue of boundaries between the work and non-work domains and this was an area where parental status was not a differentiator. Some found the blurring of boundaries to be a cause for concern reflecting Baruch and Nicholson's (1997) observation about the protective barrier being removed. Others experienced the flexibility of the work boundary as the amount of time spent on work expanded to meet the changing needs. Although both Ashforth et al's (2000) and Campbell-Clark's (2000) theories suggest that such boundary flexibility can expand or contract, there was only one reference to a boundary contracting.

> The work's there to be done, we stay to do it. Because notionally, there will come a day when there isn't so much and you go away early. (…) It does (happen) but not very often. (Jim, 4 days +, pre-school and primary)

There were difficulties with equating desire and intent regarding the boundary between home and work, and the actual lived experience of dealing with sometimes excessive demands from the workplace. This is reflected in Lewis et al's (2007) suggestion that there are two overlapping discourses regarding work life balance. The preferred choice may be to work flexibly, involving the placement of limits around available time which are supposedly under personal control, yet the workload expected of someone in a senior position may remove that choice, if one is to successfully fulfil a role at a senior level.

5.5 Summary of findings (part 1)

In this chapter I presented the overall model of managers' experiences of working flexibly and then discussed the findings with regard to the relationship of flexible working in the greater context of the managers' whole lives. Some demographic information of the 34 managers in the sample was discussed which highlighted the range of flexible working practices used. Many of the participants used a number of different flexible options to make up their own unique FWA. Parental status and contractual time at work provided a context for considering the quotations used to illustrate the themes which arose from the analysis of the findings.

Findings were grouped into two main areas. Firstly, the strategies used by the individuals to maintain their FWAs included a combination of consistency and adaptability in response to the demands from the work and the non-work domains. (This model will be developed further in Chapter 7, section 7.3.) A major issue for the 28 parents in the group was the coordination of childcare which was achieved through support from family members. The parents also talked about the changes in their FWAs over time, describing events which would be a catalyst for change. These latter two areas were largely not relevant for those without children.

Secondly, a major theme emerged regarding the relationship of flexible working and the integration of work and life. Work life balance and boundary management arose as issues for many participants, regardless of parental status, and parents found flexible working to be useful in ensuring they were able to spend time with their

families. The next chapter will continue to report the findings from the main study, focusing on the second area of the work aspects of flexible working.

Chapter 6 Findings (part 2)

6 Findings (part 2)

The aim of this thesis is to examine the experiences of managers with a flexible working arrangement. In this context the main research question is:

How do managers construe and experience flexible working?

This chapter presents further findings from the main study which was conducted amongst 34 managers from four organizations, as described in Chapter 3, section 3.7. Chapter 5 concentrated on the interaction of work in the overall context of the managers' lives, whereas this chapter focuses on the work side of flexible working. Section 6.1 provides a brief summary of the job roles of the managers in the sample. Section 6.2 describes the supervisory relationship with staff, followed by the experiences of these managers with regard to promotion in section 6.3. Finally the personal organization of work is addressed in section 6.4.

Figure 6-1 Map highlighting work aspects of flexible working
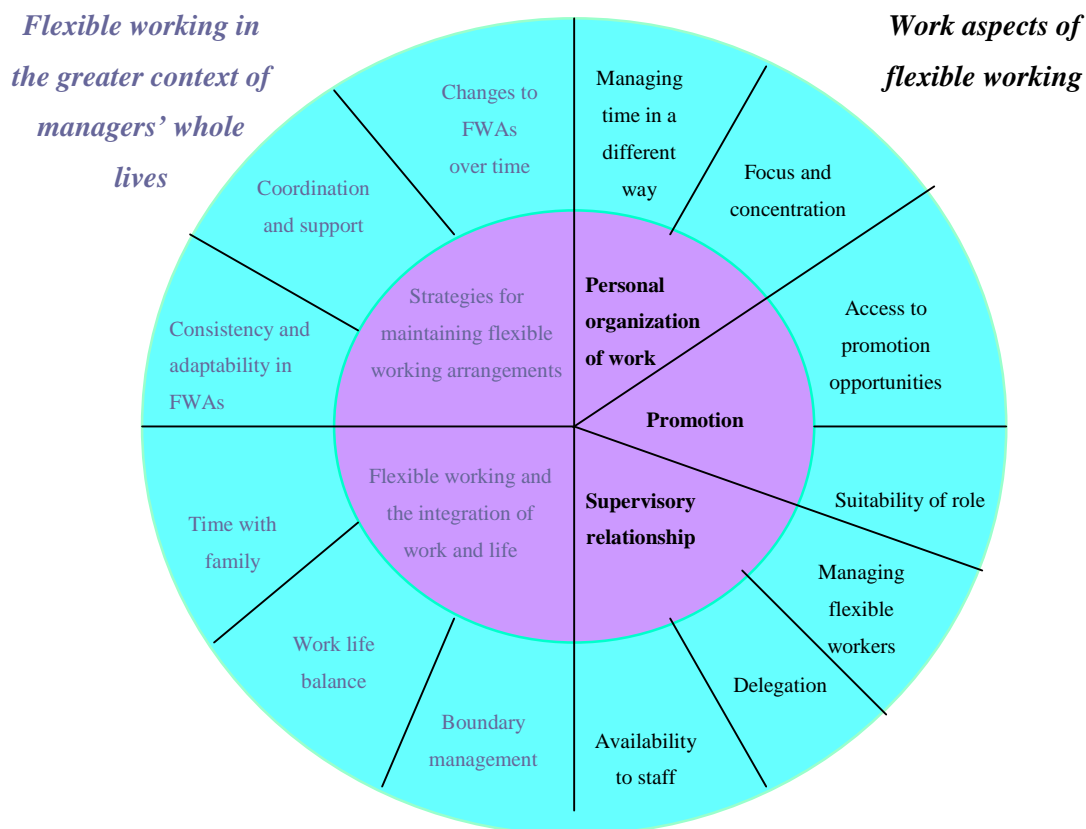
6.1 Summary of roles of managers

A full list of participants' descriptions of their roles is available in appendix 3. Levels of seniority varied and it is not the intention to compare these. The managers were mostly considered to be at senior management grades within their own organization and a summary of their self declared job titles is available in table 6.1.

After the introduction and the initial explanation of their roles, the interview focused on their working pattern, rather than the content of their jobs, although there were references to the nature of their work and this was coded and will be reported when it is relevant to the their experience of flexible working.

Table 6-1 Job titles of sample

	Job role		Job role		Job role
1	People management leader	13	Team leader	25	Head of strategy team
2	Lab-based supervisor	14	Group manager	26	Senior Manager
3	Responsible for technical training for Corporate Finance	15	Division CAO	27	Head of strategy team
4	Department senior manager	16	Professional Development Manager	28	Restructuring Manager
5	Partner in Internal Risk Management	17	Senior Vice President	29	Procurement Manager
6	Principal Advisor	18	Group Manager	30	Head of group
7	Head of team	19	Head of service Centre	31	Research team leader
8	Head of department	20	Team Leader	32	Partner
9	Senior Manager	21	Area Head	33	Head of department
10	Financial analyst	22	Sales support leader	34	Part of management team
11	Group leader	23	Site Head of Safety		
12	Business Manager	24	Professional Development Manager		

6.2   Supervisory relationship

Figure 6-2 Supervisory relationship

Flexible working in the greater context of managers' whole lives

Work aspects of flexible working

- Changes to FWAs over time
- Coordination and support
- Consistency and adaptability in FWAs
- Time with family
- Work life balance
- Boundary management
- Managing time in a different way
- Focus and concentration
- Access to promotion opportunities
- Suitability of role
- Managing flexible workers
- Delegation
- Availability to staff

Strategies for maintaining flexible working arrangements

Personal organization of work

Promotion

Supervisory relationship

Flexible working and the integration of work and life

In the exploratory study the managers talked about the way they, as flexible workers, managed their teams and this informed the choice of the sample for this stage of the research. They were chosen to reflect the managerial aspect of the role as well as the element of reduced face time in the office, which was a factor of the flexible working pattern of all individuals. I was particularly interested in the enactment of supervisory responsibilities when not necessarily present in the office at the same time as their direct reports. All of the managers were able to describe how they successfully managed the relationship with staff who report to them directly. A number of them stated explicitly that there was no effect on the relationship caused by their personal working pattern. Others explained the strategies they used to ensure that there was no detrimental effect, including ensuring that team members could contact them when necessary. The managers described the delegation of work and the positive effects of

this process. Managing staff with FWAs emerged as a theme which provided these managers with a different perspective of flexible working, including the potential challenges of allocating work to those who have limited face time.

6.2.1 Availability

The managers talked about the ways in which they made themselves available to their staff when not present in the office. When working from home, this was not a major issue as most of them were simply available on their mobile or had re-directed their office phones.

> So all people have to do is ring my office number on a Friday, they don't even have to specifically ring my mobile. They just ring the normal number and it forwards. (…) A lot of people don't even realise I'm not in the office, when they phone through. (…) A couple of times in the early days we had to remind them, 'Just because I'm not there doesn't mean you can't bother me'. (Melissa, 100%, pre-school)

However, the way they communicated their availability impacted the likelihood of people contacting them. For instance, Vicky suggested that some form of awareness training was needed to ensure that managers and colleagues did contact staff working at home in the normal course of their work.

> You know, I quite often get emails where people say "Am I alright to call you?" and it's like "Yeah, course you are" because I'm working. I think there needs to be some education around that. (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

This extract indicates a willingness to receive calls yet when describing her day at home she presents it with a focus on achieving more because of lack of interruptions.

> I think I am personally more productive because I can have = I have a day when I just can get stuff done without much interruption. I mean obviously I'll still pick up the phone but people kind of know that I am not generally there on a Friday so I won't be distracted. (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

So these two women construct the reality of their day working from home in very different ways, with Melissa commenting that people are unaware of her physical location so it is not an issue, whereas Vicky points out that people "kind of know"

that she is not in the office. Melissa has her office phone diverted to her home, and Vicky's is diverted to a colleague who is able to deal with many of the queries. Vicky's construal of working at home causes confusion in those around her because of the mixed messages she gives, which may be interpreted as "yes, she is working, but no, she does not want to be disturbed". She concluded with:

> I don't think people would expect me to be there but I would expect me to be
> there if you see what I mean. (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

Gender differences emerged here. When the men talked about this issue they all emphasized the importance of accessibility, being available to staff even when not in the office. For the women, the salient issue was availability during non-work time as many of them (17 out of 24) were on contracts with reduced hours. However, it could be argued that the differences regarding such availability were more to do with the contracted work time, as most of the men were on 100% contracts. Some of them worked flexi-time or staggered hours which could lead to them being contacted when they were not actually working, even if it was during 'normal' work hours just as with the women on reduced hours. Some of them were more than happy to be contacted on their days off, but not all. A variety of strategies were used. For instance, some found it easier to respond as calls were made.

> On my days off, I take my Blackberry and I leave my phone on, so if I'm out,
> then they're switched off and I don't check them but if I'm in, and I don't mind
> being called, I'll leave the phone on just because it just makes it easier to be
> honest. So I'd rather handle calls as they come in than every morning have to
> answer all the calls and messages that are left and I don't like to be putting 'out
> of office' on. So it would be on twice a week out of office, so I don't want to do
> that. (Gill, < 4 days, school)

In the above extract Gill actually articulated what may be part of the reason behind this willingness to be contacted, when she explained that she did not want to have her "out-of-office" response on her emails, indicating some concern about the impression that would give to others, drawing attention to her restricted time in the office. Yet others used voicemail, and then checked for messages at the time of their choice during the day. Their social construction of availability involved demonstrating their willingness to be contacted, but maintaining control of their non-work time by

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responding at their convenience. In this way they still benefited from dealing with queries relatively quickly, rather than having to face a high volume of calls or emails which had stacked up during their non-work days.

Age of children did not seem to be relevant with regard to the differences between those who welcomed calls or emails and those who did not. Many of those with a reduced hours pattern had childcare responsibilities when they were at home during a normal working day, but such a working pattern was also not a differentiating factor. One woman explicitly pointed out that her personal time was still part of the working week, and so issues may have arisen which required some sort of input or response.

> Because it's part of the working week, occasionally there'll be things going on where I'll take a call and I just kind of manage the fact that I've got the kids in tow when I'm doing it, as best I can. (Sarah, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

In a similar vein, several spoke of 'emergencies' or 'crises' when they would willingly take calls, although they stressed that these happened rarely.

The managers all made themselves available to their direct reports, their colleagues or their clients, to a greater or lesser degree. Some observed that they managed this process differently now that they had a formal flexible working arrangement.

> Also being very clear with people when I am truly unavailable, for example, I'm going on holiday for the next two weeks and potentially…I mean I didn't have a Blackberry before I came back from maternity leave, but in the past I probably would have taken my Blackberry with me, I will have my phone with me. And I might have said, 'Well, if there's any major problems give me a call', whereas now, I think I'm more inclined to say, 'I'm on holiday'. (Eve, 4 days +, pre-school)

This extract further reinforces the different outlook towards work and home responsibilities which may be perceived subsequent to the adoption of a FWA. Eve described a clearer divide by emphasizing when she was 'truly unavailable', so she no longer gave out mixed messages as she was not prepared to accept intrusions of work into what she considered to be her non-work time, something she had previously done.

So there was an explicit message of willingness from most people and yet there was also some indication of frustration or irritation with the level of interruption during what was, to these managers, non-working time.

> People call me on a Friday which is my day off and it's not always for something that's urgent. They just don't really either know or accept that actually you're not in the office and you're not working. (Hannah, < 4 days, pre-school)

Again there is evidence of the lack of clarity around availability shown in Hannah's use of the options "either don't know, or don't accept".

Although all these managers, by virtue of their inclusion in the sample, had supervisory responsibilities, a few did express doubts about managing staff whilst regularly being away from the workplace.

> It is difficult to be a flexible worker and manage a team because you are not a great role model for them, potentially. You are = you're working less hours. Sometimes you're walking out and leaving them with responsibilities that you cannot commit to. (Liz, 4 days +. pre-school)

Of course many managers with a more traditional full time pattern of work, spend time away from their team in the normal course of meeting a whole range of work demands, as explained by Sarah.

> Even if I was working full time and didn't ever work from home, I would still only spend a proportion of my time sat at my desk with the people who are my team. So I don't think it has a significant impact on them. (Sarah, 4 days+, pre-school & primary)

But for most of them, the way they construe their availability to their staff is an essential part of their effectiveness as managers with FWAs. Rather than "leaving them with responsibilities", many managers spoke positively about the benefits to the team of delegation of such responsibilities and this will be addressed in the following section.

6.2.2 Delegation

Managers recognized that having skilled and competent team members was almost a prerequisite for their own flexible working pattern.

> The people in my team are very, very capable and very driven and, you know, quite capable of working on their own. I think it would be more difficult if I had, you know, difficult employees in my team, if I had, you know, people that were less, less experienced, shall we say, and I think that would potentially cause me difficulty unless there was somebody else (…) to supervise that person. (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

Having team members who were able to work in a relatively unsupervised manner thus facilitated a manager's absence from the office, due to a lesser need for input and time spent on actively managing someone. Capable staff were also able to take over some of the requirements of a manager's role and therefore delegation of work to team members was a necessary action for some of the managers who were working reduced hours, to enable them to achieve overall team objectives. Sally described delegation as a way of trying to avoid managing a full workload in fewer hours.

> There is enough workload to keep me busy for five days, but I only have three days to do it in, so I either work late which I do sometimes, or I try and delegate some of it. (Sally, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

Similarly, Diane acknowledged delegation was necessary as her team had to cope in her absence, but also saw it as a development opportunity for herself as a senior manager who should be skilled in delegating effectively.

> I'm also probably better at delegating the work and historically you have this 'quicker for me to do it myself' and that kind of stuff. But now I'm more conscious, yes I need people working with me, I need people there to be in charge now I'm not around, so you do actually = you use that resource better and, for someone at my level I should be delegating anyway, so it pushes me in that direction. (Diane, 4 days +, pre-school)

This was an open acknowledgement of the way flexible working pushed her to be demonstrating a skill set expected of someone at her level.

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The provision of development opportunities for their team members was part of the successful enactment of a FWA for some of the managers, and this could be used as part of the business case for acceptance of their own FWA.

> I was also able to demonstrate that the person who I was supervising at the time was heading towards promotion and that it could only benefit him for me to be away for a day, because it would give him more responsibility. (…) By giving him a chance to spread his wings and not having me looking over his shoulder, it really helped him. (Jim, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

In a similar vein, another manager saw it as a way of encouraging people to work on projects she was managing.

> It used to be the way I sold all my resourcing on my projects. I mean, so many people got promoted coming to work for me, because they got the level of responsibility they wouldn't have got on other jobs. (Carolyn, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

These managers are thus reinforcing their own actions, through the recognition and explanation of the benefits which accrue to their staff as a result of the manager's absence from the workplace for part of the working week.

However, when discussing the impact of her FWA on the team, Oonagh explained in some detail the difficulties which could arise with regard to the division of responsibility.

> The person that it has affected most has been the next most senior person in the group. She's had to pick up part of, you know, the responsibility when I'm not there. She has struggled with that and we've talked about it quite a lot over the years, because she's found that quite hard to know when to step in and when to step out. She's (…) had to learn how to let go once I'm back in. I suppose that's been a bit of the issue. So, someone's come to her with an issue on a Wednesday, for example, and I'm not here. It's been a learning curve about how she deals with that. Whether she takes it on and keeps that, whatever it is, even when I am back; or whether she deals with it on that day and gives it back to me the next day; or whether she says "Can you wait for Oonagh to get back the next day." So she has struggled with that, but we've worked through it and now it's

fine. But, you know, I am conscious that that has been quite difficult for her. (Oonagh, < 4 days, school)

There is a strong sense of frustration coming through in this extract and indications of the challenges in the division of responsibilities and appropriate job design which are increased when some staff are working on a flexible basis. In this scenario Oonagh explained that there are clearly defined responsibilities and "ownership" of projects and yet her colleague has persisted in "dealing with something, taking it on, and then keeping it." Oonagh construes this experience as a problem for the other person involved when she says that "she has struggled with that" and "that has been quite difficult for her", positioning the difficulty firmly outside her domain. This is an interesting example of the way in which interviewees may wish to demonstrate their competence as well as sharing their views and experiences of the subject under discussion.

In contrast, Tom focused on communication, seeing it as a method of working with his team to ensure individual autonomy and flexibility, whilst maintaining an overview of their achievement against goals.

> One of the things is making sure that there is good communication. So I put the onus on the communication back to them. So it doesn't have to be face-to-face, it doesn't have to be the phone, but you need to keep me in touch with what's going on, the decisions that you're making, and then involve me where you think it's appropriate and valuable. (Tom, 100%, school)

Communication was deemed to be essential for real delegation if a team was to successfully deal with issues which arose in their managers' absences.

> You've got to be much more organised, structured, your communication has to be excellent, because you've got to be telling your team exactly what you think, when you want things delivered, so that you can meet those respective deadlines, so that they know whether you, if you're going to be out, certain things might come up and how they need to be handled. So, yeah, your communication has to be very good, your organization and your communication. (Carolyn, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

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The emphasis in this extract is on the overall achievement and delivery of team targets for which the manager still maintains responsibility. Managing one's own absence from the workplace for part of the working week is another factor in the myriad of issues which have to be dealt with.

