Work-life Performance: A Male Professional Perspective on Work-life Balance

Priscila Pereira

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Oxford Brookes University for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2016

Abstract

The work-life balance (WLB) debate began as a gender issue, from the need to increase and retain female participation in the labour market alongside their caring and domestic responsibilities whilst also addressing equality issues between men and women at work. After decades of studies on women, researchers and practitioners began to understand that gender equality cannot be attained until men are also included in the debate. This direction of the literature has been influenced by the ideology that gender equality starts from a fair share of responsibilities between men and women at home. Consequently, this study is aimed at contributing to WLB body of knowledge from the male perspective.

Aligned with the critical realist approach, 40 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with professionals in engineering and consultancy backgrounds with the interview questions guided by existing WLB theoretical understanding. Three areas of investigation were proposed: firstly, the exploration of individuals' thoughts on paid work and the rest of life; secondly, investigations of events which show how individuals reconcile work and the rest of life in practice; and thirdly, a search for information on gender and organisational culture.

In conclusion the research suggests that there is a gap between professional males' WLB thoughts, feelings and actual behaviours. Most thoughts were aligned with modern dynamics of family roles and expectations but behaviours were still influenced by some ingrained traditional gender beliefs. This mismatch between males' thoughts and their behaviours caused an imbalance in terms of allocation of their resources to different domains. This often triggered feelings of regret afterwards when reflecting on their actual priorities in life. The ingrained traditional gender beliefs and prioritisation of paid work seemed to be more associated with the intergenerational transmission of masculinity and personal characteristics than demands from gendered organisations. Consequently, this study suggests that males' personal beliefs, personalities and family set-ups are the foundations which promote meaningful changes toward better WLB, and not organisational culture.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who supported and accompanied me in this incredible journey who I would like to thank. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the sponsorship and support received by the organisation within which this study was carried out. Thank you to all respondents who allocated time from their busy work schedules to contribute to this research with their extraordinary ideas and experiences.

Thank you to my supervisors who, combined, provided me with the best support I could ever ask for. Simonetta Manfredi, with her incredible knowledge and experience on gender and WLB, was able to offer me great insights in terms of content and the literature review. Judie Gannon, a very experienced supervisor and researcher, literally held my hand through times when I lacked confidence: she was hugely supportive while I was coping with the stress of trying to manage a PhD and full-time employment (including three promotions) plus having my first child and encountering health issues. Judie was probably the person who most believed in my ability to conclude this thesis and I can honestly say that without her it could not have been completed.

To family and friends in Brazil and in the UK who have always been so proud of my achievements. To Beryl Law who has given her time to help with childcare whilst I was working hard on the last stages of this thesis. And finally, to my daughter Sophia Maria Pereira-Law, who, without knowing, inspires me every day to be a role model and have the determination to finish this PhD.

List of Figures and Tables

List of Abbreviations and Key Terms

CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
COR	Conservation of Resources
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PSFs	Professional Service Firms
Rest of life	Life domains excluding paid work. This might vary from respondent to respondent (ie. the parenting domain will not exist for non-fathers)
Role Identity	Most important social identity in life.
RQ	Research Question
Spheres	Domains in life including paid work
TUC	Trades Union Congress
Unpaid work	Household duties and childcare
WLB	Work-life balance
Work	Paid work and employment

Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0 Rationale

In the twenty-first century, the capacity of individuals to balance the demands of their daily lives with their obligations to the workplace has become a burning issue, and not only for employers and employees. Work-life balance (WLB), as it has become known, has increasingly attracted the attention of academics and governments (Crompton *et al*., 2007; Gregory and Milner, 2009; Rapoport *et al*., 2002). As reflected in national and international media, the term "work-life balance" has become common in the UK and is now widely used. Nevertheless, this terminology has already been challenged as misleading. This may portray work as separate from other aspects of life and vice versa (Lewis *et al*., 2007). The main purpose of the current WLB debate, however, is to resolve the segregation between work and the rest of life, and to find ways by which men and women may harmonise and integrate their work with other aspects of their lives (Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Rapoport *et al*., 2002).

Reviewing the evolution of this discussion, the focus of the WLB debate originated mainly from a need to increase female participation in the labour market alongside their caring and domestic responsibilities, at a time when there was a shortage of labour in industrialised countries (Crompton *et al*., 2007). The debate progressed by addressing the need to retain and further increase women's employment whilst addressing equality issues between men and women as a key strategy to sustain this demographic change in the labour market (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Dench *et al*., 2002; Doherty, 2004). This aspect of the literature was followed by the ideal of "shared parenting" where researchers agreed that gender equality (work and home) can only be attained by shifting males' mindsets towards taking their fair share of domestic and caring responsibilities (Gambles *et al*., 2006; Haas and Hwang, 2007; Klinth, 2008; Gatrell, *et al*., 2012). In the workplace, women have used part-time and low-skilled jobs as strategies to stay in employment whilst caring for their families, which has affected further inequality between men and women at work, i.e. producing the pay gap (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Dench *et al*., 2002; Doherty, 2004). At home, men have struggled to adjust to the dual-earner household

model by not taking their fair share of caring and domestic responsibilities (Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell *et al*., 2012; Haas and Hwang, 2007). This has caused stress and conflict in both domains and for both genders (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Murphy and Doherty, 2011). There is also a strong link between poor work-life balance and stress, making this a real issue for men, women, organisations and government in modern society and it prompts the question as to whether current efforts, ways of working, organisational cultures and policy responses are sufficiently robust to promote a sustainable way forward in respect of WLB (Gambles *et al*., 2006).

Indeed, there are gaps in the WLB literature which need to be addressed. Firstly, although there is a solid body of research investigating WLB for heterosexual white collar employees (Lewis *et al*., 2007), there is a knowledge gap between the female and the male perspectives; men's views have been under-represented as a group (Haas and Hwang, 2008). The implication of this research deficit is the limited knowledge available on the male perspective to support the "shared parenting" ideology which has been seen as one of the key answers to the gender equality issues at work and at home (Haas *et al*., 2000; Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell *et al*., 2012). Secondly, although awareness and offerings of WLB provisions have mostly increased throughout the years, the take-ups of such policies have decreased (Smeaton *et al*., 2014). Particularly from the male perspective, research on fatherhood shows a gap between a strong willingness from men to get more involved with their children and what actually happens in practice (Dermott, 2008; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Miller, 2011; Gatrell *et al*., 2011).

Thus, the WLB *gender* debate has become the most featured topic in this field. For example, the debate concerning WLB harmonisation between men and women was the main topic of discussion at an international conference on men and WLB held in Brussels in February 2007. This conference was set up to discuss the final phase of the European project concerning "the role of fathers and men in the reconciliation between private and professional lives". This project was financed by the gender equality agenda of the European Commission, with particular attention at European level to developing measures

for increasing birth rates. Gaborit's (2007) revision of this European project emphasised the need for further research on WLB from a father's perspective, and to address issues around structural gender stereotypes at institutional levels.

Aboim (2010) highlights that gender inequality discourses played in an important role in the gender arena by allowing new forms of masculinity. This happened by neutralising practices like childcare which was previously considered feminine. Aboim also states that by focusing on gender inequality, there is a risk of reinforcing the gender order where society ends up praising fathers who take family leave, where it should be the norm like it is for mothers. Equally, some gender studies have investigated WLB and examined men with the assumption that gender equality starts at home, following the well-worn idea that female professionals are only able to pursue their careers as result of a balanced division of unpaid work between both genders (Ferrant and Keiko, 2015; Haas, *et al*. 2000; Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Gatrell *et al*., 2012). Other studies have also focused on the changing dynamics of fatherhood and the breadwinner role (Dermott, 2006; Dermott, 2008; Gatrell *et al*, 2011; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Huffman *et al*., 2014; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Miller, 2011).

By understanding the male perspective and following the progression of fatherhood, policymakers can adjust their efforts towards promoting WLB and the ideal of shared responsibilities which includes parenting. For example, if the issue is more related to culture, public and private investments can keep the focus on improving legislative framework and WLB awareness campaigns for businesses. However, if the resistance is more from the individuals' perspective, investments and efforts need to be adjusted in order to include awareness campaigns targeting men to embrace the ideology of shared responsibilities between both genders (Klinth, 2008). This is also particularly important where, in some cases, male workers are expected to combine paid work and caring for elderly parents (Campbell and Carroll, 2007; Smeaton *et al*., 2014).

As a result, this research will contribute to knowledge concerning these gaps by exploring consistencies and inconsistencies between what professional male

respondents have to say, how they feel and what they actually do about their WLB. The sample includes a population of female professionals to enable consideration between both genders and further critical scrutiny of the research context. The focus on the professional environment was an interesting context to use in this research for two reasons. Firstly, the meaning of paid work for professionals concerns life fulfilment and might not limited by financial provisioning (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Secondly, the challenges of professional environments can hinder WLB participation due to their long working hours (Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008) and/or requirement for mobility in cases of international business services (Harhill, 2003; Makela and Suutari, 2015; Saarenpaa, 2015; Stahl and Bjorkman, 2006).

1.1 Aims and Objectives

Research question

How do male professionals think, behave and feel about WLB?

Research aim

In order to answer the research question above and to contribute to knowledge, the following aim was identified:

"To contribute new knowledge to the WLB debate, specifically on male professionals' perspectives, and to develop a practical contribution by identifying approaches supporting employees in achieving WLB".

Objectives

In order to achieve the research aim, the following objectives were developed:

MPhil Stage

1. To critically review and evaluate the existing empirical literature on WLB, identifying gender theories associated with WLB and specific evidence of WLB for professionals, particularly in the international business services environment.
2. To conduct primary research with male and female professionals within the business services environment to investigate their perspectives and WLB events.

3. To contribute new knowledge to the WLB debate on male professionals' perspectives and experiences. There are two main perspectives to the contribution to knowledge for this research: academic and practical. The academic contribution will emerge from two gaps in the literature: the first concerns the gap between the body of knowledge concerning WLB for men when compared to the robust literature on WLB for women; the second concerns understanding the gap between what respondents say about WLB and how they reconcile this issue in terms of what they do about it. The practical contribution will be focused upon helping individuals and organisations to understand professionals' perspectives and approaches which might support their practice of WLB.

1.2 Overview and Structure

This research has been organised into six main chapters as explained below.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) outlines the rationale for the research and the gaps within the existing literature whilst positioning the desired contribution to knowledge. This chapter also introduces the research question and the aim and objectives to be met in order to answer the research question. Lastly, it presents the context of this inquiry in connection with its limitations which is necessary to achieve transferability.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) summarises the literature which supports the research design. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section covers the discourse of the WLB debate, providing a foundation for understanding the gender aspect of the topic and how it became the central feature of the debate. This section also outlines different WLB theories explaining the WLB interface and how individuals fundamentally reconcile and manage work and life outside work. The second section focuses on men and underlines existing knowledge on WLB from the male perceptive which is the main purpose of this research. It starts by providing insights on masculinity and male gender roles. Then it moves onto theories related to fatherhood and fathering experiences in the contemporary world. Lastly, it highlights

intergenerational influence and male gendered continuity. The third and last section outlines existing knowledge which facilitates the understanding of WLB from an employment perspective and organisations' influences on the application of WLB. This section starts by capturing the concept of gender in organisations and male-dominated work cultures, policy response, then it covers WLB provisions, benefits and challenges of WLB practice for organisations, WLB management roles, and lastly it highlights the career mobility aspect of the international professional environment and the impact on WLB.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) explains and justifies the appropriateness of the philosophical position of this research study as critical realism in order to answer the research question (Willig *et al*., 2013). It also highlights the reasons for using the semi-structured interview as a method in alignment with the theory-driven critical realist interview practices whilst adopting the critical scrutiny technique from the realist ethnographic interview approach as suggested by Smith and Elger (2013). The chapter also outlines other options selected from appropriate social science methods to collect and analyse the data in order to meet scientific criteria, such as Kvale's seven steps to interview research (Kvale, 1996), framework analysis by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) and evaluation and reflexivity activities in qualitative research (Spencer et al., 2003, Symon and Cassell, 2012). Finally, this chapter covers details concerning the benefits and implications of conducting this study as a practitioner-researcher, particularly in terms of access, but equally it highlights the implications that this type of research can have for ethical matters (confidentiality and sensitivity), bias (independence) and its credibility and required measures (Kvale, 1996; Spencer et al., 2003).

Chapter 4 (Findings) describes the findings of primary data collected from semi-structured interviews: this data is presented through a thematic framework. Several quotations have been used to illustrate the explanations of themes and sub-themes. The framework uses 14 themes and 56 sub-themes structured into three main areas of investigation. The first concerns the findings on individuals' perspectives and meanings in relation to their paid work and also to their life

outside work. The second concerns the findings about personal information in relation to the actual experiences (events) and how individuals reconcile and balance work and life outside work, including their preferences. The third area relates to findings on WLB experiences related to employment. Thus themes were discussed using four dimensions: 1. positive sub-themes; 2. negative sub-themes; 3. Female considerations; and 4. inconsistencies.

Chapter 5 (Analysis) uses the above proposed framework to examine the findings in relation to the existing WLB literature. First, it highlights the contribution to knowledge where this study has supported existing literature or areas in which insights on WLB from the male perspective have been expanded. Second, it outlines some differences in knowledge between this study and existing ones. Third, it enlightens the reader to gaps in the analysis; this feeds into opportunities for exploration based on further research problems specific to each theme.

Chapter 6 (Conclusions and Recommendations) summarises the answer to the original research question whilst highlighting the contributions to knowledge from academic and practical perspectives. This chapter also specifies potential areas for further exploration which might help to address additional gaps in this field of study. Lastly, it reflects upon the limitations of this study and a short research journey which must be taken into account when considering the knowledge contribution.

1.3 The Research Context and Limitations

This research focuses on WLB from the male perspective. This means that most of the design has taken a person-centred and gendered approach towards WLB. For example, the research explores how male respondents have experienced WLB during their life course, and not only in the context of their current employer. Person-centred approaches like identity roles (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011; Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Vaillant, 2012), boundary management and reconciliation theories are explored (Ashford *et al*., 2000, Bagger, 2014; Clark, 200; Kossek *et al*., 2012). This is not to say that this inquiry has not taken into consideration the organisational perspective. In fact,

most gender studies on WLB have examined the gendered organisation and its impact on women and some have also focused on men. This is due to the history of the gender order which influences the division and dynamics of paid and unpaid work (Acker, 1990; Alvesson and Billing, 2009; Gheradi and Poggio, 2001; Kumra *et al.*, 2014; Mills, 2002). In general, organisational studies have taken a more gender-neutral approach (Mills, 2002) which undermines the influence of gender on organisational practices (Acker, 1990; Alvesson and Billing, 2009). Although gender theorists from the male perspective have agreed that notions of masculinity are in transition, they also argue that male hegemony is still the case (Aboim, 2010; Huffman *et al.*, Kumra *et al.*, 2014; Miller, 2011). This gender hierarchy still places men at the centre which makes the understanding of gender relations a critical path towards promoting change in organisations (Crawford and Mills, 2011). In other words, as entities, organisations might promote enlightened WLB policies, however, the practices adopted will be shaped by their gendered culture. Miller (2011) provides useful insights on how men and women as individuals are shaping the world of paid and unpaid work by the feminisation of paid work and masculinisation of the household. In this context the organisational perspective is addressed but the analytical focus remains on the respondents which were encouraged to share important WLB accounts from any time or place in their lives.

Furthermore considering the hegemonic impact of masculinity on WLB, a male dominated organisation was selected to recruit respondents from. All respondents were selected from the same organisation to secure understanding of a wider culture influencing their experience with WLB. Otherwise it would be difficult to explore how much gendered experiences where mostly originated by individuals' family-set ups and beliefs usually transmitted over generations (Bjornholt, 2010) or by the gendered organisation (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). This is another reason why several WLB theorists emphasise the importance of increasing WLB studies on men (Burnett *et al.*, 2012; Gatrell *et al.* 2012; Haas and Hwang, 2008; Lewis and Humbert, 2010) which have been historically focused on working mothers (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012; Lewis *et al.*, 2007; Murphy and Doherty, 2011).

The researcher was also formerly a HR practitioner in this organisation. Although the practitioner-researcher position posed several benefits in terms of access like easier access and existing rapport with potential respondents, it also presented several challenges. For example, power relations between the interviewee and interviewer (Kvale, 1996), confidentiality (Tietze, 2012) and confusion with the identity work during the interviews (Cassell, 2005). However, due to the HR nature of her role, the researcher felt that individuals tended to see Human Resources as a safe function to confide in and her existing rapport facilitated individuals' ability to feel open to discuss personal matters related to WLB. This proved to be the case with the data generated from the interviews which was rich in detail and sensitivity. In this case direct quotations from the interviews and contextual explanations needed to be carefully selected to protect individuals' identities. Furthermore, reflexivity was a critical part of the research design to ensure issues around practitioner bias were monitored (Saunders, 2012).

The organisation in question is an engineering and management consulting firm with a gender split of 70 percent male and 30 percent female which matched nicely with the research design. The organisation mostly fits with professional service firms (PSFs) structure (Boxall and Steeneveld, 1999). These differ from a classic corporate hierarchy, in terms of control and client management which are shared by senior members and decision making is usually done by committee and consensus whilst more junior staff concentrate on delivering more routine tasks (Boxall and Steeneveld, 1999). Typically in PSFs career grades are usually well-defined with the ultimate goal of becoming a partner (Boxall and Steeneveld, 1999). Perhaps this was a key difference from the organisation where the respondents were recruited from. Unlike accountancy and law firms for example, this engineering and management consulting firm was a listed company located in Northern Europe with a board of directors reporting to the shareholders who were not involved with the organisation. The differences between engineering and management consultants were not significant as consulting was the core activity within both areas. However, work autonomy between the diverse career levels were different. More senior grades held a great level of autonomy and junior staff had this flexibility moderated.

This includes flexibility around time and place to work. The support functions also took part in this study. As the focus was on male professionals, the sample was not analysed separately apart from gender. The sample provided a variety of age groups, seniority, career levels and gender.

Female respondents were also part of the sample in order secure gender insights related to what findings could be particular to the male and female perspectives. Equally, findings associated with a specific classification were reported accordingly. Respondents from this study operated in an international context which made work mobility and operating within different time zones (Gambles et al., 2006) interesting features to explore in connection with WLB. The company grew by acquisition and most business units were still operating in silos. However, the majority of people processes and staff demographics were similar amongst the offices, this includes the male dominated environment with the 70/30 gender split. Although not intentional, all respondents were heterosexuals. They were also the main breadwinners in their households. This provided useful insights on more traditional forms of masculinity and intergenerational influence.