6.2.3 Managing flexible workers

For managers who had staff with flexible working arrangements, there was another dimension to their own limited time in the office, as they had to carry out their supervisory responsibilities during shared office time. This also allowed them to experience flexible working from another perspective.

The competencies of individuals and of the team as a whole were important factors here. Many managers had a mix of staff with some working standard hours and others with a FWA. Most had at least one person with a FWA in their team. Individuals who were committed to achieving their targets and viewed as good performers were commented on by their managers.

> I would say mostly I've had some very good performers who know what level they're supposed to contribute to and deliver and often go the extra mile to make sure that they're in touch and they've dealt with something. (Frances, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

Sarah gave a particular example of someone with a reduced hours arrangement, who had a flexible approach to her work pattern which allowed her to meet deadlines, especially when they changed at short notice. This was particularly valuable as it ensured the team were not expected to provide cover or carry out work in excess of their own, already demanding, workload.

> As far as the person on my team who works a three day week is concerned, other team members say to me it only works because she's prepared to pick things up on her other days. Because the nature of the work that she is largely doing is that if she's started a piece of work on Tuesday, she may have started it, thinking that it had to be done by Thursday and then a client deadline moved. (…) She's the person with all the knowledge in her head about it. So to hand it over to somebody else would create a huge inefficiency, apart from the fact that everyone else, everyone is really busy because we're under resourced. So she

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says she is happy to do that and has done that and she does log her hours and

take, she reckons she gets an extra weeks holiday a year out of the extra hours.

(Sarah, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

This extract gives further evidence of the concepts of consistency and adaptability, which were valued by both the manager and the co-workers of the individual concerned.

But this does not suggest that co-workers are necessarily unwilling to accept and support the FWAs of others. For instance the following quotation provided an example of the team being able to cover the work of someone who was attending college one day a week.

There are ways of the team working around a person being off for a day. (…) I mean he's not reduced time but he is off at college one day so it's almost the same and we work around that and his samples still move on. You know so = I mean I guess I would flex the team to work in a way that was suitable for whoever's in the team. But it's still efficient. It still obviously has to meet the business need. (Jackie, < 4 days , school)

It is noteworthy that this manager does not quite recognize absence from the office to attend college once a week as flexible working; 'it's almost the same'. But she does offer implicit support for the range of FWAs which may be adopted by staff through her reference to 'flexing the team' to suit the needs of those particular people. Presumably college attendance was required to gain a qualification which the organization valued. Is 'flexible working' perceived as an option which meets the needs of the employee *and* has to meet business needs, whereas the individual in this example was still devoting five full days a week to the business, hence it was not quite flexible working?

In the same way that a positive approach was appreciated, there was an acknowledgement that a flexible working arrangement would not be agreed for someone who had had poor performance in the past.

There are some people that I just would not allow to have a flexible working arrangement, to work from home because I just know they're the type of personality that it's hard enough to get them to do work at work, without letting

them sit at home with a variety of different distractions (…) and a complete inability for me to monitor productivity or = that's not true, but limited ability to monitor productivity. (Robert, 100%, school)

The self-correction about ability to monitor the productivity of workers who are absent from the office, demonstrates the way in which people construct and adapt reality through the interview process. Through the act of speaking and hearing himself offer information Robert adapts his understanding of his managerial relationship with this individual, with particular regard to the requirement to monitor the performance of staff.

In contrast to Robert's views on poor performers, one of his colleagues found that offering someone a FWA actually alleviated a performance problem.

> There was one person in particular who, you know, was probably a mediocre performer partly because he had a long commute etc. I put him on a flexible working arrangement and his performance has massively improved (.) because he didn't have the two hours commute either end of the day, so he was less stressed and (more productive). (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

So flexible working is understood in different ways. Some perceive it as a privilege, part of a reward for good performance, whereas others see it as a way of meeting the needs of staff, which requires understanding those needs through communication.

The needs of the client had to be attended to when managers were planning how the team would deliver their goals and this was a particular issue for those whose work tended to be project based.

> It can be difficult when you're thinking about jobs as well and who's going to manage them, you know what the client's going to expect and you do have to be really careful sometimes about thinking "Shall I put that person on that job, to manage that job?" At the same time, quite conscious of not putting somebody on a job and giving them that opportunity just because they work part time. So it is a balance of what's going to be acceptable for the client versus experience of that person and all the other things that we have to weigh up. (Sally, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

Because these managers themselves had FWAs, they were very conscious of the possibility of limiting the work opportunities they gave to staff simply because they were not present for 100% of the time. Yet this was not limited to those whose work centred on projects. Others also spoke of the need to ensure that individuals were not adversely affected in terms of not being given interesting or high profile work. Rather than construing allocation of work as a problem when staff had limited face time, Frances emphasized the importance of issuing work commensurate with a person's abilities.

> I think the key thing is to assign work at the right level of the person, the right grade, rather than thinking about = I mean, you do have to think about the time, and how much will fit into the three days, but it's finding ways of assigning the right level of contribution. (Frances, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

These managers are not only concerned with the success of their own FWA, but the FWA of any team member is an additional factor which they have to consider in their management strategies. Reflecting on this, a sales manager described how he had recently had two women return from maternity leave into sales roles, explaining how the setting of expectations was a critical factor in facilitating a successful FWA.

> I've brought them back into sales roles because I did believe = so they both work 3 days a week and they share a role type but not the same job, so they focus on different areas and things like that, it's the same type of role. And it hasn't been done before but I believe that if you set expectations again with customers, with people internally, 'You work this day, this day, this day, and you'll be available and just like anybody else', then you can make it work because you have a smaller revenue target, you have fewer customers. There's no reason why it shouldn't work in that way. (Michael, 100%, no children)

This manager also acknowledged the committed approach he had seen from these individuals, recognizing an issue which emerged from several of the interviews ensuring that those with a reduced hours arrangement did not attempt to, or be expected to, complete a full time job within their limited hours.

> I think really the challenge there is making sure they do work three days a week and they don't let it spill into the other two days. (Michael, 100% no children)

As has been seen in earlier sections, this is perhaps an unrealistic challenge, as many individuals working fewer hours actively manage their part time working through the input of extra time.

Some managers were conscious of a difficulty in removing themselves from the office and away from their team. This included both managers with a reduced hours arrangement, and also those who had a full time contract but worked from home on a regular basis. Part of their coping mechanism was to actively promote flexible working to their team members. For instance, Oonagh, who worked five out of her agreed 26 hours from home, felt that ensuring her team were aware that similar flexible working options were available to them would erase any potential sense of injustice.

> I encourage my staff to work from home whenever they want to, because I think that gives them that sense of if they can do it as well, you know, that it's not just a benefit for me. But a lot of them don't seem to take it up because (.) I don't know (.) maybe it's habit, maybe they don't like working from home. I don't know. But I've said to them if they want to work from home regularly on one day a week, that would be fine with me. (Oonagh, < 4 days, primary age children)

She is aware and concerned about the effect her behaviour has on her team. Similarly, one manager commented on her own use of emails and the recognition that this was not behaviour she wanted her team to emulate.

> If I'm on at midnight working, and occasionally I am, I try not to send emails to my team so they don't know that I'm on, although I get caught from time to time. (Zoe, 100%, no children)

This demonstrates a clear idea of what is appropriate behaviour for flexible workers, and choosing to work at midnight is deemed to be inappropriate. As seen in previous sections, some of the managers experience flexible working as something that has to be hidden or disguised in some way. Impression management is important and often seems to involve a lack of openness in terms of when and where people are working. This provides yet another paradox: sometimes people wish to prove that they **are** working, perhaps on a sunny day when they are based at home, and yet at other times,

as in Zoe's extract, they want to hide the fact that they are working. This pervasive idea of impression management is perhaps best illustrated by Vince.

> If someone came to me and said "I want to work flexible hours", the guidance for them, the caveats I would suggest wouldn't be, "This may affect your performance", "This may affect the way people view you", "This will affect your promotion prospects". What I'll say to them is just "It's great. It allows you to achieve the things you want to achieve outside work but it's hard work. It's hard work to do effectively, but it's = it is do-able. (Vince, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

He shows his awareness of the concerns which others may have, and which may be a reflection of his own, but wants to emphasize the positive aspects of flexible working in terms of allowing one to achieve in the other spheres of life outside the workplace. Perhaps the key word in this extract is "effectively", as flexible working for Vince is clearly not just about agreeing and working different hours, but achieving a certain standard is also necessary.

This section on the supervisory relationship has highlighted the challenges managers face with regard to their own availability to their staff given their reduced face time. Delegation to team members is a benefit of working with a manager with reduced face time. These managers were in positions where delegation was a necessary part of the success of the team, if they were to maintain their own FWA. Team members may therefore receive opportunities more frequently, or sooner, than if they worked with a manager on a typical contractual arrangement. Similarly, managing flexible workers enabled these managers to experience the challenges of timing and support which their more traditional colleagues face, when working with those with FWAs.

6.3 FWAs and promotion

Figure 6-3 Promotion
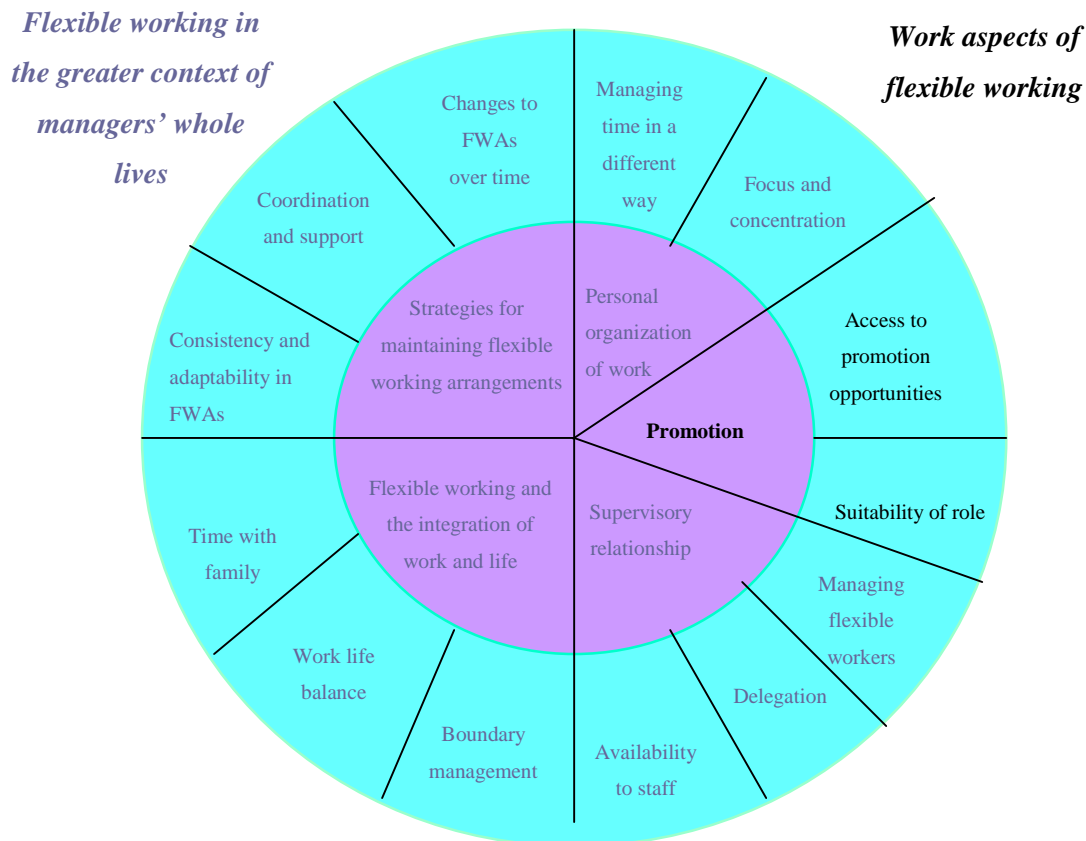
When participants discussed the relationship of their flexible working pattern with their career progression they talked about their access to promotion opportunities and the suitability of a flexible working pattern to senior roles. Participants spoke of both negative and positive perceptions of others, and their response to those perceptions. This section examines the different ways that participants spoke about their experiences and their ability to manage and influence the perceptions of others, now and in the future, whilst maintaining a valued flexible working pattern. Some had positive stories to tell, having been promoted at least once since they changed from a more traditional work routine. Few explicitly claimed that their career progression had been hampered and the recognition of individual agency was a feature here.

6.3.1 Access to promotion opportunities

Interviewees talked about their experiences of promotion whilst working flexibly. One issue to emerge was the difficulty of transferring internally when working reduced hours. This was pertinent to those respondents with a reduced contract of less than 4 days per week and some described the reaction of senior managers when they applied for internal jobs. Their experience and qualifications may have seemed very appropriate, but they felt that once they explained that they worked reduced hours, the appointing manager was no longer interested. So opportunities were limited, either in seeking a direct promotion, or gaining wider experience with a view to promotion in the future.

> I think in a way they have retained me but they = I think my career hasn't necessarily grown in the way that it might have done had I been full-time. So it's limited to the position that I'm in at the moment. (…) Partly, partly my fault, partly the organization, is that other parts of the organization are reluctant to employ (.) people so (.) when you're in a position and you go on maternity leave and you come back and you're part-time, that seems to be acceptable. But when I've gone to talk to other people in other parts of the organization and applied for jobs in other parts of the organization, there has been a reluctance to take me on part-time. They're looking for full-time. So I haven't moved my career on within (the company) or outside (the company) because of that. So I've stayed in the same job for more than 10 years. (Oonagh, < 4 days, school)

Oonagh's use of the phrase "partly my fault" and her hesitancy as she spoke combined to minimize the blame that she was placing on the organization. Her decision to maintain her part time arrangement, and her unwillingness to increase her hours were presented as a problem. So there is an indication of agreement with those managers, suggesting that she recognizes that her part time status makes her inappropriate for those jobs. Her career was important to her, and she worked within the self-declared and self-imposed limitation of part time work to ensure she developed over time.

> If you're very focused on doing the right things and using your time efficiently, then I think you can still develop and you can still supervise, you can still take on new challenges and new projects and things. (Oonagh, < 4 days, school)

Her repetition of the word "still" adds an emphasis to the activities or achievements which she states can be done **in spite of** a flexible working pattern which involves reduced hours. So there is still the suggestion that career progression could be adversely affected, but should be possible, if appropriate steps are taken by an individual.

The same attitude by managers affected those who worked in project based roles and had to consider their utilisation in the internal job market, as explained here by Hannah.

> The other response was I'd be sort of lined up for a job and yes it would be all going swimmingly and then I'd say 'Oh by the way, you know I'm a part time worker', and suddenly, you'd find that they'd find somebody else that could do that job. So I was not getting the opportunities that somebody with my level of expertise and experience should have been getting. (Hannah, < 4 days, pre-school)

Unlike Oonagh, Hannah did not have the relative security of a current role but was faced with this on an ongoing basis, a situation which under-utilised her particular skills, and she questioned the logic of paying someone her salary and yet not allowing the business to benefit from her expertise.

Some respondents were evidently uncomfortable when talking about the possible impact of a flexible working pattern on career. There was an acknowledgement that a shorter contract reduced the amount of time they were actually gaining skills and experience through the enactment of their role, and thus there was a reluctant admission that maybe it was appropriate that progression would be slower in such circumstances.

> I think it could possibly slow things down a bit, just because you're not actually here (.) as much. I don't know, I'd like to think that it doesn't. I don't know. I don't really know. (Tessa< 4 days, pre-school)

Tessa's repetitive use of the phrase "I don't know" illustrates her discomfort at the acknowledgement that she would not be considered for promotion opportunities within the same timescale as previously.

Even those who had themselves been promoted questioned the rationale behind the promotion process. There appeared to be some sort of justification going on, perhaps because they did not want to construct a reality that involved them putting themselves in a vulnerable position which may adversely affect their own future, even if that had not been the case so far.

> Ruth: I'm just thinking back through. I mean, within our team we have a lot of part-time workers, but they were promoted before they became part-time predominantly. I'm just trying to think. I mean we've had three new Directors this year, all women, which I think is fantastic but they're all full-time people. But you don't know who was positioned or who was up for it and didn't get it, or whatever. I mean, in theory, it shouldn't make any difference. Really it's the contribution and what you do, so it shouldn't really make, you know I was part-time and I was promoted. In theory it shouldn't really.

In the above extract, Ruth explained her knowledge of others **within** the organization and her awareness of the reality increased as she spoke. Although she had previously thought that her own experience proved that reduced hours workers would have the same opportunities for promotion as others, she was now less certain, as demonstrated by her repeated use of the phrases "in theory" and "it shouldn't really".

Some respondents appeared more confident that their working pattern had not damaged their prospects for promotion.

> I don't think I've seen any particular adverse affects from going part time working. Certainly still through our career development, our annual performance review, discussions with my manager, we've always kept open and talked about well maybe I could go to (headquarters) or take a different role within region. (…) I've still received promotion since I've been part time. (Rosie, 4 days +, pre-school)

In this extract Rosie focuses on her own experience and the way in which she has maintained access to opportunities to promotion on an ongoing basis, in contrast to Ruth, above, whose idea of reality involved considering how others had fared with regard to promotion. Similarly one person explained how she had focused on meeting goals and the acquisition of skills during the time she was working, in order to ensure she would be able to meet the criteria for further progression.

So long as you do whatever you're doing well, it needn't = I mean it's not necessarily a time versus quality, you know, quality and quantity, almost thing. So you can tick all the boxes in reduced time working hours. You just have to be clever at picking the right bits. (…) I've been working part time for ten years and I've been promoted three times whilst I've been part time working. (Jackie, < 4 days, school)

Through the use of the word "you" ("you can tick all the boxes", "you just have to be clever"), Jackie indicates that anyone can achieve in this way, and then refers to herself as the case which proves that flexible working does not restrict access to promotion opportunities.

6.3.2 Suitability of role

However, others still questioned their ability to progress in the same way as they would have done otherwise, despite having been promoted since returning from maternity leave and working flexibly. Liz acknowledged that her concern could be due to the fact that she is one of the two most senior women in her particular division of the organization and that women are rarely seen at those levels.

I would struggle to believe I could ever achieve a progression through to MD, by being a flexible worker. (…) Well, I mean I have just been promoted so the argument would be, no doubt, it makes no difference. Clearly, you were promoted on the basis of your work and nothing should stand in your way. I still struggle to believe, or have even seen an example of anyone promoted to MD who's on flexible working. So, maybe that's just the new frontier. (Liz, 4 days +, pre-school)

The difference between working three or four days appeared to be a critical factor for some with regard to promotion. Frances was actually sought out for a position whilst working flexibly, although her appointment was on the condition that she increased her contract to four days.

I came back after my first child was born and I worked three days. And I did that for a large number of years. And then it was only when I applied for this current role and was offered it, it was contingent on me increasing my hours to four days, because it is the Head of a group and I think they felt they could

support four days in the office, and one day out, but it wouldn't have been the right size role to fit into a three day role. (Frances, 4 days + days, pre-school & primary)

At a certain level of seniority, therefore, it would seem that a role is necessarily bigger, and simply requires more time in order to be effective. Some found that the volume of work they were expected to complete was just too much to fit into three days. Four days appeared to be a compromise, in terms of allowing an extra day beyond the weekend to attend to the non-work domain, yet enabling individuals to maintain the necessary high standards of performance expected by themselves and their colleagues and managers.

I think there are times when I feel that four days a week is very difficult to make it work in my department, and that increases my stress levels enormously. (…) I have worked three days and it just doesn't work. It's too difficult to manage, whereas four days, it's just one day off a week, it's actually very easy. I say that, it's not very easy but it is much easier to manage. (Philippa, 4 days +, pre-school)

However, it is not simply the difference between working part time and full time. Some of those with a full time contract, but a different way of working such as staggered hours, also expressed concern that flexible working would not be accepted at a more senior role. Vicky's comment encapsulated this view.

I think it could potentially impact the roles that I could do. I mean I think there are certain roles) you know as we've talked about the team there are certain roles that (.) I don't think I could have my current flexible working arrangement and do those roles and I'm realistic about that. (Vicky, 100%, pre-school & primary)

In sharp contrast, the nature of the work was highlighted as the salient factor for some in their choice to work flexibly, with roles evolving as they reached senior levels and having different demands which actually suited a less traditional working pattern. For instance, Jim explained that his promotion to a senior role actually lent itself to flexible working far more easily than when he was laboratory based.

I'm much more in a desk-based job and that's got a lot to do with the flexible working hours that I work. Before that I was very much in the lab a lot but, as I

only work four days a week, it's difficult to keep some experiments going. Some experiments require you to be in the lab five, six, or even seven days a week. (Working flexibly) puts me in a position where I can have goals that are better suited to my grade; I think that's a better way of putting it. So I've probably got more opportunity for future promotions, even though I've stayed at the same grade for the time being. (Jim, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

Others referred to the nature of their roles requiring a different response. For instance, Will was very clear about his decision to work flexibly being a response to the demands of the job.

I think it's been advantageous to my career because I've been more prepared to do US like hours. So you could argue that if I wasn't prepared to do flexible working that would have adversely affected my career. (Will, 100%, no children)

The global aspects of roles were thus appreciated as a way of obtaining flexibility informally because the need to interact with colleagues in different time zones provided an additional element of autonomy which interviewees used to their advantage.

I think in the foreseeable future it may be tough for me to find the job that I could be as flexible at. Because, you know, I do have the US angle, I'm not a UK employee. My job is European and linked very strongly to the US so that puts a whole different dimension on it doesn't it in terms of times you work and so on. (Paula, 100%, pre-school & primary)

Paula went on to explain how she took an overall view of her time commitment to the company, so she might take her children to school and have a late start if she had been away travelling and working long hours, for instance. So the fact that the role demanded flexibility was presented as fitting in with other aspects of her life.

One person commented on having made a very deliberate choice to adopt a flexible working pattern and then rationalised that choice as appropriate for him and not detrimental in any way.

I think you're talking to the wrong person about (careers). I'm not a great careerist so (.) I, as long as I'm doing a job I enjoy I, I'm not driven by

promotions or anything. If I was I'm not sure I'd be working flexibly. I may or may not be, I can't, I can't put myself in that position. (Vince, 4 days +, pre-school& primary)

In this extract Vince actually positions himself as someone who is not ambitious, whilst at the same time questioning whether he would choose to work flexibly if he was seeking opportunities to progress. Whilst he stresses that this is not an issue for him personally, the doubt and concern about possible adverse impact on career remains evident.

Visibility was a theme which emerged in response to questions about career progression for some managers. It was linked to the discussion around the critical difference between working three or four days.

I think it's not too much of an issue for me. I think as soon as you get down to three, two days a week, your visibility fades away, and I think yes, although in theory, you should just be judged by results. (…) I try to enhance my visibility actually, by becoming more involved, actually this takes up more time, but becoming more involved with things like the diversity initiatives. (Naomi, 4 days +, school)

In this extract Naomi explains her awareness of the importance of maintaining a high profile, and the strategy she has adopted to achieve that, which actually adds to her workload. Others talked of the difficulty of involving themselves in additional initiatives because of the effort needed to achieve their existing objectives in a shorter working week. So there was an awareness of the strategic necessity to be seen and involved in issues outside of their mainstream role.

There was evidenced of increased clarity around the decisions made by those who had maintained full-time hours whilst adopting a degree of flexibility in the way they carried out their jobs. Some spoke of the decision to avoid a formalised flexible contract, again because of the concern around how others would perceive such a practice.

My child came along eighteen months ago and I considered going down to four days a week formally and did not feel that would do my career any good whatsoever. So I decided not to do that and to use informal flexibility at certain

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points to be there. So there are a number = there were a number of reasons why I took that decision. One, nobody as senior as myself had done that. There was still wanting to progress, so I didn't fancy being the leader of that = that change. (John, 100%, pre-school)

Some of the managers, particularly those working full time hours spoke about the notion of visibility with regard to their own career, but with a greater focus on advice to their staff who may be seeking promotion.

I think, again, it's all about balance so I mean I advocate to people in my team, 'I don't mind where you work' and those sorts of things, and 'this is what I want you to do this year and how you do it is partly up to you in some ways'. But I think it is necessary to be visible in this organization. In other organizations it may be less, but certainly here there is = I think you do benefit from being visible in the office occasionally and so forth, because there are those networks, there is that (.) water-cooler gossip, all those sorts of things, the ability to catch up on a one-to-one face, you know some face time does help significantly I think. (Michael, 100%, no children)

This section has discussed managers' experiences of promotion and the way they view the relationship of their flexible working pattern with those experiences. Many of the managers explained that they have been promoted while working flexibly, and in some ways this is only to be expected, given that they have been working flexibly in one form or another for many years. But there was a great deal of uncertainty expressed over their possible progression in the future. A particular issue was the suitability of flexible working in some senior level positions.

6.4 Personal organization of work

Figure 6-4 Personal organization of work

Flexible working in the greater context of managers' whole lives

Work aspects of flexible working

Changes to FWAs over time

Managing time in a different way

Focus and concentration

Coordination and support

Strategies for maintaining flexible working arrangements

Personal organization of work

Access to promotion opportunities

Consistency and adaptability in FWAs

Promotion

Flexible working and the integration of work and life

Supervisory relationship

Suitability of role

Time with family

Managing flexible workers

Work life balance

Delegation

Boundary management

Availability to staff

Organization of work is a theme which emerged from this main study to a much greater extent than in the exploratory study. I have already discussed aspects of this theme in earlier sections, notably section 5.2.1 on consistency and adaptability, and the three sections on the supervisory relationship; section 6.2.1 (availability), section 62.2 (delegation), and section 6.2.3 (managing flexible workers). Additionally, there were other aspects of the personal organization of work which contributed to the managers' construction and experience of flexible working. These aspects of managing time differently and focus or concentration will be addressed here.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there were differences in the personal organization of work between the 20 people who had a formal reduced hours arrangement, and the

remaining 14 whose arrangement maintained a full time contract. All of the interviewees had previously worked a more traditional arrangement, so were able to compare any changes which had taken place in their work, or their approach to work. However most felt that their overall approach to work had remained the same, and that it was not dependent upon their pattern of work.

> I've always been the sort of person who's pretty organised anyway in terms of knowing what I need to do and getting it done. So I don't actually think that's particularly changed. (Eve, 4 days +, pre-school)

Those who regularly worked from home talked about the work they chose to do when away from the workplace. Many explained that the technology available meant that they could work in exactly the same way in the home as they would in the office.

> I think the tasks are pretty much the same. (…) Because the job I do is largely driven on a computer screen and emails, there's probably not much difference in the way that I would do it. (Will, 100%, no children)

> My working arrangements at home have a lot in common with my working arrangements in the office. It just lacks the fact that I'm not physically next to the person who I might want to be next to. (Matt, 100%, pre-school)

But some did refer to a different way or perceiving their role as a result of working only on three days a week.

> Maybe it's made me think more about (A) saying no to things that I can't commit to and (B) getting help from other people that perhaps I wouldn't have asked for in the past. (Sally, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

For Sally, her own expectations of the way she should enact her role had changed and she subsequently perceived a need for greater interaction. Rather than taking on everything she was more assertive in recognizing and acting on what was an appropriate amount of work, given her shorter hours.

6.4.1 Managing time in a different way when working flexibly

Availability when spending less time physically in the office was not an issue just with regard to team members. The managers also talked about how to manage the

expectations of other colleagues who may need to interact with them, and had an expectation of doing so on a face to face basis, simply because that had previously been the common practice. Those whose working patterns had a high level of consistency, such as leaving the workplace at a set time, found that this limited their ability to respond to requests for meetings at short notice.

> I think you have to be very clear with the people around you and your managers that these are the hours I do, and I'm very happy to exceed those, but it needs to be for a very good reason. So, in the beginning, for example, I would find that meetings were put in at six and I, or quarter to six, and I would accept them. Whereas now I tend to say, 'I'm sorry. I'm not here.' Unless, of course, it's an absolutely compelling reason to be at that meeting. So I think it's worked out very well for me, but I have had to toughen up in terms of managing other people's expectations on my time. (Liz, 4 days +, pre-school)

Yet attendance at meetings was not just an issue with regard to timing. Many managers, particularly those working four days or less, explained that they were far less likely to accept the need to be present at every meeting, or to attend for the whole duration. They were more likely to question the benefits they would accrue or give from such attendance, and decide accordingly. They viewed their time as too precious to spend on activities of doubtful value.

> (Working part time) made me focus on what was actually worth going to, you know. Where was I going to make an impact and (…) what was I getting out of going to that meeting. So I started focusing on only going to the meetings where I would get something out of it or the, you know, the company would get something out of it. (Jackie, < 4 days, school)

As well as reviewing the meetings they attended, flexible working encouraged a continual assessment by the managers of how they spent their time and the prioritisation of tasks, to ensure maximum usage of their limited time in the workplace. Again there is evidence of adaptability in the way reduced hours staff in particular, planned their work in advance in their own time, in order to get the best results from the time they did spend in the office.

> I think most of the reduced hours workers that I know have a couple of hours that they do from home to catch up. And it just gives you that, almost thinking

time to say, 'Right, this is my priorities for the week, and this is what I need to do.' (Frances, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

Some of the full time workers also explained how their adaptability involved working additional hours.

I think the downside of all of this is that if I was to stop and add up my hours I'd probably be shocked. (…) I think actually at the end of the day you end up working more rather than less. It's just because it's more flexible it doesn't quite have the same kind of impact. (Tom, 100%, school)

This may well reflect the realities of working at senior levels, rather than being a factor of flexible working per se. However, this should be of interest to organizations as it indicates no differences in levels of commitment or dedication from staff who work flexibly rather than standard hours.

Increased diary management was a strategy used by some to manage their time in a way that helped to manage the expectations of others.

I'm quite a disciplined, organised person, so when I came back part time, I basically closed off my calendar first thing in the morning and last thing at night, to allow for me to collect or drop my child at nursery, and then on Fridays obviously I've got a note in the calendar that says I'm not here on Fridays and I found people are very respectful generally of working within those parameters. (Rosie, 4 days +, pre-school)

As well as the need to fit in with children's routine, as mentioned in section 5.3.1, managers spoke of other ways in which they managed their time differently which reflected their changed priorities.

When I was working full time I would be much more willing to, if I needed to have to do an extra couple of hours work I would get it done there and then, so that I could then go home and sit down and relax. Whereas now I feel my priorities have very much changed so, all other things being equal, I will work nine to five and I will go home on the dot at five and if something else crops up, I will pick the computer up again later on in the evening, which is something I never really used to do. (Eve, 4 days +, pre-school)

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In this extract, Eve demonstrates her continued commitment to successfully fulfilling her role, through her willingness to spend time in the evenings to complete work if necessary. But this extra time spent on work now has to fit with her other priorities and at her convenience, in comparison to prior to her return from maternity leave.

Similarly, some of the managers on a reduced hours contract described how they managed their workload to ensure that they do not attempt to complete the responsibilities they had when they worked full time.

> I think there's a personal 'don't beat yourself up' piece to this which is 'don't expect yourself to be able to do everything because you can't.' You've got less time to do it, the world does not shrink because you work four days a week. There is a strategy you need to employ in terms of understanding what needs to be done, and what are the bits that if they don't get done or they perhaps don't get done in the manner that you would like them to get done, the world will still turn. (Vince, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

When comparing the volume of work whilst working reduced hours, in comparison to their previous arrangement, some described a similar volume of emails, invitations to events, possible projects to work on, explaining that they had to be more discerning and make choices about how to spend their time, as it was simply not possible to respond positively as often as they had previously.

> I still get the same volume of emails as everyone else even though I'm only here half the time. I still have to deal with all those requests for information and can you do this and can you do that and can you look at the other, and all these other things that we get. (…) It means you have to prioritise. I mean, there are just some things that you can not physically do everything that is required of you to do, attend every single event and you have to be quite selective when you've obviously not got that time. (Ruth, < 4 days, school)

The volume of emails were a factor influencing the choice of which days to work for Carolyn, when planning a reduced hours working pattern.

> Initially, I, what you tend to find, I mean emails are just a nightmare, because I would collect easily (…) eighty to a hundred emails on my day off. So unless you're checking them all the time, you walk in to your next day, and that's why I've done Monday, Tuesday, Thursday so I'm never more than one day out of

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the office, because two days would just be impossible. (Carolyn< 4 days, pre-school & primary)

Several of the managers made reference to the fact that their role involved interaction with colleagues or clients in other parts of the world which necessitated working outside standard UK hours because of the different time zones.

Because I work with people who are in different time zones, by (the evening) I might have had an influx of questions or prompts that I can deal with perhaps very quickly without having necessarily to have to do them in the morning. It's a tidying up exercise. (Matt, 100%, pre-school)

This fitted in well with their flexible working pattern and their willingness to work in the evenings. Again this is evidence of their adaptability, responding to situations which arise as part of their work demands. The following extract from Sarah encapsulates this approach:

We actually got into this habit of him not scheduling anything with me between sort of five thirty probably and eight, but knowing that if he suggested a conference call at eight in the evening I didn't mind doing it. By which time I've got my kids to bed, and now I can go back to putting the work hat on. (Sarah, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

The global aspect of his work was particularly important for Will and largely determined his working hours:

Often, there's a double wave of emails and work; the wave of the UK tends to be first thing in the morning, then there's a second wave in the late afternoon which comes in from the US, and often it's better to work to those two periods of time, than to have to work only nine to five UK time. (…) It just depends on what project I've been working on. (Will, 100%, no children)

Although many of the managers stated that their approach had not changed, there were certainly many examples of adjusting their strategies to ensure they maintained effective performance whilst working flexibly.

6.4.2 Focus and concentration

Homeworking was perceived as an advantage for work which required uninterrupted attention and many respondents talked about the lack of distractions and the greater ability to focus and concentrate in the home.

> If I, for example, if I've got a lot of reading to do, and it can wait, I'll take that home. Because it's easier, without any distractions at home and without people wandering past your office and just dropping in. It's easier to read and concentrate. (Melissa, 100%, pre-school children)

The reduced hours managers also described how they were more focused when in the work place in order to get through the volume of work in the time available.

> I think very much being quite…I guess quite ruthless in terms of the items that come through onto my desk in terms of what I'm asked to do, and pushing back and just really being very structured in terms of this is what I've got to do, focus on the main priorities and not spend/waste time in many respects doing sort of low level tasks. (Rosie, 4 days +, pre-school)

Similar to the discussion on meetings in the previous section, managers were more discerning in spending their time on activities which yielded greater return. This was accompanied by an increased sense of urgency to complete the necessary tasks and activities given the shorter time available.

> I would say I achieve more in three days knowing that I haven't got an extra two days to get things done, because I don't want to spend every night working late and that could quite easily happen. (Sally, < 4 days, pre-school & primary)

There was some discussion of higher energy levels when working a reduced contract as it was perceived to be easier to maintain efficiency over the shorter time.

> It's much easier to maintain your energy levels and enthusiasm if you're working for three days or four days, than if you're working for five days. By the end of the week, when I was working full time, I'd be kind of, 'Right, well, I'll meet somebody for lunch.' I might go for a coffee. And working reduced hours, I think you kind of tend to cram it in and really focus. So I've found that the benefit, (.) I think that it's easier to keep your energy levels up and keep your

efficiency up if you're just maintaining it over three or three and a half days, rather than five. (Frances, 4 days +, pre-school & primary)

So this reduction of time spent on peripheral activities such as unscheduled chats with someone over coffee helped to maximise the use of the time available to them when present in the workplace.

It's a frenzy during the week to pack in what you need to pack in, to do things the way you want to do it in the time that you've got. I am much less tolerant of time wasting with = I find it more difficult to just pop by and chat to individuals because it's not helping me get my week's work done. (Vince, 4 days+, pre-school & primary)

Of course, this use of every available minute for completion of necessary tasks, results in a reduction in the informal networking activities which take place and this may be at some cost to the individual in the longer term, in terms of their visibility, but also in the short term with regard to awareness of essential information. As Jackie explained, a key issue for someone with a flexible working pattern was staying informed.

It is difficult to keep = keep up with everything that's happening. So it's = it's making sure you know the things you need to know strategically or what's going on with people or your team. It's making sure you're aware of things that you need to be aware of. And making sure that you keep up with those. There's almost a lot of catch up in your job. Because you're making sure that you = you've got your finger on the pulse if you like. (Jackie, < 4 days, school)

So the greater emphasis on efficiency which most of the reduced workers experienced could have disadvantages.

6.5 Discussion

The enactment of flexibility has been explored, acknowledging the importance of including both formal and informal arrangements in order to deepen understanding of the lived experiences of flexible working (Hall & Atkinson, 2006). Many of the managers in the sample had formal FWAs but they, and those with informal

arrangements, were able to adjust their working patterns as a result of the autonomy which was to be expected at a senior level.

The importance of the supervisory relationship in the overall experiences of managers who work flexibly, emerged in the pilot study and this became an important focus of the main study. The sample of managers was chosen specifically to include those with managerial responsibility for staff, in order to understand the relationship when the managers were not necessarily present in the office at the same time as their team members. They were found to use a variety of strategies to make a FWA an effective pattern of working which allowed them to fulfil their supervisory responsibilities.

The literature on the role of manager is vast, but as pointed out in section 2.3, little has been written about managers who themselves work flexibly. The approaches reviewed all encompassed the human element of management in one way or another. Luthans et al (1988) described effective managers as those with satisfied and committed subordinates, and this is reflected in the importance the managers placed on maintaining a good relationship through being available to their team.

Mintzberg (1990) talks about the job specific knowledge which managers carry around in their heads and therefore the importance of their being able to verbally interact with their staff. One of the key issues for these managers was ensuring that their staff had sufficient access to them. Clearly Mintzberg wrote this before there was the array of technology which we have today, and the managers in this sample used varied means of communication to ensure that such verbal interaction did take place, even though it may not be the face to face communication which Mintzberg envisaged. They discussed how they made themselves available to the team, even when not working at the workplace, or during traditional hours. Thus they put in additional structures (Pearlson and Saunders, 2001) such as regular one-to-one telephone calls to ensure sufficient interaction between them. They adapted the existing communication systems (Duxbury & Neufeld, 1999) and spoke of greater use of teleconferencing facilities.