Lastly, in terms of transferability this research provides insights for individuals, practitioners and academics. However, such transferability must be analysed in the context of this research. This includes a few remarks. First, it is important to consider that the sample was made of heterosexual professionals in a male dominated environment who also had a certain level of autonomy at work. Second, the study took a person-centred approach which focuses on individuals' views and accountabilities instead of the organisational perspective. In other words, the research design *focused on* how much individuals dealt with flexibility and permeability between work and life domains and not how much their employers influenced their perceptions of boundary management and control. Third, as a practitioner-researcher inquiry, reflexivity becomes an integral part of the credibility of the research and also contribution to knowledge. Understanding the deployed reflexivity interventions, identity work as a researcher and the research journey itself, will enable readers to position the findings within the research as a whole. Fourth, the research took nine years to

be completed with gap during the data collection stage when the researcher became a mother for the first time. Not only the researcher's identity changed during these years but also the existing literature had evolved. More studies on WLB for men became available. Key transformations in the legislative framework, like shared maternity leave for example, also evolved during this period. These changes pose a challenge to the need for a generic research question and gives insights to more specific features. Equally, more recent studies also agreed that the gap between the understanding of WLB for men and women is so great that it will take a great deal of focus to catch-up (Burnett *et al*., 2012; Gatrell *et al*., 2012). Furthermore the legislative improvements are very much at the early stage in the UK. Whilst Sweden embarked on a strong public campaign, to date such an approach has not been adopted in the UK, thus it will take decades for a cultural shift to happen and enable meaningful changes (Klinth, 2008).

1.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the rationale for this research, its purpose and potential contribution to knowledge. It was reviewed as outlined below.

Women's requirement to enter the labour market has driven the debate of WLB as one of the key aspects of the equality agenda for women at work and at home (Crompton et al., 2007, Doherty, 2004; Haas *et al*, 2000;). There is recognition in the literature of the need for men's fair share of caring and domestic work (equality at home) as the key for gender equality at work (Haas *et al*., 2000; Burnett et al., 2010). However, there is a need to expand the knowledge of WLB from the male perspective to support this work and home shared ideology (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Ferrant and Keiko, 2015; Haas and Hwang, 2007; Gambles, 2006; Gatrell *et al*., 2012; Klinth, 2008). Another gap in the literature concerns the increase of WLB offerings compared with the decrease of take-up by individuals (Smeaton *et al*., 2014). This is particularly the case for men and emphasises the mismatch between men's willingness to be more involved at home and what actually happens in practice (Miller, 2011).

The potential contribution to knowledge refers to these gaps by offering an exploration of the underlying male professionals' views, motives and actions towards WLB whilst adopting a methodology which supports further examination of the consistencies and inconsistencies between what they say and what they do. This chapter also outlined how the research question, aim and objectives focus on dealing with these two gaps mentioned above. Furthermore, a structure was presented, mapping out the journey from gathering insights related to the research problems to potential development of theories and understanding concerning them. Lastly, the chapter introduced the research context and potential limitations which need be considered when analysing transferability. The next chapter outlines the literature on WLB which was used as basis for this investigation.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter aims to review the existing literature on Work-life Balance that is relevant to the scope of this study. The WLB literature is vast, however three main sections were identified and presented in this chapter which are aligned with the research question. The first section is aimed at understating the evolution of the WLB debate and how WLB became a gender equality issue. This section also gives the background of WLB theories in an attempt to explain the interface and reconciliation of work and rest of life from the individuals' perspectives. The second section provides the foundation to this study by covering the male aspect of WLB. This includes relevant studies around masculinity, fatherhood including fathering roles and gendered intergenerational influence. The last section aims to review WLB literature from the organisation's perspective and how employers might hinder or support WLB. This section starts by providing a background on gender in organisations and how it might impact on the practice of WLB. It then covers the benefits and implications of WLB for organisations, policy responses, WLB management roles and peer pressure. Lastly, it outlines work mobility as a specific characteristic of the international professional environment which impacts on WLB.

2.1 The WLB Debate and Gender

The overall WLB literature concerning gender has two main schools of thought. The first school of thought believes that you are unable to understand the process of WLB with a gender blind approach as it influences how work and life are organised (Gambles *et al.*, 2006; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012; Lewis *et al.*, 2007). The second school of thought highlights the implications of gendered research due to its contributions being limited to traditional family structures, which are changing (Ozbilgin, et al., 2011; Casper, et al., 2007) and reinforcement of gender norms (Aboim, 2010). This research rests with the gendered school of thought, not because it does not appreciate the implications of gender studies, but to attempt to address the gap between the robust body of research on WLB for women and the under-represented body of research on WLB for men. Consequently, the next sections will outline some gender

historical and cultural changes which have influenced how families and work have been organised. Equally, at the end of this section, WLB person-centred debates are outlined in terms of the interface and reconciliation theories explaining the process of balancing and managing work and rest of life. This literature provides insights on individuals' preferences and the application of WLB.

2.1.0 Paid work transformation: women's participation in the labour market

The last century witnessed a series of marked changes in the dynamics of work and family life. Particularly, the increasing participation of women in the employment market began over time to have a weakening impact on the barriers between work and personal spheres (Crompton *et al*., 2007). These changes have influenced the WLB literature focus, starting by addressing WLB for working mothers to more recently studies focusing mainly on WLB for middle-class working heterosexual parent couples (Gatrell *et al*., 2012). This direction in the literature left a gap in terms of studying fathers, impoverished parents (Gatrell *et al*., 2012) and non-traditional families and homosexual parents (Casper et al., 2007; Ozbilgin *et al*., 2011).

In order to understand the evolution of the WLB debate and its gaps, this section summarises three major phases of social/industrial change which have been argued to contribute to this profound shift in the organisation of paid and unpaid work and the debate on WLB (Brannen and Lewis, 2000; Brough *et al*., 2008; Burchell, 2006; Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Crompton *et al*., 2007;; Dench *et al*., 2002; Doherty, 2004; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Gatrell *et al*., 2012; Haas and Hwang, 2007; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Hogarth *et al*., 2003; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012; Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010). It will then go on to discuss each phase in turn in relation to the gender debate of WLB.

First phase- Industrial Revolution and the breadwinner model

Brough et al. (2008) observe that before the Industrial Revolution, the domains of work, rest, and recreation were clearly separated, mainly since the need to accommodate seasonal demands in terms of work limited the working life to a

day and night cycle. At the onset of the Industrial Revolution, however, particularly because of the introduction of heavy machinery, industries were driven to increase working hours in order to achieve better productivity (Brough *et al.*, 2008). As a result, work intensification became the first WLB issue, ever increasing demands for production triggered a conflict between serving the needs of organisations for profits, whilst meeting the needs of employees to achieve a better work–life balance (Hogarth et al., 2003). Crompton and Lyonette (2006) outlined that an important social factor in this phase of the Industrial Revolution was that while it obliged workers, mainly male, to commit to long working hours, it offered no provision for childcare. This factor skewed workers towards the single 'breadwinner' model, men were obliged to work to earn money while women were obliged to stay at home with the children (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006).

Second phase - Women "enter and stay" in the labour market (replacing men during the World War II followed by deindustrialisation and increased demand for labour within the service industry)

At the onset of World War II however, there was a significant shift in this predominantly male model of employment to one co-opting women to work in the manufacturing industries in place of enlisted male workers (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). It should be noted that even during this phase the need to reconcile work and life outside work started to become an issue for women, and has remained so (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Haas *et al.*, 2000). However, whilst feminist debates have since then always argued for acknowledgement of childcare and domestic labour in supporting the work force, a second-wave of post 1960's feminism also fought for female equality in paid work (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006).

In this second major phase, the profile of the workforce was transformed as a result of deindustrialisation and a shift from manufacturing to service industry. This shift led to high levels of male unemployment in manufacturing, whilst women were increasingly drawn into paid work in the service sector (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). As a consequence, dual-earning couples became the norm for many families across Europe (Crompton *et al.*, 2007). The ONS (2016)

reports 69.1% of the female population as workers in the UK compared to 79.2% of the male population.

Crompton et al. (2007) highlight the fact that governments encouraged female employment in order to minimise family poverty and to accommodate the rising costs of the welfare state. Although this drive to engage women in the workplace included those with small children, there was little concomitant support for childcare, even though women needed to work in order to supplement the family income (Doherty, 2004). Thus a trend in female employment began to emerge in the UK, for child-bearing women to leave full-time employment and instead to pursue part-time or irregular employment so that they could manage both, work and childcare (Burchell, 2006; Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010). This approach to combine motherhood and employment is still very popular amongst females. The table below shows that in the second quarter of 2015, 1,149 thousands of women were working school "term time" when compared to 233 thousands of men. Childcare has indeed limited women's employment choices.

Table 2.1.0 Flexible Working pattern by gender- ONS

People in employment with a flexible working pattern by gender (April to June 2015). In thousands

	UK, not seasonally adjusted	
	Men	Women
Flexible working hours	1,409	1,456
Annualised hours contract	714	597
Term time working	233	1,149
Job Share	28	116
Nine day fortnight	39	34
Four and a half day week	116	59
Zero-hours contract	339	405
On call working	427	216
Total	3,305	4,032

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey

This increasing number of female part-time workers became one of the main drivers for gender inequality at work in the UK (Burchell, 2006; Dench et al., 2002; Doherty, 2004; Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010). Although part-time work

had become a very popular way for female workers to reconcile work and family life, this in turn became a concern. Part-time work began to be promoted as an ideal solution for women to manage work and family, whilst ignoring that their life time earnings would be much lower than men's as a result (Burchell, 2006; Doherty, 2004; Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010).

Third phase - from late 1960's women's liberation movement with a focus on gender equality at work to family-friendly strategies with focus on equality at home

Haas et al. (2000) state how social and economic reforms have been influenced by the women's liberation movement since the late 1960's not only demanding gender equality but also putting childcare on the agenda as one of the key issues. Unfortunately, in the UK, the childcare and equality agendas were not linked until late 1997 causing major delays to the improvement of WLB for women and gender equality particularly when compared to other countries (Brannen and Lewis, 2000). For example, Australia with the appointment of the Labour party in 1972, after 23 years of the Conservatives in power, focused on social reforms putting women's interests and needs at the forefront of policy response (Squirchuk and Bourke, 2000). Squirchuk and Bourke (2000) point out that this made Australia a unique case showing solid progress in gender equality with a strong legislative support moving women to gain access to senior roles in various industries whilst addressing the pay gap between both genders.

Brannen and Lewis (2000) state that historically, the UK Conservative government did not make the connection between gender equality and childcare strategies. This was despite pressures from the European Union, the opposition and growing number of mothers of young children in the labour market. Only after the change in government when Labour took over in 1997, did things started to change. Kumra and Manfredi (2012) explain that the UK had then presented a dual agenda of responsibilities towards supporting family-friendly reforms. Firstly, from an employer's perspective, raising awareness and encouraging organisations to drive work-life balance practices (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012; Nelson *et al.*, 2004). Secondly, from a legislative reform point of

view, legislation started supporting parents not only by giving them the right to request flexible work arrangements but also by increasing their leave entitlements and improving paternity rights (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

Equally, Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) state that equality can only be attained if starting from home. In other words, WLB initiatives (legislative frameworks and public campaigns) need to address not only childcare enabling mothers to attend full-time paid work but also driving shared responsibilities at home between men and women. Sweden, for example has led the way in promoting a "shared parenting ideology", offering a sustainable approach to gender equality which works to integrate the involvement of men and women in paid work and family demands (Haas and Hwang, 2008). This includes men's participation in the equitable division of care and domestic responsibilities by enabling a decrease in paid working hours and an increase in the hours available for domestic labour and childcare (Dench et al., 2002; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Haas and Hwang, 2007). However, there is still a very strong gender bias in the way the daily demands of the family are managed. This leaves the male model of the ideal worker (Gatta and Roos, 2004) and the "mother track" of part-time and flexible work as unquestioned dominant discourses even though the practical demands of the family set-up may have changed (Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010).

2.1.1 Gender inequality and the WLB debate

Research into WLB and gender has focused mainly on the impact of WLB provision on gender equality, or rather, the lack of impact, since women always seem to have availed themselves of these provisions whilst compromising their availability to work at the same levels as men (Burnett et al., 2012; Dench et al., 2002; Doherty, 2004; Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Tomlinson and Durbin, 2010). Two main and overlapping sources of evidence have emerged with regard to the impact of WLB and male-female equality, WLB equality at home (Ferrant and Keiko, 2015; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009) and WLB equality at work (Gambles et al., 2006; Lewis and Humbert, 2010).

In terms of WLB equality at work, the male traditional gender organisational culture is still predominant, even in supposedly emancipated Western countries

(Lewis and Humbert, 2010). This traditional breadwinner culture has been significantly resistant to gender equality, in firstly ignoring the needs of WLB for men and secondly encouraging women to take time off for dependents (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Lewis and Humbert, 2010). Such a culture consequently serves to promote in the UK a wage gap and to reinforce occupational segregation. This leads to reduction in the number of hours women spend at work while prioritising their family commitments (Burchell, 2006; Dench *et al*., 2002; Murphy and Doherty, 2011; Straub, 2007). Furthermore Swan and Cooper (2005) outline that the total hours spent in combined family and work responsibilities makes working mothers more vulnerable to developing stress-related illnesses. Equally from the male perspective, that fathers are expected to sacrifice their own family commitments to jobs which demand long working hours is hardly conducive to a balanced family life. Rather, in this culture it is seen as culturally unacceptable for men to prioritise family over work (Gatrell *et al*., 2011; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Pinni and McDonald, 2008). This in turn has created a tension in the way men and women may feel obliged to manage potential changes in their respective roles in society and family life (Dermott, 2006; Lewis and Humbert, 2010). Such uncertainty and tension in the way the genders attempt to balance paid work and unpaid household and caring roles is argued to have compromised individual health, psychological well-being and family life for both men and women (Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Dermott, 2008; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Pini and McDonald, 2008; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). While working mothers tended to suffer from often feeling inadequate in fulfilling their family and work responsibilities (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008) men suffer too. Levine and Pittinsky (1997) refers to this as an *invisible dilemma,* of "DaddyStress" where male workers are socially pressured into questioning their parenting role and involvement with their children, while at the same time experiencing domestic pressure from women who require more help with all aspects of domestic work (Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). Equally, Charles and James (2003) indicate that job security is psychologically more important for men than women, because being the breadwinner is still a fundamental basis of male identity; given that the notion of work-commitment is a much stronger driver in men, issues around prioritisation of work or family might become a source of conflict and stress. Having said this, there has been also evidence

showing the breadwinning is no longer a central part of fatherhood (Dermott, 2008).

In terms of WLB equality at home, Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) point out that in many cases the uneven distribution of household work has been driven by women who wish to retain control of the standards of domestic jobs or childcare responsibilities with maternal gate-keeping (Gambles *et al*., 2006). In addition, Lewis and Humbert (2010) highlight the pressures which affect women around gender assumptions, such as the ideology of "the good mother" (full-time at home caring for and nurturing their kids) which contrasts with the career woman. Women thus may experience distress and guilt from spending time and energy on their careers instead of their families (Murphy and Doherty, 2011; Lewis and Humbert, 2010). However, White *et al*. (2003) found that single-earner couples had the highest levels of negative spillover and that there was no indication that dual-earner couples were more affected by work-family spillover than single-earner couples (White *et al*., 2003). These results suggest an important benefit for couples who are able to shift from a breadwinner model to a dual-earner model. White et al. (2003) suggested that single-earner couples tended to work longer hours in order to compensate for only having one wage; they also found that job security was more important for such couples than for dual career-earners.

2.1.2 WLB interface and reconciliation theories

Reiter (2007) explains that the definitions of WLB are many and varied, and usually seek to explain the meaning of balance. Because of these differences, from a gender perspective, Gambles et al. (2006) suggest an approach of WLB equity, instead of equality. This is because people have different needs and responsibilities in different stages of their life courses. Consequently men and women in their relationships need to address their needs in a way that they feel equitable at different stages in their life course whilst adjusting to life-changing events (Gambles et al., 2006). Greenhaus and Allen (2011) attempt to conceptualise WLB with the level of effectiveness and satisfaction of performed roles which are consistent with the individuals' life priorities. Frone (2003) indicates that WLB happens when conflict between roles is low and enrichment is high.

For these reasons, several studies have established the implications of trying to define WLB (Gatrell *et al*., 2012) due to its complexity and have focused instead on understanding the interface and interaction between all domains in life (Clark, 2000). In summary, studies on work and life interface and interaction have tried to explain, firstly the process of border crossing and boundary management between domains (Clark, 2000; Kossek *et al*., 2012), secondly work and life interaction outcomes (Casper *et al*., 2013; Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999; Fisher *et al*., 2009; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Wayne, 2009) and thirdly work and life interface coping strategies (Ashforth *et al*., 2000; Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2007; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Kossek and Lambert, 2006).

Concerning the knowledge about border crossing, the border theory suggests that individuals are border-crossing daily between the domains of work and home (Clark, 2000). Ashforth et al. (2000) argues that boundary crossing and role transition can be macro or micro role transitions, where macro means a more permanent transition and micro is what individuals do every day by switching between multiple roles in life in a single point in time. Borders can then be strong or weak depending how each domain competes with the other (Clark, 2000). However, border crossing is not always welcomed so individuals try to find suitable boundaries between work and family to control the transitions. These boundaries can be a physical boundary, a time boundary, a physiological boundary (Clark, 2000) or a behavioural boundary (Friedman and Greenhaus 2000; Kossek *et al*., 2012). Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) highlight that all types of boundaries are important in order to be effective in attaining WLB. Equally, Staines (1980) explains with the *spillover* theory that physical and temporal boundaries between work and family are not enough as emotions and behaviours in one sphere can spill over to the other.

This leads to the second type of studies explaining the potential outcomes of work and life interface. These outcomes tend to be negative, like role stress (Casper *et al*., 2013; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) and generate conflict (Kossek, *et al*., 2012) or positive like promoting enhancement (Fisher *et al*., 2009) or enrichment amongst roles (Greenhaus and Beutell, 2011). When the spillover is negative, emotional conflict arises, which is explained by Casper et

al. (2013) as role stress that is caused by the pressures and expectations of multiple roles. Equally, there are situations where work-family conflict happens when demands from work and life domains are mutually incompatible and it triggers work-family conflict (WFC) or family-work conflict (FWC) (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985) define this inter-role conflict as time-based (demands from roles emerge at the same time), strain-based (distractions and worries from one role spilling over across another) and behaviour-based (when common behaviours in one role are transferred to another inappropriately). Later on, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory also explain that work-life conflict usually happens when domains compete for limited resources like time, energy and incompatible behaviour. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory illustrates that individuals seek to acquire and maintain resources (Grandey and Cronpanzano, 1999). However, when there is a threat of a loss of resources, it causes conflict and stress (Grandey and Cronpanzano, 1999). Furthermore Frone et al. (1997a) state that role conflicts are bidirectional which means work-family or family-work while Kossek et al. (2012) explain that role conflict can be asymmetrical or symmetrical which means same or different levels of interruptions occur between domains.

Another beneficial theory to explain the potential outputs of WLB conflict is the Identity Role Theory (Stryker and Serpe, 1982). Stryker and Serpe (1982) explain that individuals describe themselves based on various identities they have, however different identities have different values, where high value identities tend to occupy a more central positon in describing the self (this defines the roles centrality for each individual). Furthermore, individuals tend to allocate time and energy to more central roles as success from these roles are usually more psychologically rewarding than less important ones. When work-life decisions are not aligned with the individual's role centrality (identity), role conflict happens, which then causes stress compromising self-esteem and wellbeing (Bagger *et al*., 2014). On the other hand, when the spillover is positive, domains can benefit from each other. Enhancement (Fisher *et al*., 2009) or enrichment theories (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006) explain that positive experiences in one role facilitates and improves the quality of the other.

Although Greenhaus and Beutell (2011) grouped all positive aspects of work-life interface like positive spillover and enhancement into one group called work-family enrichment, Wayne (2009) highlights that it is important to avoid the assumption that a positive spillover from one role to another will automatically mean enhanced performance or functioning. The individual must promote the effect of a positive spillover by choosing to deploy the enhanced skills, moods and behaviours to then claim an inter-role enhancement.

Finally, previous WLB studies have also tried to capture preferences and choices of coping with work and life interface and reconciliation. Other studies have outlined different types of strategies. Firstly, separating and segmenting work and life as much as possible to allow a focus on each role at once and minimising stress (Kossek *et al*., 1999; Kossek and Lambert, 2006). The main criticism towards this approach is that individuals still can find themselves psychologically and emotionally absent despite physical boundaries (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000). Secondly, another strategy could involve integrating work and life so multiple demands can be met simultaneously (Ashforth et al. 2000; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000). In this case boundaries tend to be flexible in terms of allowing individuals to leave one domain to meet a demand from another role, and be permeable in terms of allowing interruptions from one role to another (Clark, 2000). On the other hand, more integrated domains can make role transitions less difficult, but they can also create confusion between competing demands (Kossek and Lambert, 2006). Clark (2000) also explains that boundaries are clearer and more easily maintained when roles are separated. Gambles et al. (2006) suggest that the issue is more complex than re-addressing the balance in terms of trade-off between work and personal life. Furthermore, work should be seen as part of life and not something separate. Consequently, they suggest a harmonisation approach and explain that effective WLB relies on a variety of segmented and integrated strategies to reconcile work and life which will also change throughout individuals' lives (Gambles *et al*., 2006; Lewis and Humber, 2010).

Thirdly, in addition to integrated or separated boundary management strategies, Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) suggest a coping behavioural typology

explaining work and life roles reconciliation. The typology presents four strategies: 1. good enough, 2. prioritising, 3. delegating and 4. super (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Good enough means lowering performance by changing expectations and behaviours in a given role. Prioritising means arranging the duties in order of priority and performing only the most important ones. Delegating means managing demands by delegating some tasks to others. Super means insisting on trying to meet all demands at desired standards alone instead of restructuring each roles' duties.

Another interesting view was provided by a new study which explored anticipated regret in time-based work-family conflict of working parents (Bagger *et al*., 2014). The authors draw from the identity theories and explain that although we all have different identities in life there will always be one which is predominant and we feel more connected with in comparison to others, the role identity. When our work-life choices do not match our role identity then we experience more regret. Then they proceed discussing the influence of the regret regulation theory on work-family decisions and how anticipated regret can improve WLB. They reflect on the WLB enrichment theory as explained by Greenhaus and Allen (2011) which highlights the importance of aligning the resources like time and energy to individuals' life priorities. Consequently, anticipated regret might minimise conflict and stress during the application of WLB.

In terms of work-life interface and gender, Mellner et al. (2014) found that male respondents who preferred the segmentation approach towards managing WLB significantly perceived having a higher level of boundary control than females with the segmentation preference as well. However, Burke (2002) outlines that women tend to draw tight boundaries between work and family in terms of not having work crossing over into family. Equally they feel frustrated when they are unable to leave work to meet a family demand. Burke (2002) also highlights that men tend to accept work crossing over to family life if that means they are performing better at work. This male gender difference leads to the second section of this chapter which covers the male perspective of the WLB debate.

2.2 WLB from the Male Perspective

The overall debate on WLB for men has focused increasingly on fathers, recognising that women's increasing participation in the labour market has also led to men feeling pressurised in juggling work and family whilst facing identity changes concerning traditional norms of masculinity (Collier; 2009). Equally, existing literature indicates that men struggle to make sense of their new role, particularly since the responsibilities of fathers have amplified over years as a consequence of contemporary fatherhood expectations (Dermott, 2008; Gatrell *et al*., 2011; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Miller 2011). This section captures the literature associated with WLB from the male perspective outlining the major steps of the male identity journey in terms of paid work and rest of life, particularly in the case of fathers. Three linked areas are revealed in order to enhance insights concerning the potential reasons underpinning males' WLB preferences and experience. The first area covers notions of masculinity and how gendered beliefs might influence males' experiences at work and with their families, particularly fatherhood. The second area highlights debates showing the evolution of fatherhood including policy response, and changes in masculinity. The third and final area addresses intergenerational influences and how much generations might perpetuate masculine ideas of the application of WLB from the male perspective.

2.2.0 Contemporary masculinity

Lloyd (2007) highlights the importance of expanding our understanding of change in social concepts of masculinity at work, but also the impacts of change on fatherhood; it is only by better understanding the functioning of gender stereotypes that barriers to evolution of the gender equality model can be broken down. Referring to masculinity and men's attitudes towards paid work, traditionally men see their value and contribution to society as pinned to their paid work status, and at the same time see their contribution to work at home as discounted by society in general, the first and foremost challenge for the equality agenda goes back to recognising unpaid work inside or outside the home (Gaylin, 1992; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). Equally, more recent studies on masculinities (Aboim, 2010; Connell, 2014) have identified multiple forms of

masculinities showing that "masculinities can and do change" (Connell, 2014, p. 7). Connell (2014) contrasts traditional and modern masculinities:

> "*A traditional masculinity (often understood as patriarchal and perhaps violent) is contrasted with a modern masculinity (often understood as more expressive, egalitarian and peaceable*" (Connell, 2014, p. 10).

However both authors also recognised that although new forms of masculinity have changed by embracing new tasks, such as childcare which previously was associated with a feminine practice, the gender order where men occupy a position of centrality in the structure of gender relations has not changed. Aboim (2010) describes hegemonic masculinity as being very much the case in the modern world. In other words, although there are multiple masculinities, men are still privileged over women in terms of the gender order (Aboim, 2010; Miller, 2011). Aboim (2010) concludes that men are still at the centre of the gender order and it can be observed by society and gender debates where men are praised for being more involved with childcare but women are still expected to be the primary carer and fit work around children.

Nevertheless, Vaillant (2012) wrote a book sharing the key findings of the longest study in history on men, The Harvard Grant Study. The study started with undergraduates from classes 1938-1940, in total 268 males were followed during their entire lives with several of them still alive and part of the study today. The study generated several articles and books throughout the decades contributing to the scientific understanding of the male lifespan from physical, psychological and sociological perspectives. In his book named Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study, Vaillant (2012) summarises that love and close connections with others influenced joy and success throughout these men's lives. In terms of love, the author refers to loving and supportive relationships as the main factor enabling success in the context of a full life. Career success and money, in a more traditional form (in the book more related to status and power), were not associated with fulfilling lives. Instead, loving and warm childhood experiences also seemed to impact positively on life satisfaction for the rest of these men's lives. Equally, the coping styles of individuals in dealing with stressful life events played an important factor in establishing health, satisfaction and wellbeing throughout these males'

lifecourses. Coping styles which negatively impacted on loving, supportive and close relationships were detrimental to one's health and well-being in general. The study also highlights the relationship between men and work and states that connection with work is more important than the money or status they generated from it. Vaillant (2012) also reported that men who did not nurture a gratifying career displayed a lifelong inability to deal with anger. Findings from this study also helps to understand why some fatherhood studies have highlighted the evolution of fathering behaviours seeking more meaningful and close relationships with children and the family (Dermott, 2008; Gatrell *et al.*, 2012; Miller, 2011).

Equally, Huffman et al. (2014) highlights that traditional masculine beliefs will influence how men manage their work-life balance and experience inter-role conflict which for the last two centuries has been around providing financial support. Consequently, prioritising work has been a good thing and masculine identities have been based on high occupational status (Huffman *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, Huffman et al. (2014) highlight that fathering and masculinity are facing a phase of reconstruction which is making the nurturing role one of the new possibilities of masculinity. Equally, Dermott (2008) highlight that breadwinning is no longer a central part of fatherhood. Consequently the way those men manage their WLB and experience inter-role conflicts are changing too due the increased volume of care and becoming more bidirectional, work to home and home to work conflicts which also encompasses several stress theories (Huffman *et al.*, 2014).

However ideologically, there are critical implications arising from this socio-cultural "shift", mainly a lack of clarity around gender expectations in the family and work domains. This lack of clarity involves conflicting expectations of men wishing to be "hands on" fathers and the requirement to continue being the main provider (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Miller, 2011). This extends to how they can achieve this fusion of roles, given that the traditional organisational culture tends to favour women over men in terms of take-up of family provisions (Holter, 2007; Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Lewis and Humbert; 2010). Despite this resistance, more recent studies have

shown a progression in male participation in the domestic arena (Harrington *et al.*, 2011) and further development of fatherhood regimes which support fathers' rights and responsibilities within couples (Gregory and Milner, 2009; Gatrell *et al.*, 2011). It is also important to recognise that several authors have highlighted that although masculinity is in transition, the gender order remains the same (Aboim, 2010; Huffman *et al.*, 2014, Miller, 2011). This proves to be problematic for WLB from the male perspective, not only as a personal choice but also as an expectation from an organisational perspective which still places men at the centre of paid work (Alvesson and Billing, 2009). For example, several studies have discussed how organisational studies have failed to take into consideration the gender aspects of organisational cultures and how it influences the experiences of individuals and ultimately, organisational practice in reality (Acker, 1990; Gheradi and Poggio, 2001; Mills 2002; Kumra et al., 2014). Mills (2002) states that the gendering of organisational culture is deeply rooted with traditional norms of division of labour and gender hierarchy, thus gendered practice has proven to be very resistant to change, particularly with male-dominated cultures. Consequently, the theorising of WLB without taking into consideration gender becomes unrealistic (Lewis and Humbert, 2007).

2.2.1 The evolution of fatherhood

Mostly associated with fatherhood, the literature on WLB from the male perspective provides a transition from the traditional breadwinner and disciplinarian to the loving and caring "daddy" taking on his fair share of the parental work (Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Williams, 2009). Thus, studies have also promoted more fathering involvement by demonstrating the positive benefits in terms of emotional development for the child, since the baby phase, within studies on fathering and early attachment (Wilson and Prior, 2010) and enhanced cognitive and emotional development for older children as well (Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda, 2004). Furthermore, undeniably, fathers are increasingly expected to go beyond the provider role to becoming full participants in all aspects of parenting, with increasing pressure to help with other household activities (Dermott, 2008; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). However, although such studies are enlightening, there is still controversy in a view amongst certain researchers

that while men see the benefits of embracing new family roles as fathers (Gatrell *et al*., 2011; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009), they may still inadvertently be helping to perpetuate such gendered stereotypes by having less involvement with household duties (Dermott, 2006; Miller, 2009).

Investigating the more positive findings concerning contemporary fatherhood, most recently in the UK, WLB related research focusing on the male perspective has begun particularly to explore fatherhood. For example, Dermott (2006) reports that fathers in her study saw their involvement in the home as being important for developing a relationship with their children and as part of being a good father. Gatrell et al. (2011) identified profound changes in fathering roles and demonstrated that most of the fathers in the study wanted to carry out their fair share of caring responsibilities whilst seeing their roles as carer and breadwinner balanced. However, there are certain difficulties that these men faced in their organisational work culture, including financial barriers to taking time off to balance work and family as needed (Gatrell *et al*., 2011). Lamb and Oppenheim (1989) concluded that the increase of fatherhood involvement has nothing to do with the idea of equal partnership; this involvement was inspired by men's curiosity and a wish to have contact with the child.

This leads to the next set of findings which addresses fatherhood and resistance to change. Indeed, in terms of fathering roles and masculinity in general, there does appear to be a visible resistance amongst males to letting go of the primary responsibility to be the main provider (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Miller 2011). Miller (2011), for example, explores three main dimensions of this debate, to include men's experiences of a more active care role in fatherhood, changing masculinities, and how the meaning of paid work is constructed for men. As far back as 1989 Hochschild was already raising concerns about male resistance to changes in the traditional gender roles, including fatherhood. Her view was that even though new gender role expectations were emerging as major social drivers in reconciling family and work, both men and women were influenced by dominant gender discourses around each sex's domain of responsibility in the home. This led to

considerable variation from household to household in how energy and time should be allocated between home and work.

Klinth (2008) argues that in order to promote behavioural changes in fatherhood, it is essential to take into consideration certain shifts in the concept of masculinity in relation to paid work. Further, deeply rooted gender discourses on men are not the only problem hindering the evolution of gender roles since the traditional ways in which organisational culture approaches equality at work from the male perspective also play an important part in the debate. Thus Miller (2011) points out that fathers still working for traditional organisations try to reconcile their traditional role as financial provider with their new role at home, by "fitting in" fathering around the demands of their employment and not the other way around, in the same way as women try to fit work around the demands of their children. This provides insights into WLB inequality at work from the male perspective (Collier, 2009) and specifically into how men deal with the pressure of conflicting demands in the face of two obstacles: firstly finding the conditions which will allow their availability for a fair share of domestic work and secondly, dealing with an organisational gendered culture and legal frameworks which favours mainly women in regard to WLB policies.

Gregory and Milner (2009) compared WLB policies for men in France and UK, in respect of both state and organisational practices and policies. They found that while from a legal perspective, there were similarities in fathers' rights and obligations in both countries, the levels of take-up in each country were significantly different. They reported that work in the UK adheres very much to the traditional breadwinner model, whilst in France, especially since the mid-1970s, part-time working for men has increased substantially in the private sector. Gregory and Milner (2009) concluded that a key difference between the two countries was the way in which men respectively constructed their beliefs about fatherhood, and the way in which men in each country exercised their rights. In the UK the policy response (legislative but also organisational) has not been as robust and comprehensive enough to support WLB at the speed of the socio-economic changes in the modern world (Lewis *et al*., 2007)

It would seem on the other hand that Nordic countries have exceptionally evolved to frame a coherent set of updated values in regard to masculinity, evidenced in a more robust state regime for promoting WLB for fathers (Klinth, 2008). This has been achieved in these countries by offering appropriate time and pay to fathers under leave provision, in contrast to countries with weaker state provisions such as the UK, where it is left up to individual organisations to make up any gaps in provision for employee time-off needs (Holter, 2007). Klinth (2008) describes the Swedish ideology of shared parenting as *"progressive and historically unique"*. This uniqueness stems not only from proactive policies in family provisions for Swedish fathers, but from 40 years of strong collective public campaigns to back up the benefits of share parenting. This journey started at the beginning of the 1970s with an agenda which became known as "making dad pregnant". In this campaign, the focus was not only on fostering gender equality but also on raising awareness of the benefits of such parental equality for the well-being and cognitive development of children.

The first Swedish legal provision for equality came into force in 1974, with parental leave insurance giving paid leave to fathers in order to allow them to care for their small children. Interestingly (Klinth 2008) reported that at the time only 20% of fathers availed themselves of their legal entitlement. Haas & Hwang (2008) note that further legislative development was needed to address the low take-up of provisions. Thus, the Parental Leave act of 1993 adopted a "use it or lose it" framework, stating that fathers' entitlements were no longer transferable to mothers and that only the father could use one month of the 12 months parental leave. This time, 62% of fathers took leave, and in 2006, the entitlement evolved once again, to give each parent two non-transferable months, with the remaining nine months left open to sharing. Back in 1974 the father take-up for paternity leave was only 20% compared to 90% in 2006 when the newest Parental Leave rules came into force with the "take or lose" concept (Haas and Hwang, 2008).

The Swedish case combined three factors to drive their ideology of shared parental responsibility between men and women. Firstly, strong public

campaigns were led to reposition fathers from having secondary responsibility for childcare to having primary shared responsibility for childcare. This gave men and women mutual responsibility for childcare as well as financial provision (Arnalds *et al*. 2013; Klinth, 2008). Haas and Hwang (2008) emphasise that the focus started moving from families seeing the issue as matter of choice, where men might choose minimal participation in childcare, to a deeper social understanding of the external norms of institutionalised gender roles at home and work which to that point, had prevented and discouraged men from sharing childcare and domestic work equitably.

Secondly, such campaigns promoted the positive impact of fathers on their children. This had the effect not only of altering gender-stereotyped attitudes but of allowing both parents equally to contribute to the cognitive development of their children. In turn the parents would also enjoy improved well-being as a result of rewarding and fulfilling roles at home and in paid work (Arnalds *et al*., 2013). However, Lamb (2010) also highlighted that some studies instead of providing direct evidence of the positive effect of fathering presence, have assumed positive benefits on children's development based on reversing the negative aspects of fathering absence.

Thirdly by offering appropriate financial support during leave, organisations supported transition of the ideal into practice, and not just in Sweden. In the Icelandic system for example, fathers for a time were given 80% of their salary while on parental leave, although following the Icelandic financial crisis in 2004 this needed to be changed (Haas and Hwang, 2007). In this situation, caps were introduced to the parental leave rates as a temporary measure in order to reduce costs to the welfare system; however all other elements in the system remained the same (Arnalds *et al*., 2013).

2.2.2 Intergenerational influence

There is evidence showing that some dynamics of WLB might be transferred from one generation to another (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006). For example, Bjornholt (2010) outlines that there is some research interest in men and changes in gender roles and family patterns which transferred from one generation to another in order to investigate further greater participation by men

in childcare and domestic chores. Townsend (2002) explains that socialisation processes are structural (societal) as well as psychological (individual) which are influenced by intergenerational experiences. This influence can be reciprocal (from child to parent as well as from parent to child), from childhood and adult. Townsend (2002) highlights that:

> *"Research on intergenerational influence can address some broader questions posed by social theorists about continuity and change in society" (p. 8).*

Furthermore, Mason (2008) explains that children look at their parents as role models by identifying or differentiating themselves to one or both parents where gender becomes relevant. Consequently, intergenerational values, morals and orientations also influence family structures, roles and socialisation of children into their adult life (Townsend, 2002).