Some of the managers commented on the importance of being able to delegate to their team in their absence, to ensure successful delivery of overall team objectives. Mintzberg (1990) referred to the dilemma of delegation, given that it may take longer

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to explain and hand over a task than to actually do the task oneself. These managers described how crucial it was to delegate as it became part of the overall process which supported their decision to be in the office at different times or for less time. In addition, delegation was seen as a way of developing staff reflecting the focus on training and development which appeared in much of the writing on the role of manager (Drucker, 1988; Luthans et al, 1988). Senior people are away from their base office for at least 25% of the time (Buck et al, 2002), so they have to delegate and maintain contact with staff as part of the normal fulfilment of their role; therefore having to do so when working flexibly is just an extension of this.

Managing flexible workers was an issue for several of the managers, allowing them a different perspective. The role of the manager in the support of work life policies is well documented, with their support being crucial for the successful introduction and implementation of such policies (Bardoel, 2003; Maxwell, 2005). Some of the respondents demonstrated the discretionary role managers play in enabling others to work flexibly (Hyman & Summers, 2004) through their discussion about whom they would allow to take up a FWA. Awareness of their impact as role models arose in the pilot study and was endorsed in the main findings, although the literature focuses on the manager's role as change agents in supporting flexible working (Kossek et al, 1999), while these managers discussed the message their own working practices gave to team members.

Those without children all had a full time contract and this group did not indicate that their flexible working pattern had affected their career progression in any way. The key for them was visibility, reflecting the findings of Lim & Teo, (2000), and they talked of how they could adjust their flexible working pattern in order to manage that visibility. In contrast, promotion was a key theme raised by those working less than full time hours when asked about the relationship between their flexible working arrangement and career progression.

It was difficult to separate the issue of parental responsibilities and the reason for working flexibly. For the parents in this sample, the two were inextricable. Parents had different demands on their time, which could not always be adjusted to meet the immediate needs of the organization/job. Most of the parents had fixed working patterns, which involved childcare on a given day, or the need to leave at a set time to

pick up children from nursery or school, or to relieve the nanny. Parents were as flexible as they could be, but increasing their visibility was something that was difficult, because of the reason for the adoption of their flexible working pattern. But this difficulty was not insurmountable and there were some examples of a strategic approach to managing one's visibility in the workplace. The literature on flexible working and careers is inconclusive with some evidence suggesting there is no adverse impact, and others suggesting that career progression can be damaged when a FWA has been adopted. To some extent, this uncertainty was reflected by many of the participants who questioned the relationship during the interview itself.

Some of the participants questioned the possibility of working flexibly at more senior levels and there was an interesting distinction made between the number of days needed to fulfil the requirements of some senior positions. Although this is not directly reflected in the literature, it does relate to some of the language used in some articles such as "limiting career progression" (Maxwell et al, 2007:364) or putting career on hold (Hill et al, 2004).

The managers in the sample became more discerning in the way they allocated their time than when they had worked a more traditional pattern. They questioned the value of meetings and other activities because of their more limited time in the office. To some extent the ability to do this could have more to do with their seniority than their FWA, but there is evidence in the literature of increased perception of control particularly when using an informal FWA (Hall and Atkinson, 2006). An increase in autonomy and control has been seen as a benefit of flexible working (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999) and the managers here expressed appreciation of this, but equally some mentioned concerns about the high number of hours they actually put in. The reduced time available for social interaction was also mentioned by several participants, and the literature suggests that this has been related to fewer career opportunities (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999; Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

6.6 Summary of findings (part 2)

The second part of the findings from the main study was presented in this chapter with the emphasis on the work side of flexible working. A summary of the job titles

of the 34 managers was included before the three main areas were addressed. Firstly, the supervisory relationship was explored and many of the managers explained the actions they took to ensure that there was no adverse impact on their dealings with their team members as a result of their own flexible working arrangements. This often involved making themselves available to their staff when not physically present in the workplace. Some managers expressed the positive effects to their staff, because of the delegation which was necessary given their greater absence from the office. Several managers had people in their team who also worked flexibly allowing the managers to experience flexible working from another perspective.

The theme of promotion emerged as an important part of the relationship between flexible working and ongoing career. Access to promotion opportunities was problematic for some of the managers and they also discussed the suitability of more senior roles to flexible working. Finally, the personal organization of work was raised and some respondents spoke about managing time in a different way. Working at home was often seen as advantageous when tasks would benefit from fewer distractions, and managers also spoke of an increase in focus and concentration when in the office as a direct necessity of their reduced face time.

There were few gender differences emerging from the findings with regard to the work aspects of flexible working, with the only one being the approach to availability when not in the office. However, parental status did seem to be a differentiator in terms of how visibility could be managed. The findings from this chapter and those reported in chapter 5 will be discussed in the context of the existing literature in the next chapter. In addition the model of consistency and adaptability which was introduced in chapter 5 will be developed further.

Chapter 7 Discussion and contributions

7 Discussion and contributions

This chapter discusses the findings in context with the literature, and presents the main contributions of this thesis as below:

- Map providing overall view of managers' flexible working experiences, breaking down the conceptual structure. This map extends understanding of workplace flexibility building on the work of Hill et al, (2008). It also adds to the literature on telework, extending understanding of how people work from home (Bailey & Kurland, 2002, Tietze & Musson, 2003, Tietze, 2005) and how managers use a wide range of flexible working options.

- Model of consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements building on the work of Kossek et al (2005) who call for greater investigation into the complexity of the segmentation to integration continuum (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001; Campbell-Clark, 2000).

- Identification of four distinct clusters in terms of type and direction of adaptability adds to the literature on individual differences in boundary management techniques (Kossek et al, 2005) and again extends understanding of the segmentation to integration continuum (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001; Campbell-Clark, 2000).

Section 7.1 summarises the research findings. The next section discusses the map of managers' experiences of flexible working, including both the work aspects of flexible working and its enactment in the greater context of their whole lives (section 7.2). I will then develop the model of consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements in section 7.3. The constructs of consistency and adaptability were first introduced in chapter 4 and then the model was developed as a result of further support from the findings from the main study presented in chapter 5. Section 7.4 will outline the distinct clusters which emerged from the sample in terms of the direction of their adaptability and their level of consistency. This will include illustrative case studies. Finally section 7.5 will conclude this chapter.

7.1 Summary of the research findings

The purpose of this research was to answer the following research questions.

How do managers construe and experience flexible working arrangements?

Supplementary questions were:

How do managers use their flexible working arrangements to continually meet demands from both the work and the non-work domains?

How do managers who work flexibly perceive their work life balance?

What is the relationship of their flexible working arrangement with their career?

The research has provided an in depth picture of the complex nature of working flexibly at a senior level within an organization. The research was conducted within the organizations where the participants worked, and was part of a wider project which examined the relationship of flexible working and individual performance. The focus of this thesis is on the experience of the managers, and their perceptions of the relationship of their flexible working pattern with their work life balance. Although it was positioned within an organizational context, the participants willingly discussed non-work aspects of their lives, as they related to flexible working.

The positioning of flexible working in the wider context of the managers' whole lives, as well as the work related aspects of flexible working are represented in the map of managers' experiences of flexible working (see figure 7.1). The managers talked about the strategies they used in order to maintain successfully their flexible working arrangements. The interface between the work and non-work elements of their lives was a key feature in their experience of flexible working and they talked about the importance of time with family and the management of the boundaries between the two domains. Work aspects of flexible working included the enactment of the supervisory relationship with team members, given the specific context of a manager with reduced face time. This context also affected the personal organization of work,

and the managers' views of the relationship of flexible working and promotion is also presented.

7.2 Managers' experiences of flexible working

Figure 7-1 Map of managers' experiences of flexible working

Flexible working in the greater context of managers' whole lives

Work aspects of flexible working

Changes to FWAs over time

Managing time in a different way

Focus and concentration

Coordination and support

Strategies for maintaining flexible working arrangements

Personal organization of work

Access to promotion opportunities

Consistency and adaptability in FWAs

Flexible working and the integration of work and life

Promotion

Supervisory relationship

Suitability of role

Time with family

Managing flexible workers

Work life balance

Delegation

Boundary management

Availability to staff

The map presented in figure 7.1 brings together an overall perspective of the way in which managers experience their own flexible working arrangement in the context of their whole lives. Clarifying understanding of the concept of flexible working has been an ongoing challenge in the literature and studies of flexible working span many fields. Agreement has begun to emerge about what is meant by the term, acknowledging the range of options which include remote working, staggered hours, reduced hours etc (Almer et al, 2003; Houston & Waumsley, 2003; Smithson et al, 2004). The definition used in this thesis was defined in section 2.1.2, considering the criteria of location, contractual arrangement, reduction of commuting time, use of

technology and time spent away from the office and sources of these criteria are documented in section 2.1.

The extant literature informs us about why organizations introduce flexible working (Brewster et al, 1997) and the ways in which those organizations benefit from such practices (Bailyn et al, 2001; Rau & Hyland, 2002). The challenges of implementation of flexible working policies have been identified (Baruch & Nicholson, 1997) and factors such as gender, family considerations and acceptability within the workplace culture are among those which affect the take-up of policies. Studies which examine the individual in relation to flexible working have tended to focus on the outcomes of using those practices, such as job satisfaction, stress and organizational commitment. However, as Bailey & Kurland (2002) pointed out with specific reference to telework, which is of course just one form of flexible working, there has been limited research on *how* individuals actually work flexibly. The findings from this thesis address this gap and the map of managers' experiences presents an overall view of flexible working as a lived experience (see figure 7.1).

Part time work is no longer associated solely with lower status, less pay and fewer career opportunities, but is now recognized as a valuable option in the suite of flexible working options available in many organizations. The managers in this sample who work less than full time hours could be described as having "good jobs" which require high levels of skill, have good compensation packages and high levels of responsibility, as opposed to "bad jobs" with the former characteristics (Tilly, 1996). Part time working is only one of several types of flexible working which reduce face time in the office. Remote working adds another dimension to the complex nature of flexible working as it involves not just reduced face time, but also the combining of the two spheres of work and home. This presents challenges not just for the individual but also for family members (Tietze, 2002; Tietze & Musson, 2003) as they adjust to this co-presence of previously separate domains. This thesis adds understanding through bringing together the many facets of the experiences of managers who face the specific challenge of being away from the workplace at times when their teams are present, regardless of the actual form of flexible working undertaken. Thus the findings are situated within the sphere of work, yet include the

overlap between work and home, presenting a more complete picture of the factors involved in a successful working arrangement than has previously been stated.

Supporting Hill et al's (2008) claim that workplace flexibility is poorly understood, this thesis provides empirical support for their conceptualization of the phenomenon, extending understanding of *how* managers are able to engage in work-related tasks in different places, at different times and for different amounts of time. As a result of the grounded approach to the research, the findings are based on the meanings and sense that the managers make of their experiences of working flexibly.

The aim of including both women and men in the research was to look beyond the stereotypes and allow the analysis of any possible differences while recognizing that experiences may not be differentiated by gender. In this way the research extends the work of studies which have focused on either men or women (e.g. Allard et al, 2007; McDonald et al, 2005).

7.3 Consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements

In addition to the map of managerial experiences, a model emerged which demonstrated how participants used consistency and adaptability to meet the fixed and changing demands from both work and non-work (see figure 7.2). More simply it answers the question "How do managers make flexible working work?" and also addresses the issue posed by Kossek et al (2005) regarding individual differences in boundary management strategies. They go on to call for greater investigation into the complexity of the segmentation to integration continuum. This thesis goes some way to answering that call.

Figure 7-2 Consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements
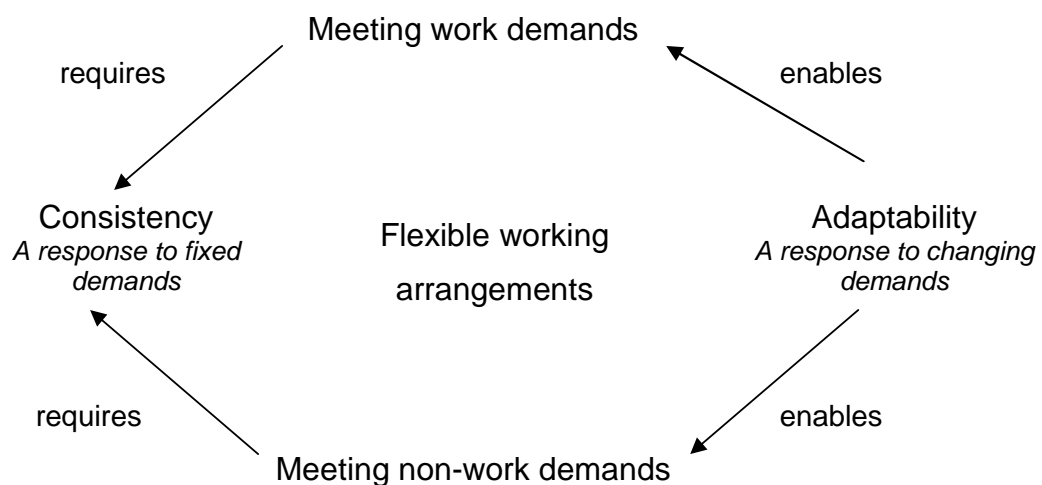
7.3.1 Consistency and adaptability in making FWAs work

When explaining their flexible working arrangements, it became clear that many of the managers experienced a continual tension between the demands from the work domain and those from the non-work domain. The decision to work flexibly was sometimes dictated by childcare needs (for some of the parents) or other lifestyle needs, and sometimes by the demands of the role, particularly when that role involved

frequent contact with colleagues or clients in different time zones. Responding to those needs from both work and home involved a range of approaches. Some of the demands were fixed, such as the need to participate in a regular teleconference with colleagues in the US, or to leave work at a set time in order to collect children from school or nursery. Other demands were more variable and may have involved working on a different day because of required attendance at a specific event. This could be a work based event such as a conference or training day, or equally could be an event from the non-work domain such as a hospital appointment for oneself or one's child. Consequently these managers used a consistent approach to the fixed demands and an adaptable approach to the changing demands, all within the bounds of their unique flexible working arrangement (see figure 7.2). Various permutations of consistency and adaptability are possible and these will be explained in sections 7.3.2 through to 7.3.5. This can be represented diagrammatically through the fading of the arrows, when that behaviour is not being demonstrated. A response to the fixed and changing demands can lead to the blended or integrated situations which many of the managers recounted, with some expressing concern about the level of integration, or the blurring of boundaries.

In this way, this model of consistency and adaptability builds on boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001) and border theory (Campbell-Clark, 2000). The two related theories of boundary theory and border theory explore the integration of the work and non-work domains and how the transitions from one aspect of life to another can be managed. This thesis builds on boundary theory through empirical investigations which inform us of *how* managers fulfil their obligations in both the work and non-work domains through the use of FWAs.

Thus we know more about how an integrated or blended situation arises through the use of FWAs which the managers adopted so that they were better able to meet the demands of both domains. A key issue with regard to the level of blending or the position on the segmentation/integration continuum (Ashforth et al, 2000) is the way the individuals manage their responses to the ongoing needs in both domains.

It is important to explain how the concepts of consistency and adaptability differ from descriptions of formal and informal flexibility. Empirical research tends to focus on

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formal arrangements and there has been little discussion of informal flexibility (Kossek et al, 2005). One exception investigated employee perceptions of flexibility, relating them to control, and offering a useful definition of informal flexibility:

> *"…..we define informal flexibility as being able to alter planned working on an ad hoc basis at short notice or agree personal start and finish times to apply on a routine basis to accommodate commitments outside of work, such flexibility being agreed at local level by the immediate manager."* *(Hall & Atkinson, 2006:376)*

This definition of informal flexibility allows for changes in the working pattern specifically to meet non-work demands, whereas adaptability can be directed towards meeting business needs or non-work needs. Formal flexibility is generally understood to involve a contractual change, either of hours, or of location of work. Formal and informal flexibility are both exhibited as part of an agreement (and that agreement may sometimes be approval of ad hoc changes). If we consider the construct of consistency, an individual could have an informal arrangement to meet a regular need from the non-work domain. For example, they may have an informal arrangement to arrive at work at 9.30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays because of a regular commitment. Equally, a similar arrangement may have been formally included in a contractual change. Hence consistency differs from formality.

Nippert-Eng emphasizes the direction of the transition across a boundary, suggesting that transitions tend to be uni-directional when domains are clearly segmented. In contrast, transitions are less distinctive and less direction-linked when the domains are integrated. However, this research suggests that the direction of the transition is important, illustrated by the four distinct clusters which emerged from further analysis of the constructs of consistency and adaptability. The clusters were differentiated by the direction of their adaptability and their level of consistency. This provides greater understanding of the **approach** managers take to ensure success of their flexible working arrangement. Respondents fell into the following clusters:

- Those with fixed demands and adaptable towards work domain

- Those with fixed demands and adaptable towards both work and non-work domains

- Those with no fixed demands resulting in an integrated approach to work and life

- A consistent approach with no changing demands

There was no pattern regarding the type of FWA used in any of the clusters, or the contractual arrangement regarding time, or parental status. The unique FWAs of the managers in this sample are an example of the flexibility which is available to individuals of their level. Not all staff who work flexibly would be able to negotiate such individual terms and more junior part time staff in particular may lack day-to-day flexibility (Johnson et al, 2008).

Eight of the managers described an integrated approach with no clear boundaries between the work and non-work domains. This group of managers worked whenever they needed to in response to the job demands rather than having a set pattern. The other 26 managers fell into three groups, all of whom had a regular pattern of work. The largest group of 14 described how they adapted their arrangements on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of the business, whilst maintaining their overall working pattern. A further nine maintained their regular pattern but also described how they would adapt to meet demands from both the work and non-work domains. The remaining three talked about a more fixed pattern with no examples of adjustment either towards home or work. These different approaches affected their experiences and perceptions of work life balance, career and the supervisory aspects of their roles. It is noteworthy that a group did not emerge which was adaptable only towards family. A more detailed explanation of these clusters follows with individual case studies which are illustrative rather than representative. The original model will be shown with sections faded to illustrate each cluster.

7.3.2 Adapting towards work domain

The largest group consisted of fourteen individuals (eleven females and three males). The managers in this group all described their routine of flexible working and their adaptability was only in the direction of the business as shown in figure 7.3. No examples were given of adapting towards demands from the non-work domain.