Brannen and Nilsen (2006) explains the concept of "intergenerational transmission" as what passes between generations without even being noticed as embedded in daily family routines and relationships. In the context of WLB, there are two key transmissions which are relevant for this study. Firstly, traditional outlook on gender roles like the male breadwinner and female caregiver roles expectations and secondly, father's involvement in childcare and domestic work. In terms of the male breadwinner role expectations, Brannen and Nilsen (2006) outline the persistence of breadwinner identity for men as an example of intergenerational continuity. Dermott (2007), for instance reported that men did not tend to experience guilt for spending little time with their children, although controversially mothers were not happy with having only short quality time with their children during the evenings. Dermott (2007) concludes that fathers feel content with little time with their children because they unconsciously relate to their own father's uninvolved behaviour as a comparison; the mothers on the other hand feel uncomfortable about being less involved with their children because of their own experiences of their own mothers' being intensively present in their lives.

In terms of fathering involvement, recent theory on fathering and behavioural changes in terms of paternal involvements, have demonstrated a shift between

generations from absent fathers towards more involved and relational ones (Dermott, 2008; Lamb, 2010; Miller, 2011; Gatrell *et al*., 2011). Bjornholt (2010) highlights intergenerational studies which investigated fathers' involvement with their children around two hypotheses. The first one supports assumptions that fathers who had greater involvement with their own fathers are also more likely to spend more time with their children. The second hypothesis supports the assumption that fathers tend to be more involved with their children when they are trying to compensate for the little time that they spent with their own fathers. Bjornholt (2010) also explains that fathers are facing a neo-traditional family arrangement where some traditional values like the breadwinner role for men and identity with work are still very much relevant with traditional gender expectations but new expectations emerged in terms of a more equal involvement with children and domestic responsibilities. Huffman et al. (2014) refer to this shift as the "new father paradigm" where fathers have increased mostly the number of hours spent caring for their children. Equally, they have not adjusted the time and hours spent at work leading to an ongoing work-family conflict. Huffman et al. (2014) explain that men retained the traditional gender role as breadwinners and therefore maintain their behaviours in terms of working long hours and prioritising work but then experiencing stress due to work-family conflict for losing necessary resources to meet their fathering responsibilities. Demort (2008, p. 7) refers to this transition as the paradox of "*culture and conduct*" where cultural representations of new fatherhood refers to equal parenthood, but their actual behaviours and activities still enact the traditional gender division of labour. Allard et al. (2011) and Burnett et al. (2012) highlight that it does not help when organisational systems and culture still maintain the breadwinner assumptions without recognising the father's roles as carers.

Consequently up until this point gendered theories on WLB have been outlined to support the understanding behind the reason why the male perspective has been identified as a potential area for exploration in order to support the WLB discourse. Lewis et al. (2007) highlight that it is important not only to take into consideration factors around gender and culture to address WLB in a more sustainable way, but also deploy a dual agenda in terms of taking into

consideration individuals but also organisations requirements and practice. Thus the next section reviews the practice of WLB from an employment point of view.

2.3 WLB & Employment

Kossek et al. (2010) highlight the importance of organisations in identifying the diversity of needs in relation to WLB whilst changing concepts of the ideal worker which usually conforms to a male full-time style of working. This includes prioritising paid work over any other parts of life. It is important to highlight that Lewis et al. (2007) observes that part of the WLB literature focus on affluent professional and white collar workers because of their struggle with getting the balance right between personal life and contemporary forms of work. Consequently, this section is aimed at understanding the employment environment and how it might influence the application of WLB or contribute to the struggle of getting it right. This section starts with understanding gender in organisation studies, WLB policy response and some key legislative frameworks, then it outlines provisions, advantages and challenges of WLB practice for organisations, WLB management roles in WLB, and lastly it highlights the career mobility aspect of the international professional environment and the impact on WLB.

2.3.0   Organisations and gender

According to Kumra et al. (2014) gender in organisation studies has evolved from an essentialist perspective (natural to men and women and often described as gender traits) to acknowledging gender as a process (not natural to organisations and understood as norms which have been socially constructed). In the context of this research, the implication of gender in organisations for WLB focuses on cultures which assumes interactions between both genders based on the traditional processes related to the gender division of labour and gender role expectations (Gheradi and Poggio, 2001). Consequently, the reconciliation between work and family spheres are highly affected by gender (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). Most WLB debates have highlighted the idea of driving a more equitable agenda in the distribution of paid and unpaid work amongst men and women (Haas and Hwang, 2008;

Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell *et al*., 2011). However, the application of this agenda becomes rather philosophical when you do not consider gender (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). This is because the history of the power structures and gender order in organisations are deeply rooted in symbolic differences between men and women, which are not necessarily biological, but nevertheless form the basis of practice (Gehardi, 1995). Consequently, organisations struggle to drive WLB through policies and provisions alone (Gambles *et al*., 2006).

Two main areas of study have enhanced the understanding and limitations of the gender order and organisation studies. Firstly, the history of the division of labour and the gender order itself with females at the centre of serving men, from house-wives to office-wives (Roper, 2003). Secondly, the implication of most organisation studies being presented as gender neutral undermines the influence of gender on employment practice and workplace culture (Acker, 1990).

Examining the history of the gender division of labour, several authors have explored gendered organisational cultures and its rooted connection with hegemonic forms of masculinity, placing men at the centre and with the leading roles at work (Acker, 1990; Alvesson and Billing, 2009; Collinson and Hern, 1996; Gehardi, 1995; Mills, 2002; Roper, 2003; Kumra *et al*,, 2014). Roper (2003) explains that most organisations have originated from male-dominated institutions where strong masculine and 'hard' traits like power, competitiveness have been the ideal for leading roles, while feminine 'soft' traits have been the ideal for service roles, such as "*homely occupations like personnel*" (p.35). This gender 'organisational hierarchy' initially explored by Acker (1990) have underlined most of the reasons behind the gender division of labour and occupational segregation in paid work. Roper (2003) highlights that most masculine behaviours in business have been initiated by the military culture when men returned from war to paid work with embedded survival ideas around power, materialism, competition and dominance. Consequently, men dominated management and most occupations outside the service Industry. Roper (2003) illustrates that the strong gender hierarchy in organisations can be observed not

only in management but also amongst some professions. The following is an example from one of Roper's interviews extracts:-

"Engineers actually create wealth, but service workers merely consume, and are lesser men by implication" (Roper, 2003, p. 138).

For male oriented occupations like engineering, the ideology of shared parenting and WLB might become even more problematic. For example, the number of women in engineering in the UK is one of the worst in Europe with less than 10 percent of professionals being women (Skills & Demands from Industry, 2015 Survey, IET). Gherdi and Poggio (2001) & Alvesson and Billing (2009) highlight the challenges of changing gendered organisational cultures particularly in male-dominated professions. Collinson and Hearn (1996) state that because of the gender history in organisations, the theories around organisational culture and practice must recognise gender construction instead of leaving this as an implicit matter. They conclude by saying that men and masculinity are central to organisational analyses and yet it has been taken for granted and ignored (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). This emphasises the implications of examining WLB provisions and practice with a gender neutral approach, leading to limitations of a gender neutral approach effectively theorizing of organisation studies and WLB.

Mills (2002) highlights the problem of studying organisational cultures without taking into consideration the gendered notions of business practice. Mills and Tancred (1992) and Acker (1990) emphasise that organisational culture is written as a gender neutral subject and it ignores the gendered nature of organisations which has a multitude of differences between both genders like job segregation, pay and promotion. Mills (2002) positions organisational culture as a "*rooted metaphor*" which is characterised by a set of rules with great resistance to change (p. 287). Like Roper (2003), Mills (2002) also highlights the marginalisation of women at work by mostly valuing masculine attributes in management which compromises career progression for women whilst leading them to focus on home life and leave career work for men. Acker (1990) raises the concern of detaching organisation studies from gender due to its impact on culture and practice. Acker (1990) explains that an individual's experiences are

shaped by cultural systems made of meanings related to what is feminine and masculine. These ideas are also constructed as oppositional meanings which are then deliberated even more in the context of the hierarchy between men and women.

In addition, Lewis and Humbert (2010) state the issues around insights of the ideal worker (men working long hours and prioritising paid work) and the ideal mother (where family is the priority). In both cases the application of work-life balance from the male perspective becomes rather challenging. Men tend to be less available at home and more present at work when compared to their partners at home and their female peers at work (Gambles and Cooper, 2008). Miller (2011) explores the feminisation of the workplace and masculinisation of the household to embrace a more balanced approach between both genders in the contemporary world. Although she agrees that hegemonic masculinity is still the case, Miller (2011) explains the transition of both spheres by embracing new attributes from both genders. For example, historically for women to be successful at work they needed to mirror some of the hard behaviours known as masculine traits like competitiveness, prioritisation of work, power, assertiveness, etc. More recently, soft behaviours which have been historically described as feminine in nature, like empathetic, collaborative, servant behaviours, are nowadays regarded as key areas for leadership and management effectiveness. Miller (2011) concludes that male traits will influence households in the same way that women's traits have influenced the workplace. Equally, from the male perspective the gendered organisation is not only the barrier for men in order to be more involved at home, but maternal gatekeeping, also fed by traditional notions of division of labour, is another area which deserves attention (Miller, 2011).

Although this study is taking a more person-centred approach and explores the personal WLB experiences of men in the context of their homes as well as their work, the gendered organisational culture literature enhances the ability to comprehend men's WLB realities. This is enabled by understanding how collective norms around WLB for men could influence their experiences of reconciling work and the rest of life. Equally, it provides further insights on their

perceptions of policy entitlement and expectations, particularly when compared to their female partners at home and female peers at work.

2.3.1 Policy response to work-life balance

Work-life balance (WLB) has become a key issue in EU and UK employment policy and legislation, and as such has led to developments in increased availability and use of WLB policies. Kumra and Manfredi (2012) state that in 2000 as part of the UK's labour government strategy, a substantial Work-life balance campaign was launched with the aim to encourage employers to drive WLB practices beyond statutory obligations by taking on some of the responsibility in supporting employees to manage family life and paid work. A Challenge Fund was announced under the responsibility of the Department for Trade and Industry. This offered £10.5 million over three years of consultancy to raise awareness amongst 400 employers from the private, public and voluntary sectors of the benefits of WLB provision (Nelson, 2004).

Additionally in 2000, 2003, 2007 and 2012, the Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform published a series of Work-life Balance surveys assessing the impact of the new employment laws like the right to request flexible working. For example, although these surveys demonstrated an increase in offers of flexible working arrangements, interestingly the perceived driver for this arrangement was more related to the benefits of staff engagement and productivity than to statutory compliance (Hooker *et al*., 2007). Such steps may have been effective, for example part-time workers in 2012 reported higher levels of satisfaction when compared with full-time workers, even with those benefitting from flexible working arrangements (Tipping *et al*., 2012). An interesting finding of these studies was the preference for part-time work as a strategy amongst women. Hooker et al. (2007) reported that 82 per cent of female employees worked part-time as compared to 58 per cent of male workers (Hooker *et al*., 2007). This was in spite of attempts to promote alternative strategies beyond part-time work to reconcile WLB issues (Hooker *et al*., 2007).

Concerning the impact of legal frameworks on the practice of WLB, for this research focusing on the male perspective, there are two developments which

are insightful when considering policy responses. The first one is the working times regulations and the second is childcare provisions.

Long hours culture & Working times regulations response

There are interesting analyses published online by the TUC website demonstrating that long working hours culture in the UK remains a problem and warns a return to 'Burnout Britain', showing 15 per cent increase in people working more than 48 hours a week (TUC Press Release issued 9 September, 2015). This article also reports the UK operating within a higher working-hours average than Europe. UK average weekly working hours is 43.6 hours, Europe average is 40.3 and France for example is only 35. Although since the Working Time Directive was introduced back in 1998, by 2010 a decrease was observed from 3.9 million people working more than 48 hours a week to 3.0 million, but then in 2015 the number went back to 3.4 million. This working long-hours culture seems to be particularly problematic for men as the gender breakdown of number of employees working long-hours (in thousands) is 2,544 of men and 873 women.

In spite of such studies it would seem that in the UK there is currently no political commitment to reducing long working hours. Stam and Coleman (2010) report that although there is a trend in decreasing working hours since 1992, UK still shows evidence of a long working hours culture when compared to the rest of Europe. The Eurostat newsletter in June 2011, reports the same.

> "*The longest weekly working hours for full-time employees were observed in the United Kingdom (42.2 hours), Austria (42.0), Bulgaria and the Czech Republic (both 41.2), and the shortest in Denmark (37.7), Ireland (38.4), the Netherlands (38.9) and Italy (39.0). In all Member States, men had longer working hours than women among full-time employees*" (Eurostat, 2011, p. 2).

Evidence presented by Hogarth et al. (2003) suggests that although this directive achieved a small reduction in hours worked by full-time male workers since 1998, the implementation of the Directive has not sufficiently influenced organisational cultures and individuals' attitudes towards better working practices. White et al. (2003) outline that the working time directive has not

been enforced in the UK showing no statutory commitment to reduce the UK long working culture compared to the rest of Europe.

There is also an agreement among researchers that what has changed from the past to present is not the length of working-hours but the pressures of work, which have intensified in recent decades (Bergman and Gardiner, 2007; Gambles *et al*., 2006; Green, 2001; Hogarth, 2003; Kodz *et al*., 2003; Roberts, 2007). Green (2001) explains that this pressure has arisen by way of excessive information conveyed by technology which requires a speedy response and constant availability. Roberts (2007) thus notes that individuals can feel over-pressurised at work regardless of the hours they actually work. Bergman and Gardiner (2007) suggest that the intensification of perceived requirement to be "available" and "responsive" in the workplace has extended also to the needs and expectations of others outside of the workplace, including family. This may be the reason for the intensification of work in all aspects of daily life. Gender researchers have gone further to argue that the long working-hours culture focuses on the male ideal worker, and has compromised women's careers by making it less possible for men to be available to share childcare and domestic responsibilities (Dermott, 2006; Hochschild, 1989, Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997) whilst simultaneously making it more difficult for women to apply for jobs that tend to demand long hours (Doherty, 2004; Hogarth *et al*. 2003; Lewis and Humbert, 2010).

Childcare legal framework

Childcare and gender equality are strongly connected in employment legislation. Statutory policies on gender equality have mostly been driven to encourage women to work and by doing this to minimise the costs to the State of welfare and unemployment benefits, while increasing employment of working mothers to meet demands for an expanding workforce (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006). Controversially, it is argued that these updated policies have had little impact on the practice of WLB in two important areas. Firstly, it is argued that policies have narrowly focused on preventing discrimination while neglecting any real promotion of equality (Haas *et al*., 2000). Doherty (2004) for instance, highlights the importance of having a policy framework which both eliminates

discrimination of a disadvantaged group and promotes equality, in order to drive behavioural change and shape the way in which organisational practices are constructed around WLB issues. Secondly, it is argued that in the UK, the equal opportunities agenda has limited its focus to addressing issues associated with equality for *mothers* in the workplace, particularly the need to reconcile work and family (Doherty and Manfredi 2006), neglecting the needs of fathers (Gatrell *et al.*, 2011).

Indeed, since childcare demands on women have been the main driver for gender inequality at work plus with the pressure of the European Union, the UK conservative government in 1996 began to realise that stronger childcare provision might be the only way to retain female employment whilst encouraging men to participate more fully in reconciling family and work (Brannen and Lewis, 2000). Nevertheless since the beginning of 2000, researchers (Clark, 2000; Harhill, 2003; Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Wilson *et al.* 2007) have tried to move away from regarding part-time work as the main strategy for mothers reconciling work and family, and to move towards exploring flexible working conditions where men and women could work and have children at the same time. However, only organisations performing well financially (White, 2003) and with high levels of female employment (Nadeem and Metcalf, 2007) have tended to adopt comprehensive family-friendly initiatives. Smeaton et al. (2014) highlight that the benefits of WLB policies go beyond being a strategy to attract and retain female workers and they conclude that economic theory indicates that WLB policies increase profits by increasing performance and lowering costs associated with absenteeism and turnover. Furthermore Smeaton et al. (2014) report the case studies of IBM and BT showing savings of millions of pounds or dollars with buildings and energy due to teleworking and homeworking.

Moving on to focus on childcare, back in the 1980s, the UK government opposed any formal State engagement in childcare provision, taking the position that working parents should be free to make their own arrangements (Haas, *et al.*, 2000). The absence of government support for working families was problematic for employers, who found themselves having to play a role in ensuring childcare provisions for their workers, in order to address the work-life

interface and retain employment levels (Brannen and Lewis, 2000). However this arrangement was not sustainable; between the increase of mothers in the employment market and pressures from the European Union. In the mid-90s the UK Conservative Government was forced to reappraise its response to childcare (Brannen and Lewis, 2000). Doherty and Manfredi (2006) outline that with the change in government; the Labour party adopted the EU parental leave directive and started making progress towards supporting working parents and carers. At this time, work-family reconciliation was incorporated into the UK Equal Opportunities political agenda, bringing gender equality to the forefront of the discussion at both European and UK levels (Doherty and Manfredi, 2006). Later in 2006, the Work and Families Act set out to regulate workers' rights to take paid leave for family purposes, including maternity and adoption leave, and to extend the 'right to request' flexible work for carers of adults (Hooker *et al*., 2007). Yet in spite of such changes, two main limitations remain concerning childcare provision in the UK, which have helped to perpetuate the problem of gender inequality. The first is that financial support during leave is limited, and the second is that the availability of such provisions is not promoted to men (Haas and Hwang, 2008; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997).

As an example of how financial support for family-related time off might be problematic, we can see that under the Employment Relations Act of 1999 any employee had the right to take reasonable time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependent. In principle this acknowledged family needs. However, an important collateral implication was that if such time off was unpaid, the result might be less an alleviation of work-family tension than an exacerbation of financial difficulties through loss of income (Dench *et al*., 2002). Evidence shows that in 2006, 52 per cent of UK employees took fully paid leave for family reasons, 3 per cent took partly paid leave, and 15 per cent took leave without pay (Hoooker *et al*., 2007). Each of these different types of leave obviously has different financial implications for families. Thus, although emergency and parental leave are critical provisions that help working parents, in particular, deal with unforeseen problems, in circumstances where organisations do not offer full pay for leave this statutory provision may have uneven results. Not only may an individual earn less by taking time off to deal with family stress, they

may experience additional stress from the impact of income loss on their situation. This may explain why logically the parent who takes time off from work to look after children tends to be the one who earns less money in the household; in most cases this is the female worker (Dench *et al*., 2002). This situation skews male-female availability for work and it also distorts the likelihood of such provisions becoming available to male workers. Thus leave-taking for family purposes becomes even more the exception for men, rather than part of the norm (Haas and Hwang, 2007).

As childcare provision for male workers, it is generally upheld amongst researchers that men's increased involvement in childcare is necessary for gender equality (Cooper and Lewis, 1995; Crompton and Lyonette, 2006) but until childcare is no longer seen as the primary responsibility of women, this increased male involvement will never happen (Haas and Hwang, 2008; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). Hooker et al. (2007) reported that women were more likely than men to be successful in requesting flexible working hours, 67 per cent of female requests were fully granted in 2006, compared to 53 per cent of male worker requests. Since 2006 some changes have come about. For instance since 2014 fathers legally have been able to share up to six months leave with the mother of their children. Nevertheless Gatrell et al. (2011) anticipated that there will be issues concerned with low take-up from fathers due to societal and organisational cultural conventions. This suggests that childcare provisions for men need to be more robust if they are to feel free to access them; otherwise the family as a whole remains trapped in a gendered vicious circle (Gatrell *et al*., 2011; Haas and Hwang, 2007; Miller, 2011).

2.3.2 Work-life balance provisions, business advantages and implications

A variety of WLB practices exist in the UK, from standard statutory provisions (complying with the right to request to work flexibility) to workplace arrangements tailored to individual needs (such as working from home). WLB has become an important piece of human resources management strategy. It has helped to improve staff engagement, job satisfaction, retention (Lockwood, 2003; Tipping *et al*., 2012) whilst addressing issues related to employees' well-being and productivity (Lewis and Cooper, 2005).   However, Lewis and

Humbert (2010) and Lockwood (2003) advise organisations to look beyond the implementation of WLB interventions to note and assess their cultural readiness for such policies. This becomes particularly relevant when taking into consideration gendered organisational cultures (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). That is, if in theory organisations are pro-WLB and have a clear WLB strategy, how ready are their gendered cultures to focus on developing and implementing family-friendly provision for men and women? To illustrate that theory and practice are not the same, Smeaton et al. (2014) interestingly report WLB benefit take-ups are failing to keep pace with WLB offers. They compared the take-up levels from 3 "Work Life balance Employee Surveys" (Hooker *et al.*, 2007; Stevens *et al.*, 2004; Tipping *et al.*, 2012) reporting on WLB packages offering elements such as reduced hours for a limited period, flexitime, job shares, compressed hours, term-time work, annualised hours and working from home. Their inquiry found that take-up percentages decreased between 2003 and 2011, with the sole exception of take-up of part-time work, which increased from 28% in 2003 to 40% in 2011. Furthermore, most take-ups are still exercised by women (Smeaton *et al.*, 2014).

Historically, most of the Human Resources Management (HRM) strategies are underpinned by interventions which are supported by processes directing and controlling employees' attitudes and behaviours (Bamberger and Meshoulam, 2014). For example, the deployment of appraisal and reward policies linked to desirable behaviours across all levels in the organisation (Bamberger and Meshoulam, 2014). However, WLB strategy, due to its nature, becomes less suitable to be supported by traditional HRM methods of linking appraisal, compensation and performance. Although WLB provisions have been widely used as a reward strategy for attraction and retention (Lockwood, 2003; Smith, 2010), it has been totally detached from the performance management piece due to its legislative history (Kumra and Manfredi, 2010). Work-life Balance policies historically tend to be framed based on legislative frameworks, personal circumstances and needs, particularly associated with childcare. For example, a mother or father would be legally entitled to WLB provisions (statutory or enhanced) based on their childcare needs and not because they performed well or not. Linking WLB to performance would lead organisations to liabilities on the

grounds of unfair treatment and discrimination. On the other hand, when looking at managerial behaviours towards hindering or driving WLB, linking WLB managerial behaviours to appraisal and reward systems could improve efforts of management towards promoting a WLB culture. Many organisations already deploy performance-based pay linked to annual appraisals (Bamberger and Meshoulam, 2014). For example, actual performance is compared to a performance criteria assigned to different roles which then informs annual salary increases or calculation for variable pay. In this case, with the intention of making organisations more active in supporting employees' WLB, effective dissemination and management of enlightened WLB practice in the workplace could be added to the managerial performance criteria.

2.3.2.0 Types of WLB provisions

Prior to proceeding in revising the advantages and implications of WLB practices in employment a non-exhaustive list of provisions are outlined below. The majority of WLB provisions involve some level of working flexibility. Kelliher and Anderson (2010) try to cover several working patterns, like non-standard hours, reduced hours, compressed hours and remote working. However, Fleetwood (2007) and Gambles et al. (2006) raise some concerns in relation to flexible working practices and how much they end up benefiting the employer by making them more available to work than the other way around. Thus Lewis and Cooper (2005), and Murphy and Doherty (2011) outline the gender limitation of flexible working as there is an automatic association between flexible working and mothers where male workers tend to be more associated with full-time work and long hours culture (Burnett *et al*., 2012) and less available towards flexible working arrangements.

Nevertheless Dex (2004) summarised WLB policies as falling into 5 categories: 1. Flexitime schedules, referring to flexibility around the start and end of the working day, within fixed hours per week or month. 2. Flexiplace or telecommuting, for example working from home. Although Russel et al., (2009) raised concerns of potential work life imbalance caused by this arrangement if employees remained online the whole time at home without switching off. 3. Job sharing where usually weekly full-time hours would be shared between two

people 4. Part-time flexiplace, when the worker would be allowed to work remotely, usually from home, for a few days a week and 5. Sabbatical or career breaks.

For the purpose of this review WLB policies and provisions are divided and explained into the following 6 categories: 1. Flexitime (flexibility with full-time hours); 2. Part-time (reduced hours when compared to full-time); 3. Homeworking (partial or total); 4. Leave entitlements (to care for someone or for career breaks and sabbaticals); 5. Job-shares (sharing a full-time job role with others); 6. Additional WLB benefits (non-statutory benefits which enhance work-life balance reconciliation, such as onsite childcare, employee assistant programmes and WLB consulting, referred to as total life planning programmes) (Lockwood, 2003).

All the options mentioned above, apart from additional WLB benefits, are statutory rights which parents can request to be considered under law. These rights were granted firstly by the Employment Act in 2002, for parents with children under 6, or with disabled children under 18. This was followed by the Work and Families Act in 2006, extending the rights of all carers other than young children. Later, in 2009, these rights were again extended, to parents of children up to the age of 17. Most recently, since June 2014, all employees have the right to work flexibility after 26 weeks' service with their employer.

Flexitime

This category groups all initiatives in this category which allow individuals to have control over their working hours, providing a number of these are fulfilled within an agreed period of time. This varies from flexitime (flexibility with start and end times) to reduced hours for a limited time to compressed hours (same full-time hours but with a reduction of working days) (Tipping *et al*., 2012). Flexitime is a very popular WLB provision as it allows individuals to respond to unforeseen issues outside work, as well as to coordinate schedules with the rest of the family (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). The 4th Work Life Balance Survey established that the percentage of individuals working with some level of flexibility increased from 51% in 2003 to 60% in 2011 (Tipping *et al*., 2012).

However, the research reports some issues arising around the implementation of flexible working (Hegewisch, 2009). Dex and Schield (1999) found that the companies experienced some real implications in offering flexible working, mainly around job structure and design (requirements to be in the work space for a fixed period of time), technological infrastructure (not allowing effective remote work) and work pressures (related to meeting deadlines and costs related to absence cover). Tipping et al.'s (2012) study found that working flexitime was available to only 48% of the employees studied. Smeaton et al. (2014) more recently have demonstrated that flexible working take-ups have on the whole decreased over time, based on data derived from their Work-life Balance Employee surveys series. For example, reduced hours for limited time went down from 20% in 2003 to 18% in 2006 and then 14% in 2011. Flexitime (start and end time of daily work) went down from 55% in 2003 to 49% in 2006 and 2011. Compressed hours went down from 36% in 2003 to 24% in 2006, with a small increase of 26% in 2011.

However, most recently an increase in the flexible working has been noted, not as an incentive to improve WLB but as a reaction to the economic downturn showing that 69% of organisations (and 78% of large businesses) employ individuals on fixed-term contracts, while 36% (and 40% of large companies) use casual workers (CIPD, 2014) and with increase of zero-hours contracts from 4% to 8% between 2004 and 2011 (CIPD, 2013). Although, this approach has allowed organisations to be more cost efficient and react to business uncertainty, all the risks associated with insecurity become a problem to the employee.

Part-time

Part-time work is defined as reduced hours when compared to full-time. Smeaton et al., (2014) in their review of the literature, refer to part-time work as anything less than 30 working hours per week. This appears to be a very popular strategy for those with demanding family lives (Hegewisch, 2009). Visser and Williams (2007) reported on a survey project with members of Unison (the public service union) which reported part-time workers as significantly more satisfied with their jobs as compared to their full-time

counterparts. In the WLB literature review by Smeaton et al. (2014) they compared all three "The Work-Life Balance Employee surveys" and showed an increase in part-time work, from 28% in 2003, to 38% in 2006 and then to 40% in 2011. However, it would appear that this is the only WLB practice which has increased with time. Tipping et al. (2012) reported that professional and managerial employees were less likely to work part-time (only 14% of this population working under 30 hours as compared to 37% of those working part-time in manual jobs). In addition women have been found to be more likely to prefer part-time working than men, with Tipping et al. (2012) claiming figures of 91% for women as opposed to 69% for men. Although the popularity of part-time work seems to be increasing from an employees' perspective, the implications from an employers' perspective are most probably damaging for equality in the workplace (Burchell, 2006). In terms of what is happening in practice from a gender point of view, the Eurostats newsletter from 2011 reports that in the UK only 11 per cent of men work part-time when compared to 42.4 per cent of women (Eurostat, 2011).

Homeworking

Felstead and Jewson (2000) offer two broad classifications of homeworking: 1. employed individuals working from home (full-time or part-time) and 2. individuals who are self-employed. Homeworking or working from home has also been found in the literature on telecommuting (Felstead and Jewson, 2000) or e-working (Grant *et al*., 2013). However, the telecommuting literature refers to all types of work outside employers' premises, including, for example, working from the client's office and field work. This review therefore explicitly limits telecommuting literature to that concerning working from home or homeworking which has close associations with WLB. There is a difference in terms of advantages between men and women, for example female professionals relate to the ability to combine childcare and domestic work, whilst men relate to quality time with family (Grant *et al*., 2013). Grant et al. (2013) concludes that it might still be a reflection that female respondents still go home to their second shift whilst men look at it as a place to rest and spend time with family.

Smeaton et al. (2007) highlighted that in principle working from home could increase performance, due to the time saved on commuting. This WLB arrangement could offer the possibility of having more time to manage non-work responsibilities during the week. On the other hand, Crosbie and Moore (2004) pointed out challenges in working from home, such as reduced social contact and personal time. In many cases therefore working from home might represent more of a hindrance to WLB rather than a benefit, leading to unclear boundaries between work and home, and family complaints about long hours (Crosbie and Moore, 2004). Mann and Holdsworth (2003) discussed how social isolation is a problematic aspect of homeworkers too. According to the TUC (2013) workplace flexibility practices like homeworking increased by 13% between 2007 and 2012 with nearly two-thirds of people who work from home being males. Nevertheless this increase of workplace flexibility was mostly associated with adjustment to recession which includes self-employment and zero contract hours than actually an employment benefit (TUC, 2013).

Leave entitlements

The majority of leave entitlements in the UK are imposed by statutory requirements such as 1. Maternity, paternity and adoptive rights, giving parents a fixed time to be away from work with a level of payment in place, 2. Parental leave of up to 13 weeks, usually without pay and with time off for dependents in an emergency (ad- hoc time to deal with unforeseen dependent-related issues), and 3. Paid holidays (28 days including bank holidays as minimum) (Tipping *et al.*, 2012).

Enhanced paid leave entitlements seem to be a practice used by organisations as a retention strategy. For example, Tipping et al. (2012) reported a relationship between leave entitlement and length of employment, where 20% of surveyed employees with over 10 years of length of service were entitled to over 30 days when compared to only 2% of employees who had been employed by less than 6 months. Smeaton et al. (2014) also report that prolonged paid maternity leave may result in women returning to the same employment rather than opting to stop working altogether after childbirth.

Sabbaticals or career breaks (usually associated with length of service) provided an opportunity to respond to changes in circumstances for block periods of time while retaining the employee. These authors distinguished sabbatical breaks from career breaks. Sabbaticals were paid while career breaks were not paid. In addition, sabbaticals were more associated with business gains, for example study leave. Holmes et al. (2007) found that 29% of people would use career breaks if such benefits were available to them, while 40% would use sabbaticals.

Job share

This arrangement allows individuals to share responsibilities and hours of a full-time position (Smeaton *et al.*, 2014). The benefit is that two or more people may work in a single job while combining a wider range of skills and experience than one individual (Wheatley, 2012). Dex and Scheibl (1999) observe that job share is a less investigated and less well known WLB practice, although Russell et al. (2009) found sharing as more common among white collar workers. In their study 9% of the women used the job share option as opposed to 3% of men. Tipping et al. (2012) reported that 55% of staff working in large single sites of 250 or more employees felt that job shares were more available to them than 25% of staff working in small sites with 9 or fewer employees.

The main practical implication, particularly for smaller business, seems to be the challenge of finding a person to share the job and then agreeing how the full-time hours will be divided (Hegewisch, 2009). This implication may explain why part-time work seems to be more common than job sharing (Tomlinson, 2006). Wheatley (2012) observed that job shares could become disruptive and expensive to sustain when considering recruitment and training costs for two people instead of one, while part-time hours could be stretched to meet the expectations of a full-time position expectations, in many cases with lesser cost.

Additional WLB provisions

Some organisations have taken the practice of WLB beyond statutory compliance, to provide employees with benefits which support their

reconciliation between work and family and wellbeing (Lockwood, 2003). For the purpose of this review, three common additional benefits have been identified: onsite nurseries, employee assistance programmes and most recently total life planning programmes. Brandon and Temple (2007) assessed the effects of onsite nurseries and found that such benefits did not seem to provide retention, and that usage was low. Lockwood (2003) examined the benefits of using Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to support employees in dealing with personal problems more efficiently, reporting an average reduction of 17 hours per year per employee. Total life planning was presented by Traynor (1999) to support employees to:

> "…*set a goal-oriented environment with a meaningful and transformational component for each individual*" (Traynor , 1999, p.30).

This is a new trend for WLB benefits, entailing programmes designed to help employees map and assess their entire lives, including relationships and support networks, physical and emotional needs, career aspirations, parenting and life skills and spirituality. This is seen as a process of self-discovery, helping individuals to make more informed choices concerning their WLB but also to make them aware of their short-falls, opportunities and needs in order to act upon these to improve their life-style and situation (Lockwood, 2003).

Furthermore wellbeing is becoming a bottom line discussion amongst businesses in the UK. Cary Cooper, who is now president of CIPD, has introduced a policy report for HR practitioners to drive the wellbeing agenda. He highlights in this report that UK is at the bottom of the G7 and near the bottom of the G20 countries in relation to productivity per capita which makes the wellbeing agenda a necessity (CIPD, 2016). The CIPD (2016) policy report offers a comprehensive framework with areas addressing the corporate wellbeing strategy whilst attributing responsibility to both, employer and employee. Work design strategy and culture are highlighted under this framework with the intention to control work intensification. For example, inappropriate work design might impact negatively on WLB by increasing demands at work and forcing individuals to reallocated resources from family to work in order to adjust to the extra demand. This often happens in organisations

with cost saving measures by merging a couple of roles in to one without adjusting the deliverables accordingly (Gambles, *et al*., 2006). Another example under this framework is management gate keeping putting pressure on employees to allocate extra resources to work as an indication of commitment (Kossek et al., 2011; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012).

2.3.2.1 WLB practice business advantages

Three positive business advantages were identified from WLB practices. Firstly, benefits related to reduced costs in regard to absence (assuming that WLB enables people to have less negative home/work spillover and therefore to be less absent from work) and reduced costs of turnover (people being less likely to leave an employer if they feel that WLB has been attained) (Lockwood, 2003). Secondly, better work productivity (Smeaton et al., 2014). Thirdly, WLB offerings associated with employer reputation (Lockwood, 2003; Smith, 2010).

As per reduced costs of turnover and absenteeism, there have been studies showing the positive impact of WLB policies for organisations. Hegewisch (2009) found that WLB practice improved turnover and absenteeism. Casper et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of WLB provisions to reduce work-related stress. Thomson et al. (1999) outline that WLB policies increased commitment of employees, while reducing work and family conflict, stress and intentions to leave. Work-related stress has become a predominant issue in modern society, sometimes leading to absenteeism in the workplace and a passed-on stress to company functioning (Lockwood, 2003). It could be argued then that WLB policies are more of a necessity than an advantageous choice (Cooper, 1996). Lockwood (2003) reflects that although stress at moderate levels has been scientifically proven as beneficial, too much work-related stress may lead to low staff morale, poor productivity and low job satisfaction. In this case WLB plays an important role in managing unhealthy levels of stress caused by changing dynamics in family units and work structures, and the struggle of individuals' to manage "dual roles" in modern society (Gatta and Roos, 2004). Cooper (in CIPD, 2016) emphasises the business case by linking the well-being and WLB agendas to the overall costs for the economy in terms of absence, low productivity (presenteeism) and turnover.

> "*The UK Government's Foresight report on mental capital and well-being highlighted the costs of over £100 billion for mental ill-health in the UK, and £27 billion to UK plc in terms of sickness absence, presenteeism and regrettable labour turnover. In addition, nearly 40% of all incapacity benefit at work is due to the common mental disorders of depression, anxiety and stress, now the leading causes of sickness absence and driver of presenteeism*" (Cooper in CIPD wellbeing report, 2016, p.3).

Furthermore, Woodland et al. (2003), in the second Work-Life Balance Study survey for employers, reported that 71% of employers reported had a positive impact of WLB practices on employee relations, 69% reporting better commitment and motivation and 54% reporting improved turnover. Smeaton et al. (2014) claim that the benefits of WLB provision for organisations concerning both absence and retention, arguing that flexible working arrangements are particularly effective in reducing absence and that flexible working arrangements helped with staff turnover and retention and consequently made significant savings. The benefits in regard to retention were associated mostly with working mothers, reporting that in the UK the percentage of mothers returning to work for the same employer increased from 75 % in 1988 to 84% in 2010 (Smeaton *et al.*, 2014). Overall the work-life balance and wellbeing are connected due to the need of individuals creating and controlling clear work-life boundaries in order to have a healthy and happy work and better manage inter-role conflict which causes stress and negatively impact on individuals' wellbeing.

In terms of increased productivity, Smeaton et al. (2014) suggest that flexible working is strongly associated with extra employee commitment regardless of parental status, leading to enhanced performance and consequently increased productivity. Another consideration was observed by a report produced by Robertson Cooper and the Bank Workers Charity who joined in a research project in 2016 exploring work-life integration which is available from Good Day At Work community website (www.robertsoncooper.com/work-life-integration). The whole debate around work-life separation or integration is discussed with a preference to having a more integrated approach by deploying flexible and permeable boundaries in order to give equal attention to various priorities in life whilst focusing on high valued activities and increasing productivity. The report highlights that the ability to combine work and the rest of life in a more

integrated way has positive outcomes to individual's wellbeing and work performance. Equally it also raises the negatives of such approach which included potential increased workload with ongoing accessibility to work demands and potentially compromised productivity due to interruptions and distractions. However, the core argument in the report is that when individuals are worried about not meeting priorities in life or not being able to perform a high valued activity, their productivity drops anyway because they are present at work but not being productivity (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

Lastly, Lockwood (2003) highlights the positive impact of WLB policies on employer's reputation and how WLB can be used to promote a company as employer of choice. This also has proven to be the case with recent studies on generation Y and their strong positioning concerning use of time and preference for organisations with WLB provision (Smith, 2010). It is important to recall that this generation will represent half of the workforce by 2020 (PwC global survey 2008).