Figure 7-3 Adapting towards work domain
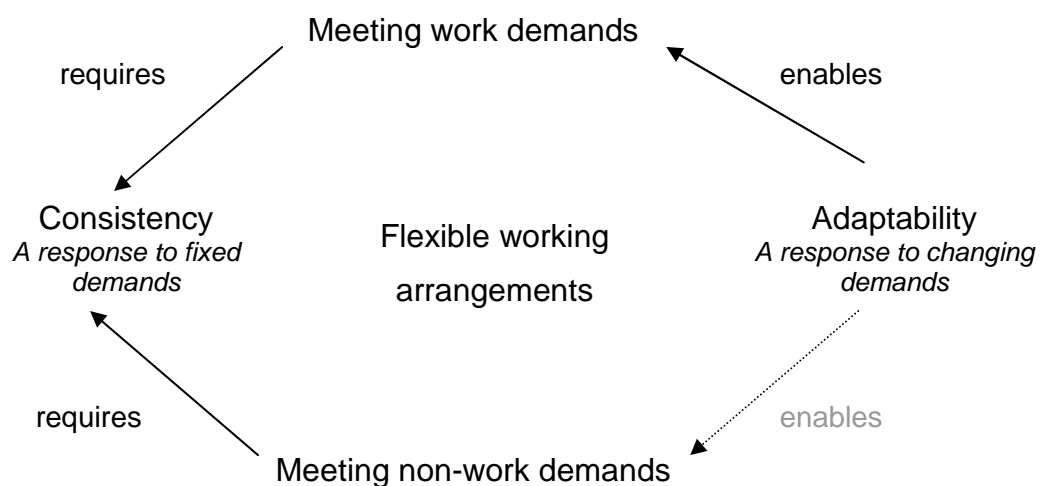
So this group of managers met the fixed demands of both work and home through their agreed pattern and then made changes to accommodate the varying demands of work as they arose. This would mean making changes such that they were working in what should have been non-work time. Examples of such accommodations include:

> I said all the way along I'd be very happy if something was really urgent, for either you to call me on my mobile, or for me to actually come in and do something. (…) Last year I had a number of responsibilities where I had to go to a forum on site to explain the processes and that was fine. I'd come in for half the day and they'd let me take the half day off another time. (Cerys, 100%, no children)

> If there's a meeting which they can't take in any other space, I do move my half day. I do have full time (child)care, so (…) I then take another day. (…)If I

know it's going to be a difficult day with lots of calls and that kind of stuff, I'd rather cancel it. (Diane, 4 days +, pre-school)

However, some of the group were prepared to adapt towards the business only in a limited way. For instance Matt explained the agreement he had reached regarding the need to attend meetings at the office on his 'home' days. Matt worked from home on two set days each week and this was linked to his need to take his child to nursery and collect them later in the day. He would attend the office on those days, but only for a shorter day because of his childcare commitments.

As and when I have to be here on a Thursday or a Friday, part of my proposal to the business was "I'm happy to be here, on a Thursday or a Friday but my travelling happens in your time". That sounds rather hardnosed. I just mean everyone is better off if I do a good decent day's work at home rather than a short day in London, but by the same token, businesses are used to paying for people to travel in their own time. (Matt, 100%, pre-school)

He continually monitored and adjusted the terms of the agreement, as he was prepared to adapt by coming into the office on a 'home' day, but the fixed demands from home remained, requiring ongoing consistency.

There were a small number of respondents who were less satisfied with the arrangements, however. They felt that they were having to do so much adapting to meet the work demands, that they were actually doing significantly more work than they had anticipated would be necessary.

Case study 1: Hannah, < 4 days, pre-school children

Hannah had been working in her organization for the past seven years and working flexibly in her current role for 18 months. The role involved people management, including recruitment and selection at certain grades, overseeing induction into the organization, learning and development, and performance management. She was also responsible for resource management and salary and promotion reviews as well as managing people leaving the organization and their exit interviews.

Her flexible working arrangement was for four days or 28 hours and her agreement was that she would work in the office Mondays to Thursdays from 10.00am to

4.00pm and then do the remaining six hours to suit herself. In fact, she described putting in additional hours such that the total was usually at least 35 hours per week and often in excess of 40 hours. She described how she regularly worked for at least two hours each evening and often worked at weekends as well. She explained that she had a young child who was the reason she was working flexibly and he was at nursery for those four days each week. However, she regularly had to deal with calls from the office on a Friday, when she was officially not working. The volume of work on a Friday had reached the level where she had felt it necessary to book her young child into nursery on Friday mornings for the previous two months. That arrangement had not been satisfactory as she still felt under pressure from work and she was therefore in the process of arranging nursery care for five full days each week.

She talked about being "*under pressure*" and expressed the view that it was "*hard to say that there's any benefit as it currently stands*". She compared her approach to work at the time of the interview with the way she worked before taking up a FWA. That approach had always been "*task focused*" and working "*long hours to get the job done*". She felt that the hours she worked and her willingness to book her child into nursery on a Friday demonstrated that continued commitment. However she expressed frustration at the reception she got from senior staff when seeking a new internal job role, as they viewed her reduced hours status as a barrier towards effectiveness.

Hannah explained that she sometimes had to leave the office at a set time and then pick up work in the evening as necessary. On other occasions, she was able to be more flexible as her husband was "*doing the pick up or the drop off*" of their child and so "*it's not absolutely rigid*". She was thus able to vary the evenings when she had to leave at a given time, which allowed her to be responsive to the needs of the office.

Hannah had two members of staff reporting to her and she felt that her absence from the office did not adversely affect their relationship and in fact allowed one of them the opportunity to cover for her, providing an additional and beneficial challenge. However, she did feel that flexible working was not a success for herself as she had been asked to do a fair amount of work which was not commensurate with her level and that she "*had been doing all of the giving and not getting much back*".

A clear picture emerged from Hannah's story of consistency and adaptability. There were some fixed demands from home in terms of childcare, but predominantly she talked about adapting to meet the fluctuating needs of the business and this often resulted in her putting in extra hours, even to the extreme of booking her child into nursery full time.

Case study 2: Jim, 4+, pre-school & primary

Jim had joined the organization 14 years previously as a graduate straight from university and had progressed through several grades and was currently in a managerial position with a team of four. His flexible working arrangement was equivalent to four days or 28 hours, but in fact he worked two short days and two long days. His hours on the short days were from 8.00am until 2.00 pm and the longer days again began at 8.00am but went on until 6.00pm. This arrangement had been in place for the previous 5 years "*to take care of childcare arrangements*". Jim explained that the culture was such that people put in the hours needed to do their jobs and so he had continued to do so since working flexibly. This involved keeping up with emails on the day he nominally did not work "*to make sure that I'm on top of any issues that come up*" and having half an hour contingency on the days he needed to pick his children up from school. Although his finish time was 2.00pm he did not need to be away until 2.30pm which still allowed him to be at the school on time.

Jim explained how his flexible working arrangement had changed over time with the evolving needs of his family. His ability to be more flexible and to attend to demands from work on his day off had taken place over the last couple of year. Previously, when looking after a small baby, he had been clear that he could not work outside his agreed hours. He also gave examples of having changed his working arrangements as a result of having to attend a training course, for instance, or having to come in at weekends on to deal with an emergency.

Jim's wife worked for three days a week at the same organization and they had set up their initial arrangements when their first child was born, in order to share the childcare between them. The application process to reduce hours was straightforward and Jim had been pleased that there was no requirement to state a reason for the request. He did point out that there had been "*some interest*" as he was only the

second man to ask for flexibility and the first to do so for childcare reasons (even though he did not have to say why!).

His absence one day a week necessitated delegating work to a team member, and Jim saw this as a valuable development opportunity for the individual, who was subsequently promoted. The nature of the work in which they were involved necessitated some continuous processes over several days, so Jim had to rely on team members to fulfil their responsibilities unsupervised. He pointed out that in their field of expertise "*maintaining continuity of work means being flexible anyway*". He chose not to work from home as he felt it important to be able to see his team and others on his four working days.

Comparison of case studies

Jim's story also illustrates consistency in attending to the childcare needs which have been the motivating factor for his adoption of a FWA. He talks of putting in some extra time to respond to the ongoing needs from business, so demonstrating adaptability towards the business, although he does this on a much smaller scale than Hannah. There is an interesting contrast in that Hannah is evidently not satisfied with the reality of her FWA although she talked of continually adapting and changing her arrangements to respond to job demands. Jim made fewer changes, and was clearly pleased with the way he was able to meet the needs from both domains. This example of the differing effects of levels of flexibility is supported by the finding of greater work family conflict as a result of greater "schedule irregularity" (Kossek et al, 2005).

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7.3.3 Adapting towards both work and non-work domains

The second cluster of eight women and one man gave examples of how they adapt in both directions, towards the business **and** towards home and family (see diagram 7.4).

Figure 7-4 Adapting towards both work and non-work domains

Meeting work demands

requires   enables

Consistency
A response to fixed demands

Flexible working arrangements

Adaptability
A response to changing demands

requires   enables

Meeting non-work demands
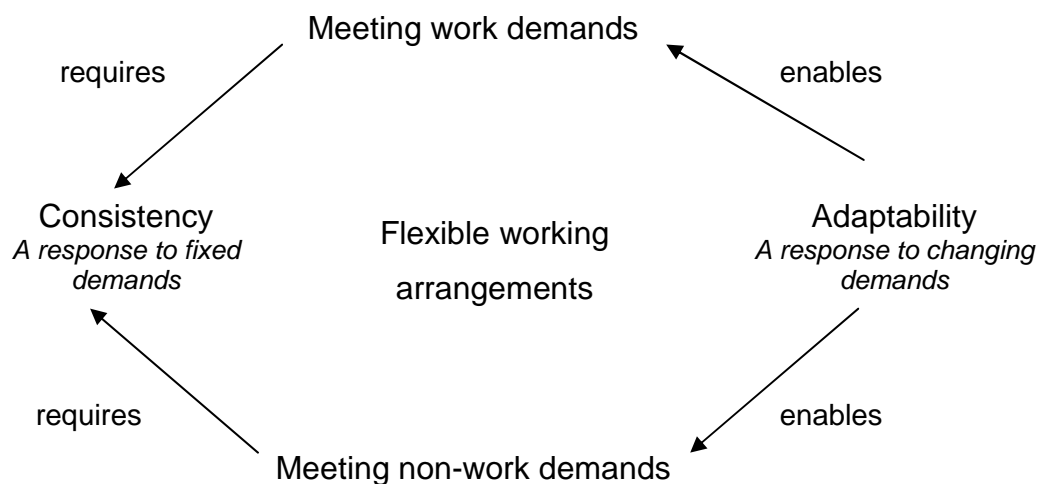
They gave similar examples to the group above regarding changing working days as a response to demands from the work domain, checking emails in their own time and attending events outside their normal pattern of work.

In addition, they talked about initiating changes to their work routine to allow them to deal with demands from the non-work domain, and it is perhaps noteworthy that this group consisted only of parents.

> I have, the understanding with my boss is that if there's something important to do related to the children, then he, as long as I haven't got a heavy schedule of meetings, he's happy for me to manage that and work from home, if absolutely necessary. (Naomi, 4 days +, school)

Social exchange emerged from the women in the pilot study, who were all parents, in terms of an unspecified element of the relationship between employer and employee. Similar language was used by many of this group who spoke about the 'give and take'

necessary to ensure success of the FWA. This phrase is indicative of the fact that these managers were less accepting of a relationship where the emphasis was on the benefits to the employer, as had been the case in the pilot and in the group above. The managers in this cluster appreciated that the employer had certain expectations of them in terms of delivering results, and equally they were going to utilise their flexibility to suit their own needs. This view is encapsulated in the following quotations.

> I think it's give and take on both sides, it's a question of I have to demonstrate that working part time and working flexibly isn't going to impact on the overall service to the client (.) and once that's demonstrated then people are more than happy to let you manage your own time and because they know that you will get the job done in the time required, so the flexibility of being able to say, look, I've got to take (my child) to the doctors or I'll be in late this morning, or I'll be leaving early but, I know you need this by such and such a time, and I'll get it to you tonight. (Eve, 4 days+, pre-school)

> I think that the flexibility allows me to give time to (the company) when (the company) needs my time. Most of the time it's a give and take thing, so if I need to work longer hours on the Friday, I can put the children on the bus at half past eight, work through to quarter to four when I get them off the bus, so it's actually longer than a five hour window. Some weeks I do that because I think I've got things to do. Other weeks that's offset against something else. So I think, you know, I'll work on a Wednesday if I need to. I'll come in for meetings on Wednesdays if I need to. So it is a bit of a give and take thing I suppose. (Oonagh, < 4 days, school)

Others were even more outspoken in support of the two-way nature of this topic, and were clear that the ongoing success of the relationship depended on the continual support from their employer.

> I'm happy to do it so long as I get the give and take and that's why this relationship works so well, because I'm very willing to be flexible and my = at the moment my management are too, and so that , that serves me well. (…) I'm flexible so long as they're flexible back." (Fiona, 100%, pre-school).

Case study 3: Ruth, <4, school

Ruth was a senior manager in a team that was spread across three offices in the UK. She had worked there for the past twenty years and worked flexibly for ten years, with several different FWAs during that time. Her current pattern of work involved 18 hours per week, with one full day and two shorter days. She only worked during school term times and she participated in a scheme where she was able to buy an extra week's holiday. Previous arrangements included three full days, and 21 hours over four days.

The nature of her role meant that she regularly attended dinners or breakfast meetings in addition to her normal hours. She explained that she had been able to negotiate her preferred FWA without any difficulty because of her seniority, and the fact that she was well respected. In fact, the role was developed with her through discussions when she returned to work two years prior to the interview, after a two and a half year career break. She explained that she had been clear about wanting two weekdays clear of work to fit in household chores and personal leisure time, as well as being able to collect her child from school most days.

She worked from home occasionally, about once a month, but preferred to come in to the office. However she did explain that many of her meetings were actually conference calls and she was able to do those from home or the office. This worked well as she could do them outside her normal hours when necessary, to fit in more easily with other people's requirements. She described the culture of the organization as flexible and professional, with a "*culture of trust around people working from home or flexibly*".

Ruth was involved in volunteering within her local community, and was treasurer for several small groups, and involved in the organization of fund raising events. She explained that sometime she spent more hours in a week on the charity work than on her paid work. She also enjoyed the opportunity to help at her child's school, explaining that she had the flexibility to change her days at work to fit in with a school trip, for instance.

Ruth talked about her uncertainty regarding the effect of working flexibly on her career. She explained that there was a very structured appraisal process which she

was fully aware of and she worked with her junior staff when they were seeking promotion. But despite her familiarity with the process, she was not sure how it affected those with a part time FWA. Because her role involved networking, she felt that she was very visible throughout her part of the organization.

She felt that the organization benefited from part time people because of the intensity with which they worked, often having to deal with similar numbers of emails, and requests for information etc. as their full time colleagues. In order to manage some of the administrative burden, she would go through emails in the evenings, so that her days at work were spent more productively.

Case study 4: Robert, 100%, school

Robert was in a senior position in the organization with a team of about 75 people in four locations, one of which was in mainland Europe, and the other three in the UK. He had been in his current role for the previous six months and had been working flexibly for four years before that. His working hours had been agreed at interview, and he explained that he needed a consistent pattern so that he could guarantee being able to see his child on certain nights, as he was separated from the child's mother. He was quite precise about the hours that he worked, and explained that they had been agreed at the interview stage when he joined the company.

He worked in an industry where long hours were very much expected of someone at his level. His flexibility involved leaving at about five o'clock or five fifteen on a Monday and a Wednesday, and not getting into work before 8.45 on a Thursday. Other than that he tended to work eleven hour days which was the norm for his organization. He was quite clear that he did not have a formal FWA and was in fact hesitant to describe it as a FWA "*because it's not actually shorter than the standard, than the sort of guideline hours*". However later in the interview he pointed out that he was in a minority as he was "*a man with a flexible working arrangement. Most would be mothers with young children*". This view of flexible working being synonymous with mothers may explain his reluctance to label his own arrangements as flexible working.

Robert expressed a preference to work in the office rather than at home, although he explained that he would take work away in the evening to look at during his commute

to and from the office. He was clear that his leadership role required him to be visible in the office and with his team as "*leadership has to be done within physical proximity*". He then went on to explain that with a team in different locations it would be possible to work from home for a couple of days per week and still maintain a suitable level of contact with them all. Thus the conversation was full of contradictions. He did not work flexibly, yet he was in a minority as a man with a FWA. As a leader it was necessary to be with your team, yet if they were geographically dispersed it was possible to see them regularly and also work from home. He did not take work home, but he talked about being able to log on to the office intranet from home once his child was in bed.

He explained that on occasions it had been necessary to change his access arrangements on a Wednesday evening to attend a meeting, but he did not find this problematic if given plenty of notice. Equally, there had been a few instances when his child had been ill, and he had been able to inform his boss that he would be working from home on that day. Balancing his work life and his home life was a key benefit of his FWA and he talked about his roles as father and partner being a priority in his life above work.

Comparison of case studies

Robert's FWA was informal, yet the demands from home were fixed and he had a consistent approach to meeting those demands. In contrast, Ruth's FWA had been formally agreed yet she too had fixed demands from the home domain. For both of them, the fixed demands centred around their child and they also gave examples of having changed work arrangements as a result of a demand from the home domain, so demonstrating their adaptability towards the home. Although their working arrangements were obviously very different, they both gave examples of the ways in which they also adapted towards the business, through working in the evenings or, in Ruth's case, through breakfast meetings or dinners as part of her networking role.

7.3.4 An integrated approach

The third cluster of managers had a substantially different approach. Their flexible working arrangements consisted entirely of responses to changing demands, largely driven by work pressures, but benefiting their whole lives. So they had no regular pattern to their working hours and took a holistic approach to work and home, rather than separating them and adapting them when the need arose. The three women and five men in this cluster all worked full-time hours.

Figure 7-5 An integrated approach to work and life
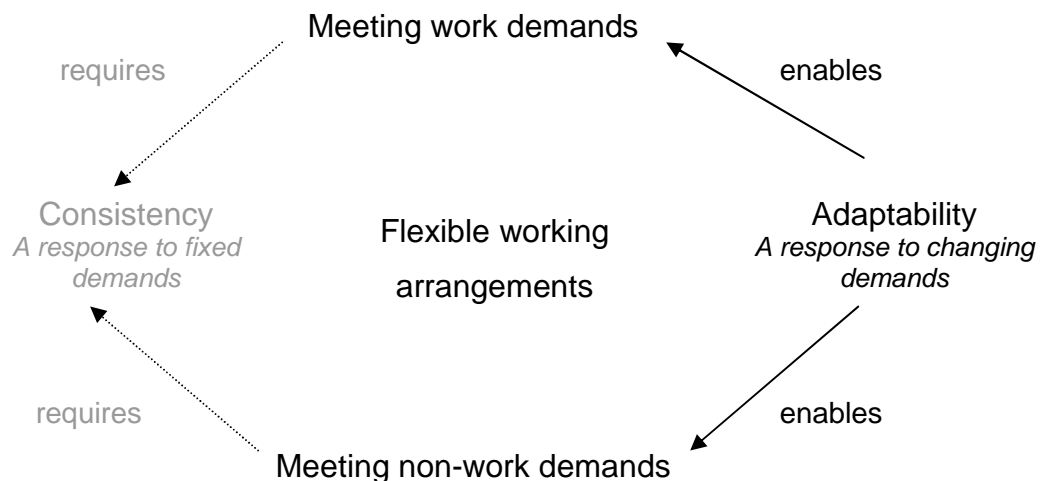
Their working patterns were largely driven by the demands of their roles and there was also an emphasis on choosing to work in this responsive way.