3.3.2.2 WLB practice business challenges

Although WLB appears to be emerging as necessity for mitigating work-related stress (Casper *et al*., 2013; Cooper, 1996; Frone *et al*., 1997a), as well as attracting and retaining employees (particularly from the Y generation) (Smith, 2010), overall organisations have treated WLB policies, as described by Lewis and Humbert (2010) as "perks and not entitlements". In a broad sense, the challenges of implementing WLB policies in a business seem to fall into two categories, organisational gender culture and perceived lack of tangible WLB benefits.

Organisations which have a culture built on traditional gender assumptions of the breadwinner and ideal worker models may lack the cultural readiness for implementing flexible working (Lewis and Humbert, 2010), reading it almost as a synonym of a lack of commitment. For this type of culture, the only thing which could excuse such a lack of commitment would be that typically a woman has children who need her care more than her working. There is also an issue concerning the application of WLB practice for men and, particularly in the face of collective views around gender assumptions and the breadwinner model

(Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997). Smeaton et al. *(2014)* state that;

> *"Men are less likely to make flexible working requests. The evidence shows that they are also less likely to have their requests accepted"* (Smeaton *et al*., 2014, p.116).

Equally in The Second Work-life balance employee surveys, Hooker et al. (2007) highlighted that parenthood for men was rarely used as a reason for requesting flexible working hours, especially as compared to women for who parenthood was the main reason given in most cases. However, many organisations have tried to be gender neutral, by offering WLB for parents of either gender, although it has been argued that in reality, such policies have still been elaborated around the traditional model of the father as earner and the mother as carer (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). This is linked to equally traditional strong beliefs in regard to long-hours culture (Cooper and Lewis, 1995; Stam and Coleman, 2010). Gambles et al. (2006) examine a work-home interface which presents work as prioritised over everything else in life, including family. In such an approach, WLB policies would be seen as little more than a *"quick fix"* type of approach (Gambles *et al.*, 2006, p. 56). Conversely, if WLB policies were to start targeting individuals who were interested in looking holistically at their lifestyles, and pursuing broader life goals, then individuals and organisations would have to address the gap between their policies and their mindsets (Gambles *et al*., 2006). Lewis and Humbert (2010) raise the question of challenging organisational norms, values and assumptions first, in order to successfully embrace family-friendly policies in the workplace. Lockwood (2003) concludes that it is important to carry out a detailed assessment of organisations' DNA and to understand their cultural implications before elaborating and implementing WLB policies.

Concerning the tangible return on WLB practices, although Smeaton et al. (2014) report businesses having more administrative burdens than real costs related to the implementation of flexible working, there is an ongoing debate as to the requirement to demonstrate WLB returns on investment (Lockwood, 2003). Researchers and practitioners have struggled to demonstrate WLB return on investment in a quantifiable way, where the majority of the evidence is

based on employees' perceptions of ability to deal with work-family conflict or the likelihood of leaving the employer (Lockwood, 2003).

Additional challenges to be taken into account when implementing WLB practices include peer pressure, the ageing population, and finally the impact of technology on WLB.

Peer pressure

Some studies have explored peer perceptions of individuals who make use of WLB provision. For example, Beauregard and Henry (2009) found that WLB benefits users are perceived by their work colleagues and senior staff as being less committed and less suitable for career advancement and training. Tipping et al. (2012) outlined that around one third of employees felt that flexible workers created more work for their peers. Gambles et al. (2006) explain that individuals are also concerned with overloading their peers because normally companies, in order to be efficient, operate high levels of productivity allocating unrealistic workload to individuals anyway, consequently employees feel concerned with being an extra burden by taking time off and adding even more work to their peers' schedules. From the male perspective, Burnett et al. (2012) highlight the importance of peers in supporting WLB and how some fathers even felt like undermined by their peers for taking up WLB provisions.

The ageing population

The ageing population phenomenon brings two main considerations for the practice of WLB. Firstly, individuals will be working longer (Barnes *et al.*, 2009) and secondly demands for caregiving will include elderly care (Smeaton *et al.*, 2014). Barnes et al. (2009) identified some interesting statistics to demonstrate the size of the problem concerning the ageing population. Firstly, in the UK between 1971 and 2006 the population aged 65 plus increased by 31 percent as opposed to the population aged 16 or less, which decreased by 19 percent. Secondly, it is projected that one third of the population will be over 50 by 2020. Thirdly, there are estimates that the ratio between working and retired ages will drop from 3.3 in 2006 to 2.9 by 2031, escalating major costs to state pensions

and making it impossible for workers currently contributing to have access to a state pension in the future. The use of part-time hours and downscaling of responsibilities can benefit the ageing workforce considerably, providing a gradual transition towards retirement which may promote well-being (Roberts, 2007). Barnes et al. (2009) also make an interesting observation that although there is an increase in availability for flexible working, this does not seem to be filtering through to the ageing workforce and is instead focused on childcare (Barnes *et al*., 2009).

As per elderly caregiving, from an employer's perspective this suggests the need to shift the mentality of seeing the role of a carer as limited to looking after children, and instead understanding the needs of each carer based on individual circumstances and depending on the profile of the people who are being cared for (Barnes *et al*., 2009; Pickard, 2004). Smeaton et al. (2014) report on the numbers of adults caring for elderly which has increased from around 5% in 2001 to 9.1% in 2010. Five million adults in England provide care for a sick, elderly or disabled person (Smeaton *et al*., 2014). Hooker et al. (2007) reported that more than 34% of those caring for other adults provide care for over 11 hours per week. With ageing demographics in the population, the requirement to source care for the elderly has become an issue for the government and wider society. Hogarth et al. (2000) highlight that WLB practice plays an important role in supporting the Government agenda to deal with increased demand for elderly care.

Technology

Evidence concerning technology and WLB is mixed suggesting that both positive and negative spillover between work and home exist, due to the increased use of technology (Duxbury *et al*., 2014; Grant *et al*., 2013; Nam, 2013). Grant et al. (2013) explain that although technology has improved work-life balance for some individuals in terms of decreasing commuting time or managing work with childcare; others struggled having to manage work, family and restoration activities in the same place due to unclear boundaries between them. Duxbury et al. (2014) explain that this issue is very much related to individuals' preferences as to how they manage and reconcile work and life

outside work, for example keeping these separate or integrated. Nam (2013) further explains that with increased technology, the boundaries between these spheres becomes blurred, making the workload heavier and unmanageable. This in turn leads to stress. Equally, Grant et al., (2013) highlights that one of the key benefits of technology is the ability to work from home which is associated with better productivity and reduced cortisol and stress.

Thus it is argued, organisations should support individuals in understanding their preferences and developing their personal strategies to deal with the issues related to the negative impact of technology (Duxbury *et al*., 2014). Equally, organisations must be aware of the necessity to mitigate the mindset and expectations of 24/7 availability, even though this has been enabled by technology. This amounts to respecting employees' space and time outside working hours (Nam, 2013). Gambles et al. (2006) outline the use of technology in terms of work invasiveness and how professionals are expected to be available to attend to work demands at any time via technology, particularly in the global context across different time zones.

Nevertheless there are WLB issues for e-working in terms of unrealistic demands from employers to be on-line all the time or even self-control from the individual's perspective in terms of making themselves available in a first place. Symon et al. (2014) launched a project called "the digital brain switch". The research team highlights that with digital technology, the concept of WLB and role boundary management evolved from a micro-transition between work and life identities to the concept of instant "switches". Although the speed and permeability of these identities switches might instantly enhance the performance amongst other roles, it also can cause conflict and confusion particularly when experience from one role is perceived as negative. In this case, negative feelings are blended into one entity making it harder for individuals to understand what belongs to what and switching back without carrying over unhelpful emotions and concerns. Providing that the digital era is already embedded in current ways of working, socialising and living in general, the challenge for WLB researchers then become to help individuals to uncover and deploy boundaries suitable to on-line/off-line presence but most importantly

to develop self-awareness and monitor how the "switch" between roles are triggered, reflect on their own switch experiences and make positive changes to improve their WLB in the context of the digital world (Symon *et al*., 2014).

2.3.3 The role of the manager in the application of WLB

There is ample evidence demonstrating the decisive role of management in ensuring successful implementation of WLB (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Managers have the power to support the take-up of WLB initiatives, or indeed discourage employees from this. Straub (2012) points out that managers can be gatekeepers as they can control the access to WLB initiatives. Policies are often informal and based on management discretion (Hyman & Summers, 2004) but even with formal policies managers appear to have direct influence on take-up (Dex and Scheibl, 1999; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Kossek et al. (2011) link perceptions of supervisor work-life support with employees' perceptions of managerial care concerning their well-being.

Hammer et al. (2009) described supportive managerial behaviours towards WLB in four dimensions, emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling behaviours, and creative work-life management. Emotional support means managerial empathy towards subordinate's WLB. Instrumental support happens when managers act on subordinates, work-life needs on a regular basis. Modelling behaviours is when a manager leads by example demonstrating how to balance their work-life behaviours. The last dimension is creative work-life management which means managerial initiatives towards proactively creating new ways to ensure subordinates' WLB will be effective.

Kumra and Manfredi (2012) highlight the importance of all levels of management in driving the application of WLB practices but also observe that there is considerable managerial resistance to doing so. There are various factors which might justify this resistance, including the perceived administration burden (Visser and Williams, 2007), perceived costs, lack of training including knowledge of statutory policies, lack of control, managers overlooking their own WLB needs (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012) and failure to buy into the concept (Lockwood, 2003;Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Lockwood (2003) suggests that it is essential for the Humans Resources function to evaluate certain critical

aspects of WLB policies, including that of management philosophy, starting with senior managers.

It seems unrealistic to develop managers to become WLB champions if they have not experienced the benefits of WLB themselves (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012), or if they lack confidence or training in dealing with WLB requests (Hyman & Summers, 2004; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Moreover, one study (Visser and Williams 2007) suggests that if their only experience with WLB has been of an increased administrative burden they may be reluctant to drive WLB initiatives, on the grounds that it is too time consuming to manage employees using such provisions. Nadeem and Metcalf (2007) report an association between WLB practice visibility and awareness, and positive managerial attitudes towards work-life balance. Lewis et al. (2007) highlight that it is part of the management role to accomplish a "dual agenda" and to reasonably accommodate individual WLB requests as a strategic decision for any organisation.

2.3.4 WLB in the international professional environment

This section of the research examines the nature of Work-life Balance in an international professional environment where employees are expected to work in different time zones and/or across borders. Typically this may require a readiness for operating on-line to meet different time zones, international mobility and long travelling hours as part of long or short term business assignments. As a consequence of this requirement, individuals building a professional career may experience extra time-linked demands on their lives and those of their families, and conflicting choices in furthering the needs of family and career (Hardill, 2003; Gambles *et al*., 2006; Lewis *et al*., 2007; Makela and Suutari, 2015). For example, either professional mobility demands may result in workers being unavailable for regular weekly social life and commitments of their family and friends, or needing to impose an expatriate lifestyle on the whole family in order to sustain family life.

2.3.4.0 WLB and international professionals

There is a large body of research trying to address WLB for professionals, particularly white-collar parents, heterosexual and from dual-career households

where demands from work and family are intense and shared amongst men and women in a gendered way (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Lewis *et al*., 2007; Murphy and Doherty, 2011). Such studies have been criticised by their narrow contribution aimed at a very specific social class which does not represent the reality of a large population of lower-status workers who tend to have less access to WLB policies in the first place (Casper *et al*., 2007). Nevertheless, particularly in dual-career households WLB studies are still very popular in order to address career disadvantages for female professionals after having children due to persistent traditional gender norms placing childcare and domestic work as their primary responsibility on top of their careers (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Lewis *et al*., 2007).

Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) surveyed more than 800 business professionals attempting to "have it all" in their daily lives: that is, a successful career and a happy home life. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) contended that work life and the rest of life should be integrated and receive equal attention, instead of being submitted to constant trade-offs between time and energy in competing domains which is possible in the professional environment due to the high level of autonomy in terms of time and place to work. These authors argued that integration could be achieved by understanding what really matters for all domains in life; this would mean connecting one's choices to one's personal values, while minimising personal dissatisfaction and psychological absence. This extensive study by Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) also demonstrates some interesting conclusions as to the role of gender in the ways people approach their Work-Life Balance. The main hindrance to WLB, and a source of conflict among both genders appeared to be the issue of psychological presence rather than time. The women in the study found it hard to reconcile home-work conflict because their psychological presence remained primarily at home. In contrast, the psychological presence of men was found to be mainly at work. In other words, a successful man at work is a successful man at home, because worries about work do not interfere with a man's psychological presence at home. The challenge for women is to invest equal energy and time between home and work whilst for men it is to leave work at work.

However the professional environment does not only present benefits associated with WLB access and autonomy of time and place of work, it also outlines some hindering WLB elements. This is the case particularly for part of the sample within this study where international career mobility is part of the job. For example, in line with increasing internationalisation and globalisation driven by multinational companies, research interest has started to cover the area of global careers and work mobility (Harris, 2004). Certain directions in this body of research, relevant to this study, include expatriation WLB issues (Lovvorn and Chen, 2011) including the importance of WLB policies for international mobility (Shortland and Cummins, 2007) and the expansion of international mobility to include the impact of business travel on flexpatriate (Makela and Suutari, 2015; Mayerhofer *et al*., 2004; Welch and Worm, 2006; Westman and Etzioni, 2002).

2.3.4.1 Expatriates

Expatriates may be defined as professionals who are invited to relocate, normally with their families, to another country to deliver a specific project or assignment for a prolonged period of time (Hardill, 2003). Although this type of career opportunity is ideal for enhancing an individual's cultural experiences (Lovvorn and Chen, 2011), it inevitably invites substantial WLB challenges for the international worker (Shortland and Cummins, 2007), due to additional pressure to deliver results whilst managing family life and integrating it into a new lifestyle. This pressure may be the cause of the considerable failure rate of international assignments (Makela and Suutari, 2015; Shaffer and Harrinson, 2008). Usually companies, with WLB values, promote WLB culture only inside the workers' home countries and not abroad (Shortland and Cummings, 2007).

There is also recognition that the increase in numbers of professionally educated women, and the increased prevalence of dual-career couples (Hughes, 2013) has led to a trend wherein spouses become resistant to the idea of family migration if it means risking their own career (Kierner, 2015). In terms of gender and expatriation, Altman and Shortland (2008) reported that while women's participation rates were increasing, men were beginning to decline international transfers. Reasons put forward in the review included the

impact on dual career house-holds, family disruption and career uncertainties on repatriation. Haslberger (2010) elaborates further this claim by highlighting that the adjustment levels of male and female expatriates appear somewhat different. Female expatriates demonstrate better adjustment to international assignments, particularly in areas of building up and maintaining relationships with host nationals. However, Altman and Shortland's (2008) outline other gender differences in expatriation experiences, such as job satisfaction being less likely for women than men. Altman and Shortland (2008) concluded that testing out differences and similarities between genders has become one of the leading trends of this body of research.

2.3.4.2 Flexpatriates

Unlike expatriates, the flexpatriate group appear to have been neglected by International Human Resources Management, even though the constant change in business circumstances, and technological progress have raised a greater demand for international business travellers rather than for long term expatriates Mayerhofer et al. (2004) state that WLB is the most mentioned problem associated with international work because the interface between family and work creates tension and potential conflict on a regular basis in order to accommodate travel. It can be argued, therefore, that there is a need for International Human Resources Management to further support flexpatriates, particularly because of the negative impact on WLB, as opposed to leaving it to the individual to address international travel as a domestic issue.

There is evidence to show the implications of business travel in terms of the negative impact of business separation and work intensification (Stahl and Bjorkman, 2006). However, the literature on flexpatriates is almost non-existent, particularly in regard to gender and WLB (Fischmayr and Kollinger, 2010; Makela *et al*., 2011). Mayerhofer et al. (2004) defines flexpatriates as individuals engaged in unaccompanied international mobility for a short period of time, such as business travel. This group of international workers hold a job in their home country which comes with duties and responsibilities abroad. DeFrank et al. (2000) define three typical separate stages of business travel: pre-trip, on-trip and post-trip, all three of these stages may require WLB

reconciliation or produce different levels of stress. DeFrank et al. (2000) argue that the pre- and post-trip stages are the most stressful. These require intense family reconciliation, pre-trip making arrangements to compensate for the absence, and post-trip making up for the absence. Westman and Etzioni (2002) suggested that women feel more stressed than men on returning from business trips, because the backlog of work at home seems to be greater for women than for men. Likewise, the majority of the research on flexipatriates barely acknowledges potential gender differences between men and women. Fischmayr and Kollinger (2010) suggested that work-family tension and conflict for female business travellers might be higher than for men because their belief in traditional gender roles might clash with their inability to contribute to the household at the same pace and intensity whilst travelling, as they might while at home. Covering for their absence would also requires more preparation and arrangements than it would for men.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter was divided into three main sections. The first section explained the evolution of the WLB debate and how the organisation and development of families in the last century were severely affected by the transformation of paid work and lack of synchronisation between gender roles (Crompton *et al.*, 2007). Then it explored the imbalance between the roles of men and women in relation to family and work, and how this has over time resulted in potential family conflict (Hochschild, 1989) and gender inequality issues (Doherty, 2004; Kumra and Manfredri, 2012; Lewis *et al.* 2007; Murphy and Doherty, 2011). Then it moved on exploring work life interface and boundary management approaches (Clark, 2000; Kossek and Lambert, 2006; Lewis *et al.*, 2007; Kossek *et al.*, 2012; Staines, 1980) in order to understand how the process of reconciliation between work and rest of life happens from individuals' perspectives.

The second section introduced the other side of the coin, the male perspective, particularly the work on fathers, who now need to fulfil the expectations of the traditional provider role, while being "hands-on daddies" and responding to increased female pressure to share in domestic work (Dermott 2008; Haas and Hwang, 2007; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). It explained how WLB from the

male perspective had been affected by the need for fairer sharing of paid and unpaid work between men and women, and is economically and socially inevitable (Haas and Hwang, 2008). This section also addressed the conflicts related to masculinity, by examining changes in role expectations and male resistance to the dual earner model (Dermott, 2006; 2008; Gatrell *et al*., 2012; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Miller 2011). Lastly, it explored the intergenerational influences on gender roles (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006; Townsend, 2002).

The third section was aimed at understanding WLB and employment from a practice point of view. It explained how the application of WLB policies strongly rely on a WLB culture (Lewis and Humbert, 2010) and how a gendered approach is needed in organisation studies (Acker, 1990; Crawford and Mill, 2011; Gehardi and Poggio, 2001) particularly for male dominated organisational cultures (Roper, 2003; Lewis and Humbert, 2010). This section also explored the policy response concerning long working hours culture when compared to the rest of Europe (Stam and Coleman, 2010). It covered how in the UK childcare provision has started to include men in recognition that equality at work can only be attained with equality at home (Haas and Hwang, 2007). This section also discussed the WLB practice in organisations, taking into consideration its advantages and challenges for implementation. It was then followed a review of the line managers' roles in implementing WLB policies (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012) and managerial WLB positive behaviours (Hammer et al.; 2009). Finally this section examined WLB in the professional environment and explored two main aspects in this context: 1. how WLB differs for male and female professionals (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000) and 2. the impact of professional mobility on WLB (Harhill, 2013; Shortland and Cummins, 2007; Welch and Worm, 2006). The research methodology and methods applied in this study of WLB from the male perspective, is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines and justifies the methodological choices adopted to undertake this *exploratory* study. The main aim of the research is to investigate *how male professionals think, behave and feel about work-life balance (WLB).* Specifically, the research explores any inconsistencies between how men make sense of WLB from the standpoint of their views and their actual behaviours. Therefore, in order to access this type of *qualitative* data which described their views and experiences, interaction with the respondents was deemed essential. This chapter also explains how *critical realism* has been identified as the most appropriate philosophical position for the nature of this investigation and rationalises why an interview research method has been adopted as a sole qualitative research strategy. Final sections of this chapter also cover issues of data analysis, ethics, reflexivity and the limitations of the approaches and methods adopted, particularly in the context of a practitioner-researcher inquiry.

3.1 Philosophical Approach

Work-life balance is a phenomenon which we all experience on a daily basis and it is known through our minds and constructed meanings. However, it does not mean that there is not a reality external to each actor of this phenomenon. There is strong evidence outlining that there is a gender reality created by social structures which impacts on how WLB is experienced by men and women (Burnett *et al.*, 2010; Haas *et al.*, 2000; Lewis, 2007). Therefore, it is suggested that individuals cannot totally create their own WLB reality as they wish. Bhaskar (1978) suggests that individuals can only reproduce or transform collective social structures but they cannot create them. In other words, there is an external gender reality from each social actor influencing their actions and wishes concerning their personal experiences with WLB. For example, a male employee who wants to apply for flexible working might have his WLB experience changed if working for an organisation with traditional gender values favouring women over men (Levine and Pittinsky, 1997). Burnett et al. (2010) explain that although there is a visible social transformation of the paternal

roles, organisations are not following this change yet and still retain traditional values and cultures.

From a philosophical perspective, this study is positioning WLB as a gendered phenomenon (Gatrell *et al*., 2012; Haas *et al*., 2000; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997; Lewis and Humbert, 2010) and is taking an ontological position where there is a gender work-life balance reality (social mechanisms around the male gender role) which seems to be independent from the actors of this phenomenon. Equally, a qualitative approach seems to be more aligned with the purpose of this study as it enables an exploring and gathering of deep insights on individuals' own perspectives and experiences (Ritchie *et al*., 2014) concerning the WLB gender reality in this case. Epistemologically speaking, Willig (2013) suggests three main ways of approaching the production of knowledge through qualitative research: realist knowledge (where researchers try to capture what is happening in reality), phenomenological knowledge (where researchers capture respondents' experiences and feelings but do not claim to investigate causes and influences) and social constructivist knowledge (where data comes from the construction of different versions of realities dependent on the actors). Willig states*:*

 "In realist knowledge, social processes are real, they characterize or even determine the behaviour and/or the thinking of participants, irrespective of whether or not the researcher participants are aware of it" (Willig, 2013, p. 15).

This is particularly important for this research in order to enable scrutiny of any differences between how participants think about their WLB experiences and their actual behaviours and feelings. Using Greenhaus and Allen's (2011) definition of work-life balance in terms of the consistency between work-life roles satisfaction/effectiveness with life priorities for example, it is insightful to explore gaps between respondents' constructions around life priorities and their actual allocation of resources to various domains in life.

Hartwig (2007) observes that while positivists may see theories as testable through observations, and found to be "true" or "false", or somewhere in between, on the basis of that testing, realists conversely take the position that "observations" cannot be separated from "theories". Several types of realism

are believed to exist, based on varying perspectives on how to understand and describe world phenomena (Madill *et al*., 2000). These range from naïve realism theory, based on a belief that reality can be described accurately and objectively (Madill *et al*., 2000) to critical realism theory, where multiple perspectives of the same reality are admissible as contributing to understanding (Hammersley, 1992). In the social sciences the most commonly adopted approach to realism is *critical realism* (Bhaskar, 1998; Hammersley, 1992). In critical realism there is a clear distinction between ontology and epistemology, thus giving rise to the possibility of conflicting ontological and epistemological positions coexisting within a single piece of social research. Frazer and Lacey (1993), for instance, highlight the possibility of a researcher taking a realistic view of studied phenomena from an ontological perspective, while equally taking an epistemologically interpretivist position; in other words, that:

> *"Knowledge of the world is inevitably interpretive and provisional rather than straightforwardly representational"* (Frazer & Lacey, 1993, p. 182).

Frazer and Lacey (1993) argue that it is possible to accept a world view as independent of the human mind, while conceding that human beings cannot possess absolute knowledge of everything in that world. Indeed, human beings can only understand their world by interpreting what is accessible to them, whilst creating knowledge about that world through socially constructed meanings (Blaikie, 2007). This is not to say that no reality exists independent of such interpretation; rather it says that it is difficult to access this reality by observation without the human views (Archer et al., 1998). Scott (2005) also reflects this critical realist paradigm, in acknowledging the existence of an independent reality, while equally rejecting the possibility of absolute knowledge of that same reality. Consequently, in the context of this study, the ontological position will follow on from a "critical" realism perspective of the research, that reality is external to the social actors (respondents) involved. In this position, the researcher also accepts that important differences may arise between each respondent's perceptions and interpretations in regard to the same reality context, and believes that this difference may enhance the overall understanding of the WLB phenomenon for men as the research focus. For the purposes of exploring the meaning of WLB as socially constructed in the minds

of individual respondents, a qualitative approach is deemed to be most appropriate as the instrument of investigation (Ritchie *et al*., 2014). Furthermore, Willig (2013) outlines that in critical realism the data does assume a description of the real: "It proposes that data needs to be interpreted in order to further our understanding of the underlying structures which generate the phenomena we are trying to gain knowledge about" (Willig, 2013, p. 16). Thus, epistemologically speaking, this study adopts an interpretivist position and accepts that a value-free output is not attainable in the handling of qualitative data. Similarly, it is held that observations of reality in this context can only be assessed in a consensual way.

As to transparency in how theory was formed in this study, either through, testing (deductive) or creation (inductive), it is important to clarify that this research uses mainly an inductive method by means of interviews in order to develop theory based on the evidence gathered from respondents. Richards and Richards (1994) state that in qualitative research theory is always constructed, even though Blaikie (2007) qualified this by stating that qualitative research cannot be purely inductive. There will always be an element of deduction, given that no researcher can bring an entirely blank mind to interviews, instead, it is expected that the researcher will have a good pre-understanding of the field, informed at least by a thorough literature review. In this research the interview schedule was based on WLB existing literature which could be perceived as a form of deduction as suggested by Blaikie (2007).

3.1.0 Critical realism and interview research

Ritchie et al. (2014) highlight similarities between this view of critical realism and the interpretivist framework. Both focus on and emphasise the importance of understanding individuals' perspectives when experiencing and describing a particular phenomenon in the context of their lives. For these reasons, interviews can be a suitable method in critical realist studies (Smith and Elger, 2013). Smith and Elger (2013) explain that in critical realism, interviews are the method which enables researchers to investigate perspectives and actions as experienced by actors. Smith and Elger (2013) highlight the theory-led

interviewing approach in critical realism. This approach means that knowledge is created by both, where researcher and participant deploy different types of expertise. The researcher has the expertise to provide wider contexts and conceptualisations while the participant has the expertise to explain the reasons, motivations and choices. With this approach the interview questions must be aligned with an analytical framework providing direction, context and complexity for the accounts developed during the interview (Smith and Elger, 2013). Equally, interviews alone are not adequate to analyse mechanisms influencing deep social structures which is why Smith and Elger (2013) suggest that in critical realist interviews accounts need to be subject to critical scrutiny in relation to other sources like observation, documents and other interviews. Smith and Elger (2013) refer to critical scrutiny as a feature of realist ethnographic interviews which assumes that ethnographies are socially constructed and which emphasises the importance of the researcher's reflexivity in the process of knowledge creation. This type of interview also raises the point that reality of knowledge gathered during the interview cannot be taken for granted and therefore accounts must be subject to critical scrutiny (Smith and Elger, 2013). This means a deep examination of "information" and "perspectives" concerning alternative paths of action and reasons for decision-making processes (Smith and Elger, 2013). Rees and Gatenby (2014) highlight that critical realist researchers can still benefit from deploying ethnographic techniques even when a whole ethnographic method is not suitable.

This inquiry is not totally a realist ethnographic interview research either, as it is not focusing on how respondents describe and explain the social worlds they live in (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This is part of understanding the context but not the aim of this research. This research is interested in exploring what male respondents say about work-life balance, what they actually do about it and how they have related themselves to traditional gender role expectations throughout their professional careers. Consequently, this study is proposing to develop a critical realist interview inquiry based on a theory-driven approach with some aspects from the realist ethnographic interview, as also suggested by Smith and Elger (2013). This will be achieved by using existing theoretical frameworks to guide the collection and analysis of the data whilst securing information

concerning the context of accounts given by each respondent during each interview – this refers to the critical realist theory-driven approach (Smith and Elger, 2013). It also deploys critical scrutiny (Smith and Elger, 2013) by categorising the questions in a way that would enable the examination of the gap between what people say and what they do – this refers to the realist ethnographic approach (Smith and Elger, 2013). This research is also adopting reflexivity as an aid to improve the accuracy of data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), particularly to explore the first layers of insights concerning the social world (Smith and Elger, 2013). Despite the above, the main criticism of any critical realist interview is the limit for accessing the whole picture in terms of causal impact of external factors on human action (Smith and Elger, 2013) which limits its contribution to human thought, meaning and experience. Archer (1998) highlighted that deep levels of social structures are not uncovered by interviewing respondents about them and positioned the contribution of interviews as a starting point of the social inquiry which seems to be adequate for this study. The research question is not specific but generic with the aim to narrow the WLB research gap between women and men whilst providing the starting point for further studies on WLB and men which then might provide more specific contributions. Furthermore, the research question and the nature of this inquiry presented some specific elements which limited the options available in terms of research strategies and approaches. Such elements included not only a more generic research question but also three parts to it; the think, the behave, and the feel of WLB male experiences with a particular focus on examining any contradiction between them. Lastly, this research had the ambition of recruiting a large sample of respondents in order to explore the patterns across a sizeable set of data, making allocation of resources and time even more difficult. Nevertheless, further methodological alternatives were carefully taken into consideration and such deliberations are explained below in terms of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Critical Interview Technique and Case Study.

The first consideration was to adopt the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework which is suitable to understand the deeper layers of the social structures and specific problems (Smith and Osborn, 2008)

concerning WLB for each respondent. IPA could provide a framework to explore the coherence and mismatches between what male respondents say and what they actually do about WLB. However, IPA explores and presents the data from each respondent separately (Smith and Osborn, 2008) instead of reporting patterns across a large data set which was been scoped in this research. Furthermore, in this case the research scope would also need to have a narrower research question, be temporal and have only a few respondents in order to be more aligned with an IPA approach. Consequently, IPA was also regarded unsuitable for the research question and aim.

Another interesting approach suggested by Chell (1998) is the Critical Interview Technique. This technique enables the investigation of significant events identified by each respondent in relation to positive or negative outcomes. The technique focuses on individuals' cognitive and behavioural elements in the context of an incident from the respondents' perspectives. This technique would be particularly suitable for an evaluation of how men behave in relation to WLB which is one of the elements of the research question. Although this was the focus of some of the interview questions, for example when respondents were asked to give critical incident examples of work-life reconciliation (appendix 2), it was not the focus of the research as a whole. Therefore, some parts of the interview schedule adopted the critical interview technique but it did not follow a critical analytical framework. This was because WLB behaviours were not the aspect of this inquiry. Thus, the reason for seeking insights concerning behaviours was not to underpin what behavioural attributes were responsible for a particular WLB incident. It was more focused on exploring the gap between what male respondents say and what they actually do about work-life balance and most importantly if their behaviours were in alignment with their role centralities and identities.

Lastly, in terms of strategy, it is important to recognise that this WLB research study, at first glance, also fits very well also with the case study approach (Smith and Elger, 2013). For example, it focuses on the case (male professionals), which cannot be considered in isolation (gender social structures and context influencing their experiences), respondents come from the same

organisational (potentially definable boundaries within the study) and this study is concerned with new theory generation or expansion of existing theoretical frameworks (Willig, 2013). However, closer examination of the features of the case study approach highlights there are also some key gaps if this research adopts a case study design. Willig (2013) lists five key characteristics of case studies. The first is the idiographic perspective, which is concerned with the particular not the general (this research is not exploring a particular aspect of WLB such as male professionals who made flexible working requests; the research question is generic and allows the respondents to share passages in their lives which better represent their experiences and views on WLB). The second is the attention to the contextual data (although all respondents are professionals working from the same organisation, the context of the data will be varied and generated from their views and experiences throughout their lives and not only from their current employer). The third characteristic is triangulation (additional sources of evidence depend on experiences at the time of the occurrence; for example, a male respondent describing his experience with paternity leave 15 years ago). The fourth is a temporal element, as the case study takes place over a period of time (this research is not defining time and is exploring WLB accounts from past, present and future). The fifth characteristic is that the case study is concerned with theory (this is the only feature which has been met by this research).

Furthermore, there were other types of qualitative methods which could be used to enhance the scrutiny between the "think, behave and feel" aspect of the research question. Additional methods could be valuable to enable further insights concerning the decision-making process during the transition between life domains and potential regrets. For example, this study could adopt diaries or personal video recordings as used by Symon et al. (2014) in order to explore work-life switches and the dynamics of the micro transitions between the roles. However, the access to the respondents became limited due to the ambition of interviewing a large number of (40) respondents with an extensive schedule which lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. Thus the interview time with the respondents were taken from their normal working days. The average hourly rate of these professionals varied from £200 to £500 making the cost for the

organisation already very high. Furthermore, due to the sensitive nature of the interview schedule, like exploring the meaning of being a father, life change events, etc, the use of personal diaries and videos would require further ethical considerations and more complex control measures which would create difficulties to manage within a large sample.

3.2 Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy and plan adopted in order to answer the research question in a logical way (Saunders *et al*., 2012). Realists such as Bhaskar (1998) have represented research design as being framed by "scientific" criteria. Saunders et al. (2012) suggest seven topics to be considered when designing a piece of research: 1. *Purpos*e (exploratory, explanatory or descriptive); 2. S*trategy* (such as experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography or archival research); 3.*Method* (i.e. qualitative, quantitative or mixed); 4. *Data collection and analysis* (sample, data collection instrument and data analysis – on an inductive or deductive basis); 5.*Time horizons* (longitudinal or cross-sectional); 6. *Credibility* (reliability, validity -internal and external); and 7. *Ethics.*

Using these seven topics as reference, the subsequent sections outline the research design adopted for this study.

3.2.1 Purpose of study

Saunders et al. (2012) reflected that the type of research undertaken would depend on the purpose of the inquiry; as such, researchers are encouraged to reflect closely on the research question and to set clear objectives in answering that question. They went on to list three main types of study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Exploratory has a broad focus on what is happening and new insights concerning the phenomena. Descriptive has clear picture of the phenomena prior to investigation and aims to provide accurate profiles on specific persons, events or situations. Explanatory has causal relationships between variables to explain a situation.

Therefore, in order to identify the most appropriate type of research for this investigation, the research question of the study was used as the starting point. (*What* do *male professionals think, behave and feel about WLB?*). The purpose

behind this question was to access deep information which would provide new insights into the phenomenon of WLB for male professionals. Given the research purpose, it would appear that an exploratory qualitative study might usefully be undertaken, particularly if it could offer a powerful framework for understanding the male experience of WLB. Considering the gender element of the nature of this study it was also recognised that an explanatory (also known as causal) type of research might usefully enable a comparison between the ways in which men and women experience different WLB situations. However, the research question entailed gaining insights into men's feelings, motivations and actions concerning WLB and not focusing on the actual association between men and women.

3.2.2 Research strategy and methods

As mentioned previously, qualitative research was deemed to be the most appropriate choice to answer the research question. Ritchie et al. (2014) described a major contextual feature of qualitative research as:

"*Its facility to describe and display phenomena as experienced by the study population, in fine-tuned detail and in the study participants' own terms*" (Ritchie *et al*., 2014, p. 31).

Quantitative methods like questionnaires, for example, were regarded as inappropriate for this inquiry. This type of methods risked limiting access to the depth of information required to provide insights into the "what", "how" and "why" of the phenomena under scrutiny (Saunders *et al*., 2012), in this instance the ways in which WLB is experienced by male professionals. Consequently, it became clear that two main methods could appropriately be adopted for this research, that of focus groups and that of interviews. Focus groups were an attractive option in terms of helping respondents to interchange ideas in order to better explain their accounts and understand their own feelings and views. Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 56) highlight focus groups as "used where group process – the interaction between participants – will itself illuminate the research issue". It was envisaged in using this option that individuals would be encouraged to talk to each other about WLB, and to start to make meaning of their ideas concerning WLB. This would open the groups up to differences of opinion, which in turn would be discussed with possible points of agreement emerging.

Whilst the nature of such focus groups seems to promise rich rewards, it could not, however, be ignored that WLB is a subject where the researcher is dealing with an enormous amount of personal information and in many cases deeply rooted and sensitive stories. Birks and Mills (2011) point out that some respondents are more reserved and will feel less comfortable talking in a group, preferring a one-to-one situation instead. Given the importance of maintaining an ethical perspective, this method was found to be less appropriate than that of interviews, which thus remained the chosen method for the research. In hindsight, this seemed to have been the wisest choice, given certain respondents' emotional reactions during interviews when they talked about their WLB choices, particularly concerning their children.