> Because of the way the work comes in to me and now being hard wired with a Blackberry, I find that it's pretty much, apart from the sleeping hours, that I am contactable. I actually like that from a customer service point of view. If something is coming in over the weekend, and somebody wants an answer then I feel that that's something that I personally want to respond back to. (John, 100%, pre-school)

> I don't personally use a fixed day per week which is what some people do. My own pattern is to get the job done no matter what time of day that requires. So

that's a personal choice. (…) I work very flexible hours, early mornings, late evenings and sometimes nothing during the day. Occasionally, I take a day to work from home and so it's a mix of working probably from home one day every second week and then just working what hours are necessary to get the job done, rather than working fixed hours. It probably all adds up to the required number of hours though. (Will, 100%, no children)

Many of this group gave examples of the requirement to work in different offices or the effects of the global business which required them to be available to colleagues in different time zones. There was no mention of the need for consistency and they adapted to the needs of both business, and home/family.

Tom described flexibility and work life balance as a "trade-off".

Sometimes you should trade off one way and sometimes you have to trade off the other, and if you don't keep the two things in balance that's when you start to run into problems. So if you're always trading off say in one arm, always going to give up my personal time for work, and vice versa, then that's where you get into problems. But if you remember that it's a trade-off and sometimes it goes one way and sometimes it goes the other, it allows you to keep a balance. And because you've got a flexible working approach you've got to make it a conscious decision rather than a consequential decision, if you understand what I mean by that. (Tom, 100%, school)

So the integrated approach also requires the give and take which was talked about by the group who adapt to both business and home/family. The difference is that this group do not have the same boundaries, because of their overall approach. Non-work issues were discussed, and all members of this group were satisfied with the lifestyle they had as a result of their FWA.

Case study 5: Michael, 100%, no children

Michael began by explaining his preferred working pattern compared to his actual one. He would have liked to work from home regularly one day a week, but in fact that only happened about once a month, and he was usually in the office five days per week. He described his "*non-office pattern*" as a long standing one, from before he had joined the organization three years previously. He described the days at home as

an opportunity to "*plough through and get things done*", without the distractions of an open plan office, and also affording him the privacy needed to make confidential calls, which were a more prominent part of his current role.

In addition to his occasional full day at home, Michael also adapted the times he worked in the office to avoid the rush hour traffic, maybe leaving early and then working again once he got home, or arriving later in the office and staying correspondingly later in the evening. He also explained that, as he lived alone, it was helpful to be able to choose to work at home if something was being delivered, for instance. To him, this was part of work life balance, as well as the fact that his work was his passion, so he did not see clear boundaries. He explained, "*Work life balance is the fact that what I'm passionate about in my personal life spills over into my business life and vice versa, and that makes it easier for me.*"

The only drawbacks Michael experienced from his FWA were to do with technology as he had had problems with mobile phone reception at home, necessitating the purchase of a second mobile on a different network. However the organization supported homeworkers through provision of broadband and any equipment needed. He explained that there were no negative associations with home working within the organization culture, although he pointed out that self-discipline was needed to ensure breaks were taken and people did not become totally engrossed with work.

Visibility was important within the organization for career progression, but Michael also explained that he benefited simply from being in the workplace, being able to "*gauge the general level of energy*". Most of his colleagues and his team worked in a similar way, and this was partly because of the nature of their area of the business.

Case study 6: Paula, 100%, pre-school & primary

Paula began by telling me about the reasons that she worked flexibly. She reported to someone based in the US and explained that she had to have regular conversations with the team there, and they came online at five pm UK time. For her that meant that she regularly engaged in conference calls at ten or eleven o'clock at night. The second reason she talked about was her family, explaining that "*the job demands that flexibility and I have two children and (…) the job actually suits me because of that flexibility*".

Paula explained that she had had her current FWA for the previous 18 months, with a full time contract, and she worked the hours necessary to fulfil her senior management position. She felt that this reflected the culture of the organization and involved longer hours than her contractual agreement, pointing out that this was the case for many of her colleagues with more traditional working patterns. Previously she had been on a contract with reduced hours, but this had not been successful for her, as job demands had meant that she had effectively been working full hours for reduced pay.

The ability to work flexibly was a major factor in her employment with the organization, and she was clear that she would have left if they could not accommodate her need for such a working pattern. However, the business did not suffer in any way from her FWA, and she suggested that it actually made her work harder. She was happy to work at times which suited the demands of her role and then attend to her family at times which would more normally have been considered work time. For instance, she talked about arriving home from a business trip late in the evening, and then taking her children to school the next day as she could "*afford that flexibility at that point*".

Paula felt that the drawback to her FWA was that she was "*never really (able to) leave it behind*" and she explained that her late night calls would often lead into checking and responding to emails and spending lots of time on work, which sometimes caused friction with her husband. However, it was the nature of the job, particularly the US contact, which facilitated her flexibility. She expressed concern that it may be difficult for her to move to a more senior role which would afford her such flexibility, and that was a concern, as it was something that she would not be prepared to forgo.

Paula's team spent a lot of time away from the office visiting customers, again because of the inherent nature of the roles. She described her team as doing "*whatever is needed to be done or to get the job done*". She described the business as very much day-to-day and therefore ensured that she spoke to each member of the team on a daily basis as a matter of course.

She made a comment during the interview which summed up her attitude towards her job. *"I'm not on any kind of flexible working scheme. I'm just doing a job and no-one really cares how I do it."*

Comparison of case studies

Both Michael and Paula were quite clear that they put in the necessary hours to achieve their goals and were not concerned about when or where that happened. They fitted in their work around the other needs and priorities in their lives and seemed satisfied that this worked for them. They both expressed awareness of the potential for work to be ever present, although this was more of a concern for Paula who gave more examples of the blurring of boundaries.

7.3.5 Consistent FWA

The remaining cluster is small with just three managers, who worked according to their agreed pattern and gave no examples of adapting as a result of needs within either the business or home, other than talking about working beyond their contractual hours. They all had young children and talked about the importance of family and they were satisfied that their working arrangement met their needs.

Figure 7-6 Consistent approach to flexible working

Meeting work demands

requires   enables

Consistency
A response to fixed demands

Flexible working arrangements

Adaptability
A response to changing demands

requires   enables

Meeting non-work demands
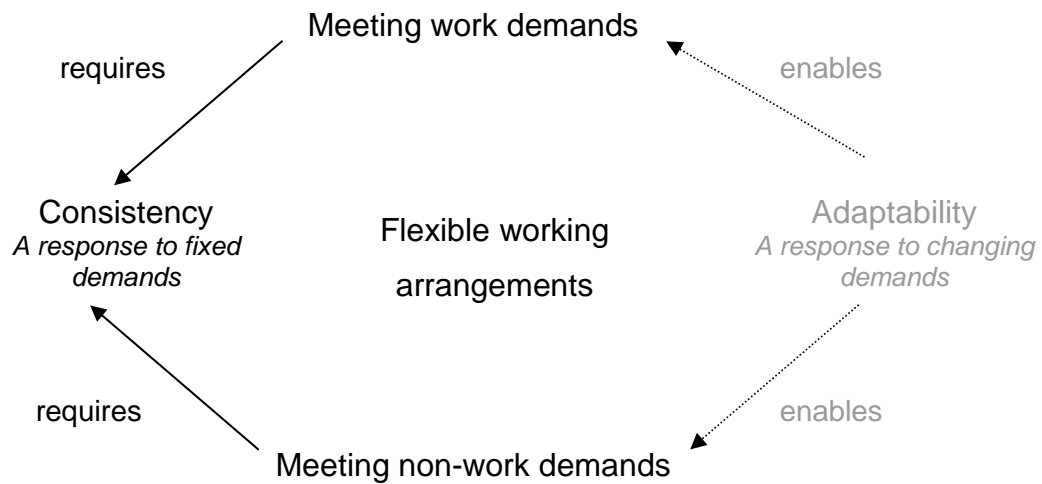
The three managers (two women and one man) all explained that they worked flexibly because of wanting to spend time with their children. They had quite complicated childcare arrangements involving specific days and times and these arrangements were shared with their spouses, depending also on their working pattern. Tessa explained that for her it was an ideal arrangement.

> I think it's fantastic, the best of both worlds. It's being able to have 4 days at home with a young family and bring them up, and also have that bit of time for me and my development and so I love it. (Tessa, < 4 days, pre-school)

The main concern which emerged was mentioned by the two women who both experienced difficulties with the scheduling of meetings because of their set times when they were in the office.

Case study 7: Melissa, 100%, pre-school

Melissa had been with the organization for five years and working flexibly for the last two and a half years. She had a full time contract with remote working on a Friday and staggered hours on the other days, involving either an early start and correspondingly early finish, or a later start and later finish. She explained that her husband's working pattern (in another organization) mirrored hers, and they were based around the ability for one of them to be with their young child each morning and evening. Melissa was quite clear that being able to see her child in this way was her main priority and therefore her FWA was the key factor in her continued employment with the organization.

Her senior role was demanding and involved long hours so she regularly worked on the train during her long commute or in the evenings after her child was in bed. She explained that she had found her FWA stressful, especially when she first began working in that way. She was the only person at her level with such an arrangement and she explained that flexibility did not really fit the culture of the organization. She described having to leave the office early as particularly stressful. As she explained, "*there's no flexibility there*" and this meant literally walking out of meetings in order to catch her train. Similarly, not being able to attend a meeting which was outside her working pattern differentiated her from other people and drew unwelcome attention to her FWA.

Melissa described herself as a proactive manager with a competent team. However, being away from them on a Friday meant that she had to make "*more of an effort to find out what they're doing*". She laughed as she explained that she was very conscious of replying to emails immediately when working at home "*to prove to people that, yes, I am working*". She was uncertain about the effect of working flexibly on her career progression, saying that she really could not tell if her promotion prospects would be affected. This was something which only "*time will tell*".

Case study 8: Vince, 4+, pre-school & primary

Vince had been working for the organization for 13 years and working flexibly for the previous three years. He described his hours as "*point eight five of a working week*" (0.85), and explained that he and his wife had "*regimented work patterns*" based around their children which required a "*very well structured swap every day*". He explained his working times in the office to which he strictly adheres.

His decision to work flexibly had been driven by his desire to spend a day each week with his young child before the child began school. This had then continued in order to have time with his second child in the same way. He explained that he now spent time as a parent helper in the school each week, something which was important as a man, because there was an all female staff: "*I think there is distinct value in having male parents go in and interact with the kids.*".

Vince talked about the value he placed on the day he was able to spend with his children, in comparison to the cut in salary he had to take as a result. The decreased salary 'bought' him the guarantee that he could manage his own hours and decide when to leave, without having to justify that decision to anyone. This was only possible because he worked beyond his hours, yet for him this was a satisfactory arrangement. He had experienced "nothing but support and appreciation of why I'm doing it" from his colleagues and senior managers. Others acknowledged his absence and avoided arranging meetings where his presence was needed at times when they knew he would be unavailable. He emphasized the lack of resentment from his peers, which he felt was noteworthy because of his membership of the senior management team within the organization. For him, his FWA led to increased commitment to the organization and also a "*sustainability about what you're doing*" because of being able to attend to other priorities in his life.

With regard to his supervisory responsibilities, he felt that his approach had not changed and he maintained his previous level of interaction with his staff. He described the need to recognize what he himself could no longer do, because of his shorter working week. This benefited his team because of the greater level of exposure to elements of his role which he now had to delegate.

Comparison of case studies

Vince and Melissa both place great emphasis on their childcare arrangements as the driver behind their FWAs. These arrangements are fixed and worked successfully because of the corresponding arrangements of their spouses. Neither gave any examples of adapting their FWAs to respond to changing needs from either the work place or the non-work domain. They received quite different levels of support from colleagues, with Vince expressing cooperation from his peers in the arrangement of meetings to suit his FWA, whereas Melissa missed some meetings and had to walk out of others as a result of her FWA. Regarding their supervisory responsibilities, they both expressed satisfaction with the way they had been able to maintain a good relationship with their teams and this had been an important part of making their FWAs a success.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the main contributions of this thesis to the literature, explaining how it extends understanding of boundary theory and provides an overall view of the lived experiences of working flexibly. The map of managers' experiences brings together the work and non-work aspects of flexible working, answering the main research question: How do managers construe and experience flexible working arrangements? The map also indicates managers' perceptions of their work life balance and the relationship of flexible working with their career. The model of consistency and adaptability demonstrates how participants used flexible working arrangements to meet the fixed and changing demands from both work and non-work domains.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

8 Conclusions

In the previous chapter, the main contributions of this research were identified and discussed. This final chapter summarises the answers to the research questions and my main contributions to the literature. In order to do this, I first summarize the significant findings which emerged from the literature review, with particular focus on the role of managers, as little is known about managers who work flexibly, emphasizing the research gap which was thus established. The research questions are re-stated and I then explain how these were explored in both stages of the study. The main contributions are clarified and I then examine the implications of the findings of this research for organizations who wish to improve the implementation of their flexible working policies. The limitations of the work are reviewed with suggestions for the improvement of the research design, and finally, directions for future research are identified.

8.1 Summary of findings from the literature review

8.1.1 Definition

The review of the literature led to the development of a definition of flexible working arrangements (FWAs), which in this study referred to **a range of working patterns available to permanent employees who have been able to exercise some degree of individual choice in agreeing when, where and how much time they spend fulfilling their work responsibilities** (see section 2.1.2). This definition was in line with the recent work of Hill et al (2008) which defined "workplace flexibility" as:

> *"the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where and for how long they engage in work-related tasks"* (Hill et al, 2008:152)

8.1.2 Role of manager

The role of manager was discussed in Chapter 2 examining the work of Mintzberg and other eminent writers, such as Katz, Stewart, Luthans and Drucker. Managers draw on a wide range of competencies and skills to enact the many demands which

they face in their jobs. Stewart emphasized the autonomy which managers have over the organization of their work, describing it as a:

> *"choice [which] refers to the opportunities that jobs provide for the incumbent to work on the task of his choosing at the time of his choosing."* (Stewart, 1976:27).

This autonomy or choice is remarkably similar to the temporal aspect of the definitions of FWAs and workplace flexibility offered above, and therefore managerial work would apparently lend itself to flexible working. Yet low numbers of managers working flexibly are consistently reported and there has been limited research focusing specifically on managers who work flexibly.

So from the literature, we know what flexible working involves, and that managers tend not to describe their working patterns as FWAs, despite the autonomy and choice which are accepted parts of their roles. We know little specifically about managers who claim to have a FWA, yet organizations are keen to encourage managers to adopt such an arrangement as this will go some way towards demonstrating the organization's commitment to its work life policies. One exception to the dearth of research on managerial staff working flexibly is the work of Tietze and Musson who examined the challenges experienced by teleworkers with regard to managing the boundaries between work and home, identifying the issue of "ever-availability" (Tietze & Musson, 2003:444) when the expectation from the organization is that they are available during traditional work hours and beyond. However, little is known about how managers with other forms of FWAs (and specifically reduced face time) use flexible working to fulfil their responsibilities in both the work and non-work domains.

Many of the existing studies on flexible working include samples of staff at various levels and with a variety of FWAs. This study addresses Lewis's (2002) call for further investigation into the strategies used by individuals who have adopted FWAs, and focuses on those working at managerial level. Avery and Zabel (2001) suggest that further work is needed to establish how to make FWAs work well. This study therefore provides greater understanding of the overall experiences of managers working flexibly, portraying the successful strategies they used, and also the difficulties which were faced. Previous studies have been criticised for including

individuals with a variety of flexible working patterns, which inhibits generalisation. This sample did include managers with such a range of FWAs, but rather than just accepting this as a necessity because of the relative scarcity of such managers, I explored those unique working patterns in the interviews which led to the model of consistency and adaptability. I also focused on one particular outcome of the varied working patterns, the reduction of face time, exploring the managers' perceptions of the effects of such reduced face time, especially with regard to their staff supervisory responsibilities.

8.1.3 Career, gender differences and work life balance

Reduced hours or part time working is one form of flexible working where there has been some limited research of those at managerial levels. Conflicting evidence has been found with regard to the effect of having a FWA on one's career. Some studies found no adverse effects, instead commenting on the choice made by those who reduce their hours, to focus on work life balance rather than career whilst working that way (Kropf, 1999; Hill et al, 2004; Maxwell et al, 2007). In contrast, others found explicit evidence of the detrimental effect of reduced hours, where career advancement to senior levels may only be available to those with a traditional working pattern (Stanworth, 1999; McDonald et al, 2005; Walsh, 2007).

Some gender differences were suggested in the literature with women being more likely to make use of FWAs and there is a continuing perception that flexible working is predominantly an option for women, particularly when they return from maternity leave (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

8.2 Pilot study

Drawing on these issues of managerial role, career, gender differences and boundary between work and home, the pilot study was therefore an exploratory study designed to examine the experiences of male and female managers who described themselves as having an FWA. The research question was:

> **How do managers who adopt a flexible working pattern perceive the relationship between flexible working, work life balance and career?**

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The main factor to emerge was the need to acknowledge and explore the unique working patterns of the participants. Several managers talked about an informal approach to their working pattern and there is very little in the literature which distinguishes between formal flexibility and informal flexibility. This differentiation was identified in 1996 by Holt and Thaulow and then referred to again in 2006 by Hall and Atkinson. But in fact, findings from both the pilot study and the main study indicated that the level of formality is just one factor in understanding the unique nature of a FWA for an individual. An interesting perspective to arise out of the writing on formality, and other studies which examine the business case (for example, Dex et al, 2001), is the discussion around managers, whose involvement tends to be portrayed as part of the implementation of flexible working, rather than their adoption of such arrangements. For instance, managerial attitudes and support are factors in an accommodating organizational culture which welcomes flexibility (Bardoel, 2003) and a negative attitude on the part of senior managers has a detrimental impact on the take up of FWAs by those in junior positions (Nadeem & Hendry, 2003). Another perspective was reported by Pearlson and Saunders (2001) who discussed the additional planning and communication which may be needed by managers of teleworkers.

Yet if we examine Hall and Atkinson's definition of flexible working (see section 2.1.1), which includes ad hoc changes at short notice, it could be argued that this is the way many managers work, given the autonomy they have over when and where they work. In the pilot study, exploration of these managers' working patterns indicated the existence of individual consistency and adaptability within each unique arrangement and this was taken forward for further investigation in the main phase of the research. Consistency is demonstrated through a routine response to the fixed demands from either the work or the non-work domain. Adaptability occurs when individuals adjust their daily or weekly schedules, going beyond their consistent approach to meet changing demands in either domain.

A second key theme which emerged from the pilot study was the relationship of the managers' FWAs with their staff supervisory responsibilities. The literature informs us that as well as the wide range of tasks and roles which managers are required to undertake, a key feature of their responsibilities is their interaction with staff who

reported to them. This was variously described as "directing the activities of others" (Katz, 1974), "human resource management" (Luthans, 1988) and the role of leader (Mintzberg, 1990). This aspect of managerial work may be particularly affected by a FWA which limits an individual's face time in the office, but the extant literature on flexible working does not report on this.

Thus two themes were taken forward for further examination in the main study. This allowed for deeper investigation into how managers negotiate the boundaries between the work and non-work domains, as well as further examination of how managers with a flexible working pattern conduct their staff supervisory responsibilities.

8.3 Research gap

From the literature review and the pilot study, it has been established that little is known about the experiences of managers who work flexibly and in particular we do not know how they actually use flexible working arrangements or their perceptions of the relationship of their own working pattern and their work life balance and ongoing career. The overarching research question to be addressed was:

> **How do managers construe and experience flexible working arrangements?**

Supplementary questions were as follows:

> **How do managers use their flexible working arrangements to continually meet demands from both the work and the non-work domains?**

> **How do managers who work flexibly perceive their work life balance?**

> **What is the relationship of their flexible working arrangement with their career?**

8.4 Contributions

There are three main contributions to the literature. Firstly, analysis of the findings led to the design of a map which provides an overall picture of managers' flexible working experiences, and adds to what is known about the role of manager through

the exploration of the enactment of that role when working flexibly. The second contribution addresses the segmentation/integration continuum (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001; Campbell-Clark, 2000). Finally, four distinct clusters emerged among the managerial participants in terms of the type and direction of adaptability, extending understanding of the approach used by managers to ensure the success of their flexible working arrangement.

8.4.1 Map of managers' experience of flexible working

The map (see figure 8.1) extends knowledge of workplace flexibility through a greater understanding of how flexible working is enacted by individuals in senior positions, thereby providing a framework for further interpretation of the patterns of flexible working. In addition, findings indicate different aspects of the role of manager are emphasized when managers themselves work flexibly.

Figure 8-1 Map of managers' experiences of flexible working

In particular, this study highlights the priority given by managers to the staff supervisory element of their work, contradicting Drucker (1988) who considered the management of people to be a secondary element within the role of manager. Taking Luthans' (1988) distinction between successful and effective managers, this sample of managers with FWAs appears to be focusing on communication and HR management, like Luthans' "effective" managers. His "successful" managers were those who spent significantly more time on networking activities, something which is more difficult when one's working pattern reduces face time in the workplace, as in the case of the managers in this study.

Mintzberg's interpersonal roles lead to a network of contacts, and managers working flexibly particularly emphasize the role of leader and may consequently spend less time on the other roles of figurehead and liaison. Greater consideration is given to the benefits from activities on which managers can choose to spend their time, or not. For instance, managers with FWAs were more discerning in their assessment of the need to attend meetings, for instance, rather than attending them as a matter or course. So these findings indicate that working flexibly emphasizes the choices available to managers about how to spend their time, supporting the work of Stewart (1976). Limited face time also makes Mintzberg's informational roles which process vast amounts of information, more challenging. For some of the managers in this sample, the "dilemma of delegation" (Mintzberg, 1990:173) was addressed by the sheer necessity of passing on responsibility to team members to maintain the delivery of the products or services involved when the manager was away from the office. Managers who work flexibly have to trust their staff to achieve their targets, and the managers in this sample saw the increased delegation and subsequent development opportunities as positive outcomes of their personal choice to adopt a FWA. So the dilemma of delegation does not hold for managers working flexibly.

Findings from this study also add to Tietze's work which was limited to exploration of the temporal boundaries around work and home, when actually working in the home. This study extends her work by examining the strategies used by managers with varying FWAs so that we now know more about how managers work successfully when their working pattern involves staggered hours, compressed hours, flexi-time or reduced hours, as well as when working remotely, which is usually, but

not always, from home. Addressing the specific issue of *how* people work flexibly involved focusing on exploration of the "work" element of flexible working and a greater understanding of the staff supervisory role of managers in such a position.

8.4.2 Model of consistency and adaptability

The second contribution addresses the segmentation-integration continuum of boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001) and the blending of border theory (Campbell-Clark, 2000). From analysis of the data I propose a model which demonstrates how participants used consistency and adaptability to meet the fixed and changing demands from both work and non-work, addressing the issue of individual differences (see fig.8.2).

Figure 8-2 Consistency and adaptability of flexible working arrangements
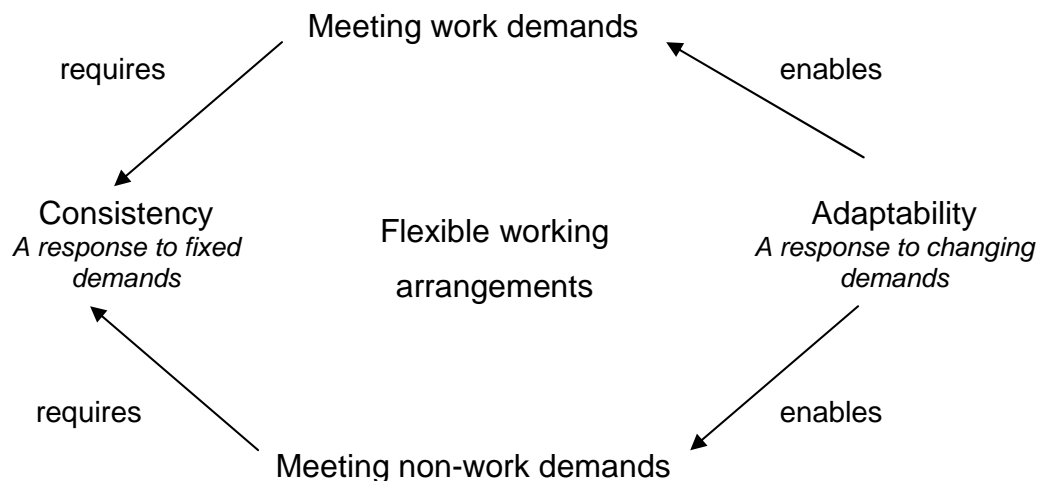
Both boundary theory and border theory focus on the two domains of work and non-work. The overlap of boundaries between the domains can occur in two ways (Hall & Richter, 1998):

➢ as a result of **boundary flexibility** or the extent to which the hours of work or the place of work can be moved

➢ as a result of **boundary permeability** or the extent to which the psychological concerns of one domain can enter the physical location of the other

Boundary theory considers the ways in which the domains can be segmented when the two domains are kept completely separate, or integrated to some degree, resulting in the segmentation-integration continuum (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Ashforth et al, 2000). Individuals may undertake a variety of roles in the different domains, such as parent, spouse, or carer in the non-work domain, and colleague, boss, or supplier in the work domain. As well as moving between roles within a domain, role transitions may involve physical movement between the work and non-work domains, such as travelling to/from work, or entering/leaving the home office and closing the door. Alternatively they can be psychological transitions between work and non-work roles in a given place. For instance, someone who works staggered hours which involve a break from work during the hours of four pm and seven pm to attend to non-work responsibilities in the home, may participate in a conference call during that time, switching from the role of parent or spouse to their professional role for the duration of the call.

Ashforth et al's work was conceptual and focused on the process of transitioning between roles, examining "boundary crossing activities" (2000:472). In contrast this study uses empirical data and highlights the greater emphasis which individuals place on moving between roles in different domains, rather than roles within the same domain. So it is not a role transition per se which is an issue for these individuals, as suggested by Ashforth et al, but the transition across domain boundaries. Similarly, Nippert Eng (1996) discusses "boundary work" and the way individuals organize objects, people and aspects of themselves in order to maintain the distinction between home and work to a greater or lesser degree. In contrast, my study examines how and why individuals use flexible working arrangements as a means of managing boundaries and achieving desired goals in both the work and non-work domains.

On the segmentation-integration continuum, segmented roles with high contrast in role identities are linked to inflexible and impermeable boundaries at one end, with integrated roles, having low contrast in role identities and flexible and permeable boundaries, at the other end (see figure 8.3). Thus extreme segmentation involves complete separation of work and family, whereas extreme integration holds that the two domains are indistinguishable, with behaviour, values, feelings and cognition

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being the same regardless of the role or the domain. Of course, such extremes help us understand the concepts but are rare, if they exist at all.

Figure 8-3 Role segmentation-role integration continuum (Ashforth et al, 2000)

Segmented Roles ― ― ― ― ― ― - **Integrated Roles**

High contrast in role
identities

Low contrast in role
identities

Inflexible and impermeable
role boundaries

Flexible and permeable role
boundaries
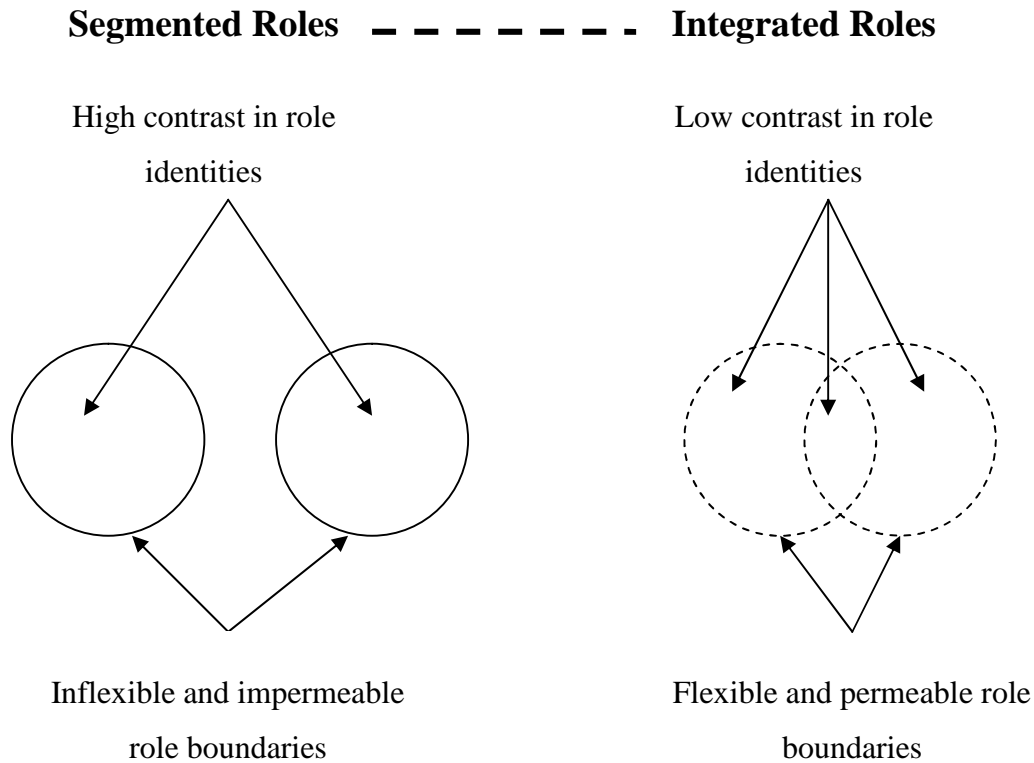
Border theory focuses on the overlap or the blending of the two domains as the borders become more permeable and/or flexible "creating a borderland which cannot be exclusively called either domain" (Campbell-Clark, 2000:757). Kossek et al (2005) called for further examination of individual differences in boundary management strategies to increase understanding of the complexity of the levels of integration used by people as they live out their daily lives.

Examination of the unique FWAs of the individuals in the pilot study led to the emergence of the concepts of consistency and adaptability. These concepts were further explored in the main study to understand how participants meet the fixed and changing demands from both work and non-work. Ashforth et al and Campbell-Clark both tell us about the overlap between the work and non-work domains, but do not tell us how people behave differently along that continuum. Nippert-Eng explains how people create the boundaries through their interaction with people, with the physical

artefacts of either work or home, and their actual behaviour, again indicating regular patterns which position people along the continuum at a given time. This study extends her work through the explanation of the continual process of adjustment which is involved as individuals respond to the on-going demands from both domains.

How and why do individuals make the role transitions identified by Ashforth? From the findings of my study, we now know how individuals in this sample actually use FWAs to achieve their personal level of integration or how they manage the "borderland" between home and work. They do this through a consistent response to fixed demands, and an adaptable response to changing demands. This study shows how the managers engage with the nature of the work and the requirements of the roles within the non-work domain. So it shows how they use flexible working to do their jobs and how flexible working facilitates (or can inhibit) the way they "do" parenthood and/or life at home. Managers in the sample experienced both fixed demands from the work and the non-work domains, and also changing or fluctuating demands. This element of flux highlights a flaw in Ashforth et al's work which was based on an assumption of the stability of roles, with relatively established boundaries and content. However, the reality of these managers' experiences indicated otherwise. The fixed demands required a consistent or routine approach such as leaving the office at a set time on given days of the week, or attendance at a regular weekly meeting. But for many, there were also changing demands, which varied as part of a manager's multi-faceted role and required a more adaptable approach.

Thus this study extended knowledge of the segmentation-integration continuum (and the borderland of border theory) by adding to what is known about how people actually use FWAs to integrate their roles, or their behaviour between the two domains and **why** they make the continual transitions between roles. My study also explains why "flexible working" is sometimes seen as supremely inflexible, when someone observes a "flexible worker" responding to their fixed demands, which is sometimes very evident and public (such as leaving a meeting at a pre-determined time to pick up one's children), but does not see the responses to changing demands, which may not be as public, or are just accepted as a necessary part of the role.

8.4.3 Consistency/adaptability clusters

The third contribution added to Nippert-Eng's (1996) work which highlighted the importance of the direction of the transition between roles or domains. She suggested that the direction of the transition from one domain to another was an important factor in boundary theory, as it may be easier to cross one way rather than the other. For instance, an individual may find it easier to move mentally from home to work, rather than work to home. This study extends this element of boundary theory through deeper understanding of **how and why** individuals enact boundary management in different directions. My work shows how individuals use their FWA to transition in either direction and that this can be a response to both fixed and changing demands. Four distinct clusters emerged among the managerial participants in terms of the type and direction of adaptability, extending understanding of the strategies used by managers to ensure the success of their flexible working arrangement. The four clusters were as follows:

➢ Those with fixed demands from work or home and adaptable towards work domain. This group of managers changed their behaviour in the non-work domain to accommodate emerging demands from the workplace.

➢ Those with fixed demands from work or home and adaptable towards both work and non-work domains. These managers demonstrated similar changes to accommodate new demands from the workplace, but also showed that they would adapt their behaviour in the work domain in order to respond to non-work demands.

➢ Those with no fixed demands resulting in an integrated approach to work and life. These managers had a more holistic approach to their lives, and did not experience the different domains as bounded by time and space. However they still demonstrated a very clear awareness of what constituted work and what they experienced as non-work. Work and non-work were intermingled, in the sense that the managers would plan to spend their time in one domain or the other to meet the overall needs of their lives, rather than as a result of any fixed demands of time or space. But they were alert to the amount of time given over to work responsibilities and ensured they delivered more than their contractual obligations.

> Those who had a consistent approach with no changing demands. This small cluster included those who had a routine approach to work, with very clear demarcations between the two domains.

There were no differences among the four clusters with regard to the type of flexible working pattern, parental status, or the length of the individual's working week.

8.5 Implications for practice

This study provides more information about both work aspects of flexible working and flexible working in the greater context of managers' whole lives. As a result, several implications for practice arise.

8.5.1 Work aspects of flexible working

Many, if not all, managers have a great deal of choice or autonomy over when, where and how they do their jobs, suggesting that they may in fact work flexibly, according to accepted definitions of what this concept means. Such a working pattern often leads to longer hours, just as those with a more traditional working pattern often work beyond their contractual obligations. But flexible working is still sometimes perceived as synonymous with clock-watching or reduced hours, and so ostensibly limits time spent on work, indicating a lack of commitment. This study demonstrates the amount of work managers do regardless of the constraints on their face time and their contractual obligation. So managers working flexibly often do more than their contractual hours and see the greater element of control over when and where (the choice element) as their payoff for those extra hours. They may be reluctant to publicly label their working pattern as flexible if flexible working is actually perceived as "limited working". The language itself may have become an inhibitor in the take-up of formal FWAs and the acknowledgement of informal FWAs and organizations may need to consider how they "brand" their work life policies.

Although the phraseology itself is somewhat problematic, the term "flexible working" is currently enshrined in UK legislation and there are imminent legislative changes and employers may be encouraged to further extend the option of flexible working to all employees. The legal requirement to extend the right to request flexible working

to all parents with children aged 16 or under, will be introduced in April 2009. The findings from this study indicate that employers should address the longer term use of flexible working arrangements as part of their overall approach in the official policies. Many organizations have policies in place which already go beyond the legal requirements, but barriers still exist towards the ongoing success of such policies.

The findings present a greater overall picture than has previously been presented, of the strategies used by managers to make flexible working work. The thesis provides evidence of how individuals can maintain a managerial position while working flexibly in ways that reduce face time and this finding helps to dispel the fallacy that managers cannot work flexibly. Organizations could usefully examine their managerial roles and the working patterns of their managers leading to greater sharing of the successful strategies which are used, thus offering practical support for managers who wish to reduce their face time. Many of the managers in this study had found their own way, and developed their own strategies with little if any guidance, leading to duplication of effort. Managers of flexible workers benefit from a greater knowledge and understanding of flexible working, leading to greater trust in the likelihood of their staff to achieve their objectives. Workshops about flexible working could provide some of this information and guidance.

Organizations should reconsider the career paths which are available to those working flexibly, recognizing the need to understand the uniqueness of each person's FWA. In this way, organizations will be more likely to ensure that those with flexible working patterns, especially those at senior levels, can maintain roles which are commensurate with their skills and experience. As retention of talented and valued staff is often a stated aim of flexible working policies, organizations must ensure that there are subsequent development opportunities for staff who wish to maintain a flexible working arrangement and still progress. For instance, these findings would indicate that flexible working policies are especially useful for parents who feel that they are able to maintain challenging careers whilst attending to demands from the non-work domain. Flexible working is part of a process which is continually adjusted by many individuals as demands from both the work and non-work domains change over time. Organizations can continue to benefit, not just from the initial retention of valued individuals, but also from the skills and expertise which individuals acquire

through ongoing development. One particular issue raised here pertains to internal transfers available for those working reduced hours. The successful implementation of flexible working policies is affected by the ability of those using them to move into new roles within their existing organization. This study has highlighted the variability with which such internal transfers actually happen, and organizations could usefully address this issue. This could be one step towards a more flexible organizational culture.

The findings show that greater delegation occurs in teams where the manager works flexibly and organizations could maximise such a benefit, offering greater development opportunities for team members. Encouraging managers to be more open about their working pattern would enable this to become a managed part of the provision for high potential staff.

8.5.2 Flexible working in the greater context of managers' whole lives

Another issue to arise was the expectation of availability of flexible workers when not physically present in the office. Through the model of consistency and adaptability, organizations can have a greater understanding of the ways people attend to the demands from the work domain. This can lead to more open discussions about the expectations, and allow agreement to be reached over an acceptable level of availability, taking into account the individual's working pattern. This is relevant for people with varying working patterns, but especially so for those who work reduced hours, who may find it particularly stressful if they interpret contact from work on those days as intrusion into their home lives. The organizational aims behind their flexible working policies can be reconsidered in the light of this model. Supporting employees' work life balance is often a stated aim, and these findings suggest that the increased blurring of the boundaries between home and work is not always beneficial to the individuals. Organizations may wish to revisit the expectations which are placed upon those using a FWA. Thus the real challenge to employers is to offer continuing flexibility and re-negotiation of boundaries with individuals on an ongoing basis.

8.6 Limitations of this research

I acknowledge the limitations of the study. I have encountered the difficulty of categorising flexible working patterns which are so often unique to the individual concerned. Numbers in the groups were small, which may reflect the reality of senior managers working flexibly, particularly those without children. The aim was not to generalize, but to increase understanding of the issues experienced by managers with a flexible working pattern. Flexible workers in other roles at lower levels in organizations will not necessarily have the same degree of autonomy as the managers in the sample. Similarly, the family structures of the managers are not representative of the UK as a whole. Although I did not ask specifically about the domestic arrangements of the individuals, it was evident that many of the 28 parents interviewed were in permanent relationships with the parent of their children. Only one father talked about his ex-wife and access arrangements to see his child.

The unit of analysis was the individual, which was an appropriate choice for the research question. However, the managers worked in four different organizations and it is inevitable that their experiences will have reflected the culture of the organization. Support for flexible working, and particularly for those in senior positions working flexibly, may vary not just between colleagues, but also be dependent upon the organizational culture.

Other limitations arise because of the nature of qualitative research. My own experience of working flexibly for many years will have resulted in a level of researcher bias. Equally, it has helped to form my intellectual curiosity about the area, and the emotional engagement which Lofland et al (2006) suggest is necessary for the completion of a research project. I attended to the questions suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) to address the issues of reliability and validity of a qualitative research project.

Through the use of a social constructionist approach I have explored the differing experiences of individuals, paying attention to the individual context and the meanings which have constituted their actions. Social desirability may well have affected the answers given by the respondents, as they may have, consciously or sub-consciously portrayed themselves in a promising light. However there were negative

elements within the discussions and I have presented contrasting and contradictory evidence, in an effort to challenge existing assumptions and to reduce my own bias in the selection of what is to be presented. I conducted the majority of the interviews but some were done by my co-researcher. In those cases the socially constructed reality of the interviewee's experiences of flexible working will have continued through the interviews conducted by her. However, Schwandt (2002:302) points out that "meaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation" and such negotiation can take place through the interaction of the researcher with the text. Through such interaction with the transcripts, the discussions with my co-researcher and the iterative process of analysis and asking new questions of the data, I believe I have adhered to the principles of social constructionism.

8.7 Directions for future research

Given the findings regarding managers working flexibly, future research could examine the work of a wide range of managers, exploring how, when and where this work is done. At the same time their perceptions of flexible working could be explored, to establish if differences exist in the working patterns of those who claim to work flexibly and those who do not. What sort of work do managers do from home or other remote places, such as satellite offices? What sort of work do they do at times other than the standard hours of nine to five thirty? How do these issues fit with their social construction of flexible working?

Parental status was more of a differentiator than gender in this study and future research could expand the scope, allowing a greater comparison between parents and those without children. There were 24 women in this sample and many of those with children talked about how their FWA dovetailed with their partner's, yet there were only ten men in the sample. This may be linked to the discussion on formal and informal flexibility (Holt & Thaulow, 1996; Hall & Atkinson, 2006) as women are more likely to have formal FWAs. It may be possible to design a study which would focus on couples who both work flexibly, accessing them through women with formal FWAs and then speaking to their partners.

Findings on the relationship of flexible working and career remain inconclusive. Future research could investigate the changes which result from organizations offering greater support to internal transfers and promotions to those working flexibly. A longitudinal study would allow better understanding of the real impact of flexible working on career. As several respondents pointed out, they hoped that there would be no negative repercussions with regard to their future career progression, but this would have to be examined over several years.

Given the findings regarding the importance of the supervisory relationship for managers working flexibly, it would be interesting to work with manager/team member dyads. This would enable the research to move beyond the self perceptions of the flexible worker. Similarly a whole team perspective would provide an interesting direction for research.

Summary

This research focused on an exploration of how managers experience flexible working, and presented an overall picture of those experiences which includes the greater context of the managers' whole lives, as well as the work aspects such as the supervisory relationship with team members, issues around promotion, and the personal organization of work. The research extends understanding of how and why managers use flexible working arrangements to manage the boundaries between the work and the non-work domains, attending to both fixed and changing demands.

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview schedule for pilot study

1. **Flexible working**

   - What is your individual flexible working pattern?

   - Tell me about your experiences of working flexibly within EnergyCo?

   - Describe the key benefits you are experiencing from working flexibly.

   - What are the drawbacks?

   - How does this match up with your expectations?

2. **Work-life balance**

   - How do you see the relationship between your current working pattern and your "work-life balance"?

   - How do the significant others in your life (partner, children, boss, colleagues) perceive the effects of your flexible working (on either career or non-work issues)?

3. **Flexible working and career**

   - What effect, if any, is your choice of working flexibly having on your career? Was this discussed in your quarterly/annual performance review?

   - What interventions do EnergyCo make to support your career development whilst working flexibly?

4. **Career**

   - Looking back at your career, what has helped you advance?

   - Looking at the jobs you've held in the past, why did you change and were there any critical steps or changes?

   - Have you faced any particular barriers to progress?

   - How do you see your career unfolding in the foreseeable future?

5. **Demographics** (age, education, sex, marital status, parental status/children under 18 living at home, time since starting to work flexibly; spouse/partner's job)

Appendix 2: Interview schedule for main study

Introduction

- Nature of project, confidentiality, permission to tape

- Please tell me a bit about your current role (*probe: job title, how long in role, how long with company*)

Flexible working

- What is your individual flexible working pattern?

- Tell me about your experiences of working flexibly within ABC co? *(probe: benefits, drawbacks, comparison with expectations, any changes in approach to work, nature of work)*

- What are the issues for you as a manager who works flexibly, with regards to your team?

Flexible working and performance

- How has flexible working affected your performance, if at all? (*probe: quantity, quality, working with colleagues, stress, job satisfaction)*

Work-life balance

- How do you see the relationship between your current working pattern and your work/life balance?

Flexible working and career

- What effect, if any, is your choice of working flexibly having on your career?

- What interventions does ABC co. make to support career development whilst working flexibly?

- How do you see your career unfolding in the foreseeable future?

- Overall, how do you feel about being able to work flexibly?

Demographics - (age, sex, parental status/children under 18 living at home)

Appendix 3: Coding structure

attitudes and feelings		0
Tree Node	angst	
Tree Node	determination	
Tree Node	feeling pressured	
Tree Node	focus	
Tree Node	give and take	
Tree Node	guilt	
Tree Node	resentment	
Tree Node	satisfaction	
Tree Node	in control	
Tree Node	trust	
flexible working patterns		0
Tree Node	3 or 4 days	
Tree Node	changes to fwp	
Tree Node	compressed hours	
Tree Node	informal	
Tree Node	reduced hours	
Tree Node	remote	
Tree Node	staggered hours	
Impact of flexible working		0
Tree Node	benefits	
Tree Node	drawbacks	
Tree Node	mixed impact	
individual focus		0
Tree Node	career	
	Tree Node	commitment
	Tree Node	delay in progression
	Tree Node	future
	Tree Node	maintaining career
	Tree Node	mentor
	Tree Node	no ambition
	Tree Node	own performance measurement
	Tree Node	promotion
	Tree Node	restrictions time & location
	Tree Node	visibility
Tree Node	commuting	
Tree Node	managerial responsibilities	

		Tree Node	communication
			Tree Node – accessibility of staff
			Tree Node – accessibility to staff
		Tree Node	delegation
		Tree Node	different locations
		Tree Node	difficult to manage
		Tree Node	equal treatment for all
		Tree Node	extra to main role
		Tree Node	managing flex workers
		Tree Node	no effect on supervision
		Tree Node	performance review
		Tree Node	scheduling time together
		Tree Node	style of management
Tree Node	maternity returner		
Tree Node	nature of work		
		Tree Node	client facing
		Tree Node	concentration
		Tree Node	global
		Tree Node	informal sharing of info
		Tree Node	long hours
		Tree Node	meetings
		Tree Node	travel demands
		Tree Node	workload
Tree Node	remuneration		
Tree Node	role		
		Tree Node	effect of flex working on role
		Tree Node	expectations of others
		Tree Node	organization of work
Tree Node	stress		
Tree Node	wlb		
		Tree Node	2 way flexibility
			Tree Node – adaptability to business
			Tree Node – adaptability to home and family
			Tree Node – checking emails
			Tree Node – dependency on others
			Tree Node – integrated approach
			Tree Node – lack of flexibility
			Tree Node - wlb give & take
		Tree Node	achieving work life balance
		Tree Node	children's routine

	Tree Node	community work
	Tree Node	home work interface
	Tree Node	household chores
	Tree Node	Me time
	Tree Node	time with children
organization focus		0
Tree Node	co image	
Tree Node	culture	
	Tree Node	women
Tree Node	recruitment	
Tree Node	retention	
Tree Node	support	
	Tree Node	guidance
	Tree Node	technology
	Tree Node	training
	Tree Node	transparency
Tree Node	system	
	Tree Node	allocation of people to projects
	Tree Node	application procedure
people referred to		0
Tree Node	children	
Tree Node	clients	
Tree Node	co-workers	
Tree Node	family	
Tree Node	others	
Tree Node	own managers	
Tree Node	team members	
views about fwa		21
Tree Node	others views	

Appendix 4: Respondents' descriptions of their roles

Interviewee Number	Job role[4]	Amount of time in contract	Parental status
1	My current role is People Management Leader within the private equity group in London and, more specifically now, private equity TS group.	< 4 days	Pre-school
2	I work in a lab-based role, but I do have people reporting to me as well so it's supervisory and it's lab work. I work in what's called the (Alpha) Team, so it could be supporting drug substance development, it could be looking at [excipients ?], it's supporting formulation work and specifically for inhalation compounds.	< 4 days	Pre-school
3	I'm currently on secondment to the Learning & Development team. I'm basically responsible for the technical training for Corporate Finance. So that's a two year secondment. Prior to that, I was pretty much nine years as a professional on the Project Finance team in Corporate Finance, and basically worked with the government generally, providing financial advice on their public/private partnership programmes. In other words, building roads, rail, new schools, new hospitals, but advising the government on those procurements.	< 4 days	Pre-school & primary
4	Effectively my role as department senior manager is quite difficult to explain, but it's predominantly looking after my team. So looking after people issues, looking after recruitment, performance management, overseeing staffing and resourcing, general liaison with other departments, facilities and operations. So kind of practice management, if you like, those sorts of issues.	< 4 days	Pre-school & primary

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[4] Interviewee numbers have been used to preserve confidentiality and where necessary names of departments have been assigned pseudonyms. In this way, it should not be possible to connect a given quote with a particular job role. Some of the job roles are unique and thus would possibly reveal the identity of the participant.

5	I'm a partner. I now do internal risk management. I work 24 hours a week. I spend all that time on risk matters, working with a partner who spends perhaps 10% of his time on risk matters. So I'm the sort of back up. I write all the risk flashes that go round the forensic unit in the UK. I sit on various committees and I carry out training for all the forensic staff in the UK on risk matters.	< 4 days	School
6	My official title is principal advisor and I'm an accountant. I guess the closest description in terms of what people would generally recognise is management consultant, but I do it very much from an accounting perspective.	< 4 days	School
7	I head up a team who run a purification service. And this purification service is for chemists in the therapeutic areas. And we're at the very start of the drug process if you like. So the compounds that we purify don't necessarily become products. So we're very much at the research end of the organization. And so the TA chemists will make what they think are the compounds. And they quite often get side reactions happening so they won't make the compounds clean. And what we do is we clean up the compound so when it goes off for testing it is the pure compound that is being tested and not all the side products as well. And basically that's where I fit in. So I run that team that provides this service.	< 4 days	School
8	I'm Head of (Beta department) so I head a small team. It involves leading the team; making sure that the work gets done; that we need to do the audits; the training of whatever the work it is that we're doing; liaising with Management of the departments that we audit to make sure that what we're doing is in line with their requirements and sort of general (Beta) research to development activities and being in involved in them and influencing the quality of what goes on in the processes of the work.	< 4 days	School
9	I'm a Senior Manager in the (Gamma) team based here in (location A). We're a team of about sixteen people based across three offices. My role is, effectively, a Business Development Manager. I'm responsible for generating new work and feeding into the sales teams within (location A, B and C) offices.	< 4 days	School

10	I'm a financial analyst in the (Theta) finance group. So I look after a wide range of different parts of the business. I'm looking after their budgets and their forecasts and their monthly reporting.	100%	Pre-school
11	my group is an outward facing customer service group, that do have actual defined clinical trial deliverables. We actually work, so where this is (Theta), we are actually working for our country operation (Iota). I lead the group, it's a bit of an experimental pilot group to try and take on lean working principles.	100%	Pre-school
12	They call me the Business Manager. As a business manager, the throwaway version of the job is I'm the MD's sidekick, but it means that I take care of business planning, involving internal communications and I suppose that I'm the sounding board for the MD, giving her ideas and thoughts and responses and so on and so forth.	100%	Pre-school
13	I run a team of, well, by the end of this year there'll be ten people in it. At the moment it's seven. And we are responsible for the execution risk on securitisations, holding cells and acquisitions out of our, in and out of our mortgage companies. So, the ultimate, the ultimate responsibility lies with me, but I have a team of these people who do transactions on a daily basis.	100%	Pre-school
14	I work in the (Kappa) division, which is the division which looks after the big, well looks after the hardware partners. And our job as a division is to work with those hardware companies to pre-install as much software as we can on machines before it goes out of the door really. So I look after (Customer X), so I'm the group manager for the team that looks after (Customer X).	100%	Pre-school & primary
15	I'm the Division CAO and that's kind of for finance that's really like a business manager role so I look after all the staffing initiatives recruitment any training development as well as looking after the division strategy budgets hiring approval … you know if any spends I would review and approve.	100%	Pre-school & primary

16	I'm a sort of professional development manager. It doesn't mean I'm professional, it means I manage professionals so I'm a professional development manager. It's purely pay and rations, pastoral care, it's line management so I look after their career development, making sure I have the right skills to service customer's requirements	100%	School
17	I'm Senior Vice President. I look after the (Lambda) division which is about a quarter of the head count in Europe. My current team is about seventy five. We're at four different locations one in the Netherlands and three in the UK as well at head office here, so it's kind of dispersed.	100%	School
18	I am the Group Manager for the (Sigma) Partners. So in my team are a set of Partner Account Managers managing the business relationship with, pro-actively, around about a dozen of our (Sigma) Partners.	100%	School
19	I head up an internal HR service centre where colleagues and managers phone up to ask for policy advice, general queries and all the transactional stuff that goes behind the employee life cycle, so maternity, leavers, joiners, promotions, all of that piece is done within my department now.	100%	No children
20	I run a specialist sales team that looks after certain types of products. So about 70% of our enterprise revenue goes across my desk, as it were.	100%	No children
21	I'm a therapeutic area head in a part of the organization called (Epsilon), as part of a wider group called Safety and Risk Management. And my therapeutic area involves genitourinary medicine, sexual health, herpetology and gastroenterology. My role essentially involves managing a group of people, fifteen people, based in (three offices in the UK, Italy and the US), within my group. And we prepare a series of clinical summary documents throughout the development continuum from investigator's brochures through to registration documents, clinical overviews, clinical expert reports, safety summaries, aggregates reports, safety update reports for regulatory submission.	100%	No children

22	There's four FTE's reporting into me, plus I have an intern. Really what we do is we kind of support the whole of (the organization), both the sales team in terms of helping them gain revenue through helping them with data for their pitches and arguments as to why advertisers should advertise with (the organization). Then on the other side just generally looking at research amongst customers, consumers, about what they think of our products, competitive reviews.	100%	No children
23	I'm a site head for safety and risk management and indirectly am part of a group of about forty five people and they're involved in a spectrum of activities from quality control to authoring written documents through to strategy for safety of (new product) development.	100%	No children
24	I'm a Professional Development Manager, which essentially means I manage a team inside the consultant group and my teams focus on a particular set of technologies, and they're all consultants. I have 25 consultants who work for me and they work all round the country. My role specifically is responsible as their line manager managing their careers, doing their reviews.	100%	No children
25	My role is to run a strategy team within the fixed income area and what that means is that we tend to look at market positioning, market share, competitors, market entry etc. So it's almost an advisory group to the senior management team within the division.	4 days +	Pre-school
26	I work in the (Gamma) Department in the (location A) office. I'm a Senior Manager, I've been a Senior Manager for four years now. I'm client-facing, principally on the Expert Witness side of (Gamma), so a lot of profit claims, that sort of thing.	4 days +	Pre-school
27	My role is to run a strategy team within the fixed income area and what that means is that we tend to look at market positioning, market share, competitors, market entry etc. So it's almost an advisory group to the senior management team within the division.	4 days +	Pre-school
28	I work in Restructuring. So, I'm dealing with companies that are often in stressed financial positions, or distressed financial positions. They can be under a lot of pressure from the parent company or their lenders or the financial markets. What I do is I generally work on programmes helping them to restructure their cost base.	4 days +	Pre-school

29	I'm Procurement Manager here, in my case so responsible for all of our indirect spend out of the UK.	4 days +	Pre-school
30	I'm the Head of (Upsilon) which is a group of about 23 people in pharmaceutical sciences. And our group pulls together the quality aspects of all regulatory submissions for clinical trials and for new drug applications.	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
31	I'm a research biologist. I've got a team of three direct reports and one of those has got reports as well, so I've got a team of four. I'm more substantially in the office role than the lab now and I'm still expected to understand the science within my group.	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
32	I'm a partner. I've been a partner for eleven years and I recently moved into a new practice area, which is (Gamma). (Gamma) accounting has two main sides to it. One is fraud investigations, and the other is more around litigation support, it's called expert witness, which is one element of it, being an expert accountant in litigation.

Within expert witness I lead the (Gamma) transaction services team, which supports our transaction services colleagues in the legal aspects of deals. I will sit as an independent expert accountant to decide the dispute. So that is the day job, I guess.

I have elements of my old job which was as a partner in audits, very much focused on retail. So I am lead partner for three or, three I think now, three retail organizations where we are not auditors and we sell a number of other services and I co-ordinate how our relationships with those companies.

I still have a role on a major, one of our biggest global accounts which is (customer B) Where I have one, now long running project, that isn't finished and I shall see it through to its end and potentially get involved in another one. It doesn't take a huge amount of time but it's another thing I do.

I run a global consumer markets group within the whole of (Gamma), so not just my (Gamma) TS area. It's across the breadth of (Gamma) services, focusing on consumer markets and I am about to take a position on the board of (Gamma) for the merged UK German practice, and I try to do all of that in a four and a half day week. | 4 days + | Pre-school & primary |

33	I'm a member of the (Omega) Leadership Team in (Location D) so I head up a group of around 25 chemists, 25 to 30 (scientists), looking after a therapeutic area, anti-virals therapeutic area. And as part of the leadership team I also have responsibility along with my other colleagues on the team for running the department, the (Omega) department.	4 days +	Pre-school & primary
34	(I'm part of the) management team in Fixed Income on the day to day side reporting into a Managing Director who is CAO as well. And the bulk of my job really involves understanding and co-ordinating our plan around our key clients. So it's, up until now, has been broadly an internal role, in terms of organising internal reviews with the teams who cover the accounts, making sure we have proper business plan around the accounts. But also more and more in terms of the profit. Trying to work towards the working out the real profitability of covering the key accounts. And then also it would be going out and actually conducting independent reviews with clients on our relationship.	4 days +	School

Appendix 5: Journal article