Although interviews in general can be a popular method in critical realist research (Smith and Elger, 2013), there exist some interesting debates as to how much of the knowledge constructed during the interview is derived from the interviewee and how much from the interviewer (Kvale, 1996; Ritchie *et al*., 2014). Kvale (1996) describes certain theoretical implications of interview research by using the "miner and traveller" metaphor. One is being a miner when knowledge is represented as a rare and hidden metal and the interviewer is seeking to unearth the treasure. On the other hand, one is being a traveller when the search for knowledge is seen as a journey, the interview being an episode when tales are shared with others which the traveller can then carry home. The traveller metaphor refers to a constructive understanding that both interviewer and interviewee engage heuristically in conversation as research, together generating knowledge (Kvale, 1996). Although it is common to hear of the research interview method being dismissed for a lack of objectivity, Kvale (1996) highlights that interviews can serve as a scientific method of research with structure and purpose. Kvale (1996) also argued even though a single interview cannot be replicated, different interviewers following similar procedures and schedules may commonly come up with similar results. In interviews, objectivity is known as intersubjective agreement where knowledge has been checked and verified with all respondents involved, whilst controlled and undistorted by the interviewer's personal bias and prejudice (Kvale, 1996).

Equally, Saunders et al. (2012) point out the importance of a research strategy in aiding the researcher to answer their research question. Consequently, it can be argued that interview research on its own is not enough to ensure that the research question is answered and therefore it can be seen as a risk to validity. However, Kvale (1996), with "the stages of interview research", provides a framework to be applied in an interview investigation which covers all elements under the research design and is aimed at ensuring the interview investigation answers the research question. The stages are: 1. Thematising – interview questions aligned with the purpose and linked with the research question; 2. Designing – interview research instrument, sample, access and ethics; 3. Interviewing – reflective approach; 4. Transcribing – preparing data for analysis; 5. Analysing – method of analysis aligned with research purpose; 6. Verifying – reliability and validity; and 7. Reporting – communicating findings in a scientific manner. This research is adopting the seven stages of interview research by Kvale (1996) to improve credibility and ensure the research question is answered (refer to Appendix 5). In addition, a qualitative analysis framework was also deployed to assist with the data analysis stage. This framework approach to analysis, as proposed by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), has been used in large-scale policy research since the 1980s at Qualitative Research Unit at the National Centre for Social Research in the UK.

3.2.3 Data collection and sample

This section highlights the tools and techniques used in order to collect the data. This includes explanations concerning the type of interview, interview questions and sample. Kvale (1996) states that semi-structured interviews tend to be guided by a schedule indicating the topics to be discussed, while the question sequence aims to contribute thematically to knowledge production, and dynamically to an interactive flow. Furthermore, in critical realism, theory-led approach interviews have a structure based on existing theories, and even realist ethnographic interviews also have some level of structure with an agenda aligned with the research question (Smith and Elger, 2013).

Therefore this research proposes an interview schedule with three main categories for discussion. The first category captures individuals' views and meanings with respect to their paid work and, for individuals' contextualisation,

also their life outside work. These sets of questions were critical for enhancing the researcher's ability to understand the world from the participants' point of view whilst bracketing some general assumptions derived from the literature review. For example, a question might aim to capture their personal meaning of deciding to prioritise being a father over assuming the stereotypical role of male breadwinner. The second category gathers personal information and examples on how individuals reconciled and balanced work and life outside work. This includes, for example, descriptions of their personal WLB strategies. Critical scrutiny concerning the gap between what people say about WLB and what they actually do was possible by using these two separate categories of questions. Initially, by exploring their motives and views and then by asking participants for information related to their experiences in practice. Finally, the third category focuses on individuals' description of their WLB experiences with employment.

The interview schedule was important to contribute thematically to knowledge production and to help with the flow. However, it was not possible to follow the whole schedule during all interviews. This was for two reasons; first, the investigation needed to allow respondents to demonstrate their perspectives by spending more time with topics they were more concerned with. At the beginning of each interview a summary of the topics to be covered was introduced and the role of the interview schedule was explained to them. The second reason was that although the interviewer tried to manage the interview situation by bringing the respondents back to schedule (when they started taking a lot of time to share experiences about a new tennis club or a specific account about a trip around the world), there were also situations where directing the respondents back to the schedule was not appropriate. For example, two cases in particular did not even reach the second set of questions as the respondents were clearly not ready to proceed. The first one was a mother who notably got upset talking about her role as a mother and the dilemmas, choices and guilt she experienced going back to work after childbirth. The second example was a male respondent who started describing the meaning of work-life balance by sharing a negative experience (for the whole of

the interview) concerning an international assignment in Australia and how it was traumatic for himself and his family.

The duration of each interview varied from 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded in order to allow data from the interviews to be transcribed for analysis and to protect data integrity. The interview schedule (see appendix 2) was also printed, to be used as a template for the interviewer to take notes during the interview. The notes helped the researcher focus on what was been said instead of analysing or judging the answers. The written records were also used as a source to enable further reflexivity before and during the analysis stage, particularly by later contrasting the notes with the audio records.

Sample profile

Spencer et al. (2003) highlight the importance of describing the rationale for basis of the selection of the sample as one of the key appraisal areas to assess the quality of a qualitative research. On that note, as the literature review for this study progressed, it became apparent that the meaning of work and masculinity were key areas to understanding the male gender aspect of WLB (Dermott, 2006; Dermott, 2008; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). Thus, a growing body of research on WLB for professionals and management started questioning the concept of balance by highlighting the benefits of professional work on other domains of life; for example, insights from WLB enrichment (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006) or enhancement theories (Fisher *et al*., 2009). Consequently, 'professional' was the core criteria for the sample. Equally it is important to highlight that by studying professionals the sample would limit its contribution to similar environments, excluding lower-status counterparts. Casper et al. (2007) highlight that managerial and professional employees, enjoy greater access to work-life policies than lower-income workers. Besides, it was important to recruit respondents from the same organisation in order to investigate insights into the existing gendered organisation literature (Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Lewis and Humbert, 2010) and how an organisational culture might influence individuals' WLB experiences; perhaps not to an extent of understanding in-depth the how and why underpinning this influence but to

acknowledge how much WLB gendered practice have been influenced by respondents' workplace or their own family set-ups.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the nature of this research project, a male dominated organisation could provide further insights on how gendered organisations might affect the practice of WLB (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). In terms of the selection of this organisation, as a practitioner and knowing the challenges of any research project in terms of gaining access (Saunders *et al*., 2012), the researcher used her employment as a means of addressing this issue and requested her employer to allow her access to respondents. This organisation not only fitted with the scope of this study but also presented another interesting characteristic which was the international aspect of the business which required mobility. Opportunities to explore new challenges in relation to WLB were identified across different time zones (Gambles *et al*., 2006) and the requirement for professional mobility (Hardill, 2003; Shortland and Cummins, 2007). Thus, one of the criticisms of using respondents from the same organisation without deploying a case study, was the fact that employees might have been influenced by a wider organisational culture which has not been investigated in-depth (Willig, 2013). By using her employing organisation, which also grew by acquisitions with offices still operating as separate business entities, the wider organisational context was less rooted. This was ideal for this study which has taken mostly a person-centred approach which means it places respondents at the centre of the analysis and uses the context to understand their experiences and not the other way around.

The organisation at the heart of this study is a listed international consulting and engineering firm with its head office based in Helsinki, Finland. The research took place in the UK where this company employed 211 professionals working in five legal entities spread across eight different locations. Taking in the total headcount, the gender split of employees was 70% men to 30% women. Their sectors include energy and forestry management consulting, safety in nuclear energy and renewable energy. Professionals in this organisation were mainly qualified engineers, management consultants and members from the support functions like finance. The structure of the organisation was fairly similar to other Professional Service Firms (PSFs) in terms of decision-making which

mostly happened by committee amongst more senior members of staff (Boxall and Steeneveld, 1999). However, as a listed company, senior roles did not hold any shares in the organisation like partnerships in law firms, for example (Boxall and Steeneveld, 1999). Nevertheless, senior management operated with a great deal of autonomy and influence while junior members were more limited in terms of work flexibility (time and location).

Although most employees were male across all sites, the overall culture of the organisation was diverse. As mentioned previously, the organisation grew by acquisitions and still had separate legal entities which allowed them to operate in silos and retain their cultural roots. Mills (2002) highlights that organisation culture should be understood as dynamic and it changes. Even though exploring organisational culture theory is not within the scope of this study, it is important to recognise that if masculinity is changing, the gendered organisation is changing too (Miller, 2011). Significant cultural differences were not observed between the offices, but some existed between the professions and they were mostly around client management which reflected the nature of their services. For example, the engineering consultants delivered long-term projects whilst the management consultants delivered more short-term projects. Consequently, the management consultants were very active with sales processes while the engineering consultants were more active with project and client management. Both professions also had similar gender split, most of them operated with autonomy and felt pressurised by deadlines. They also had international clients and collaboration from other offices around the world and experienced WLB hindrance when trying to fit in within different time zones. Perhaps this was a reflection of the fact that even the engineers were operating as consultants. Equally, there were some subtle differences in terms of mobility. For example, management consultants experienced more business travel while engineers were more exposed to expatriate assignments. This is not to say that management consultants were not engaging in international transfers or engineering consultants were not travelling, it was more a matter of frequency. In general, both professions needed to be mobile and were operating as an international business.

The support functions from all offices were very similar, pre-acquisition and post- acquisition. For example, all offices had travel policies, career paths, pay grades, similar benefits, working hours etc. The main difference between the support functions and the consultants (engineering and management) was that support functions tended to work less remotely as they were not dealing directly with international clients. However, they still travelled to other offices occasionally and worked from home. Seniority seemed to be more relevant to work mobility than the profile itself. This was observed from all three profiles within the sample (management consulting, engineering consulting and support functions). More junior levels seemed to spend more time in the office delivering repetitive tasks and with less client facing interactions (internal and external clients).

As similarities between profiles were very evident and differences were marginal, all three profiles were analysed together. Equally, when differences were more evident, for example the frequency of business travel between management consultants and engineering consultants, the findings and analysis have taken these into consideration, evaluated and reported them accordingly. This was not only the case for the different profiles, the overall classification of respondents was taken into account like; age groups, marital status, childcare, work mobility (please refer to appendix 1). These classifications were also reported accordingly when patterns were observed. For example, childless respondents who felt that childcare legitimatised WLB.

Furthermore, in order to draw gender considerations and secure further insights from what might be particular from a male perspective, a small sample of female respondents were included to the sample. Recruiting both genders for this study was not an attempt to design a comparative study. Equally, by embedding a small sample of female respondents, deeper insights were drawn by considering experiences by both genders with the same organisation. For example, one of the interview questions addressed gendered treatment at work. Most male respondents felt that men and women were treated the same. By considering the female responses, it was possible to understand that neither group felt influenced by their employers' culture. Their gendered experiences in terms of taking up WLB provisions for childcare, for example, was a reflection of

their family set-ups and demands and not associated with a sense of entitlement. In this case both genders mostly felt entitled to take-up WLB provisions and hardly observed differences in treatment between men and women with their current employer, positive or negative.

At this point is worth mentioning that Ritchie et al. (2014) point out that when the focus of the study is to compare two groups of respondents, the sample from each group needs to be compatible in size and large enough to be representative. However, the purpose of this inquiry is first and foremost to explore and expand the males' perspective dimension: the decision for comparing both genders was to enhance this understanding of the males' views in the first place. The research question is not addressing the differences and similarities between both genders; the inquiry is focusing on men. Therefore, the decision for the size of the groups based on the natural gender split of the respondents' professional environment whilst securing a larger number of males, was more important than having equal numbers between the male and female group.

Thus, although there were no criteria in terms of heterosexual partnership or family set-ups, all respondents were heterosexuals, all fathers were the main breadwinners and all mothers were the main caregivers even in dual-career households. This includes the female sample where in some cases mothers were both main caregivers and main breadwinners. Nevertheless, because of the research title (WLB from the male professional perspective) which was distributed with the participant information sheet and instructions to participate in the study, this could have characterised the research with assumptions of heteronormativity which could provoke a natural exclusion of any participants in homosexual partnerships. As per Appendix 1, the profile of respondents was varied in terms of age, partnership status, requirement for work mobility and dependents. Although some respondents were listed as not having any dependents they were still able to contribute with passages from the past when their children were still at home.

Sample size

The research was able to study respondents from seven out of eight locations in the UK and was able to recruit 40 individuals in total (please refer to table 3.2.3.). One office did not want to take part because of their long-hours culture and concerns associated with upsetting the dynamics within the office. Their employees numbered only 12 out of the total of 211. Another point concerning the sample is that during the study location 7 was sold. However, this event had no implications for the research design as it happened after data collection.

TABLE 3.2.3 NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS PER LOCATION JUST BEFORE DATA COLLECTION.

Overview headcount against selected sample						
Total male respondents 29 (6 heads)			Total female respondents 11(1 head)			
Multi-sites	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4	Location 5	Location 6	Location 7
Business type	ENG	ENG	ENG	ENG	MC	MC	ENG
Total headcount	25	12	20	6	70	20	58
Sample headcount	5	3	3	2	13	3	11

(ENG = engineering, MC = management consultancy)

As mentioned above, this research presented in total a sample of 40 professionals working for this organisation in the UK (management consultants, engineers and support functions). The initial sample started with 20 interviews (which took place in late 2011 and the beginning of 2012). The sample was then increased to 40 interviews, with the rest of the interviews scheduled for later on in 2012. In terms of the size of the sample, Ragin (2012) suggests that if interviews are the chosen method, between 20 and 50 interviews would provide a quantity of data which would be manageable while still providing a likely good quality of data for analysis. Bryman (2008) suggests a minimum of 20–30 interviews for a qualitative research study to be considered for publication. Kvale (1996) suggested that the size of a research sample should be defined by the number of interview respondents required to find out what the researcher needed to know. Strauss and Corbin (1998) outline that data saturation in

qualitative research is reached when new findings is no longer benefiting the overall theory. In other words, the right size for the sample can only truly be determined when the data begins to be gathered, and when it becomes clear that the data has become sufficiently saturated to allow for an analysis which will answer the research question. Equally this research had the ambition of recruiting a large number of respondents to have sufficient data to investigate patterns across a sizeable sample in order to understand the male perspective of WLB.

Consequently, the design took into consideration an incremental approach towards conducting the interviews with a starting point of 20 interviews (17 male and 3 female). After familiarisation with the data from the first 20 interviews and initial classification, new themes started to emerge which needed to be supported further in order to answer the research question. For example, it was initially thought that in the professional services environment the main purpose of paid work could be primarily linked to individuals' identities rather than financial rewards. However, initial analysis started showing that most male respondents referred to paid work as instrumental (as financial necessity) instead of meaningful (as masculine identity). An additional unexpected theme was related to physical exercise and how some male respondents exercised regularly as a strategy to enhance performance in all areas of life. Although there is literature available on the benefits of regular physical exercise in terms of performance (Cartwright and Cooper, 2011; Coulson *et al.*, 2008), the link between regular physical exercise and better WLB was not covered during the literature review and therefore further evidence was sought to support this knowledge. Another interesting theme which emerged from the initial interviews was related to workload and how much individuals' personalities and habits contributed to increasing and intensifying their workload. Initially, it was reviewed in the literature how paid work invasiveness in a global economy intensifies works demands which impacts negatively on WLB (Gambles *et al.*, 2006). However, the initial findings were flagging individuals' personalities being more problematic to WLB than work invasiveness.

Consequently, the researcher invited 20 more participants in order to explore further the unexpected findings. After 40 interviews (29 males and 11 females)

the researcher felt that data saturation was achieved, particularly within the unexpected themes. Taking the total headcount of the organisation, the gender split of employees was 70% men to 30% women, therefore the gender ratio for this sample followed a similar rationale. In total, 33 respondents were self-selected and seven respondents were deliberately selected (6 were male and 1 was female) as they were the office heads of each of the seven main locations of the organisation taking part in this study (this was decided in order to improve participation from others).

Recruiting participants

Personal invitations were sent out to the seven office heads, after which calls for respondents within the seven locations were made by the local HR or management teams via staff meetings or internal emails. The objective was to attract people who were interested in the subject and were happy to contribute. In total, 41 names were submitted (this excludes the 7 office heads purposely selected). The 41 volunteers were representing all locations, of which 23 were named males and 18 named females. Taking into consideration both stages of data collection (from late 2011 to early 2012 then starting again in late 2012), the research in the end proceeded with all 23 named males (securing access to male experiences with and without children) plus the 6 male office heads and with 10 (out of 18) short-listed female participants plus the 1 female office head. The 10 names from the female group of 18 volunteers were selected based on their availability to participate in the interviews within the same office where the male respondents were being interviewed. Four interviews were piloted, one of which was a leader's interview. As no major changes were required to the interview questions, all four pilot interviews were also used in the analysis.

3.2.4 Data analysis

Saunders et al. (2012) state two types of analytical procedures, deductive-based (testing existing theories) or inductive-based (developing new theories). However, Blaikie (2007) outlines that in critical realism there are additional reasoning logics concerning analysing the data from social studies. This is because even inductive methods in qualitative research are based on existing knowledge and therefore there will always be an element of deduction where existing theories will be challenged. Blaikie (2007) proposes two additional

reasoning logics to be considered when analysing data from critical realism social studies: reproductive (patterns in the data to explain) or abductive (considers participants' own accounts to interpreting and re-describing different aspects from existing theories).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) propose a framework to analyse qualitative data which has been adopted in this study, as mentioned previously. The framework approach sits between the two analytical procedures suggested by Blaikie (2007), reproductive and abductive. It tries to interrogate existing theories by using initial theoretical frameworks at the data collection stage whilst using thematic analysis to generate new theories (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The framework approach is appropriate for substantive and cross-sectional studies which may attempt to explain phenomena without reporting quantification. This analytical method is based on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). There two main differences between thematic analysis and the framework approach. Firstly, the framework offers an additional stage named data summary and display which is explained in detail in the next section. This stage ensures that the researcher stays close to the raw data by producing a summary which describes what in essence each respondent is saying about each theme (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Secondly, the framework approach reiterates the importance of the abstraction and interpretation stage by offering step-by-step guidance on moving from descriptive data to more abstract themes which are then interpreted through further creation of analytic concepts and interrogation for meaning (Ritchie *et al*., 2014).

Framework approach adapted to this study

The framework approach offers a staged process designed to help the researcher work from deep familiarisation with the raw data towards a stage of interpretation and illustration of the analytical accounts (Ritchie *et al*., 2014).

> *"Underlying our approach is an assumption that the researcher is aiming to capture, portray and explain the social world of people under study. In order to do this, they must initially stay close to the original data"* (p. 279).

There are five key steps for data management and thematic analysis within the framework approach set out by Richie and Lewis (2003) which was adapted for

this study. *First* is the familiarisation with the data. This was achieved by listening and transcribing the interviews. At this stage summary sheets were also written for each interview and saved on Nvivo as case nodes (refer to appendix 5)*. Second* is the construction of an initial thematic framework during the first level of data organisation, with topics to be identified and sorted by emergent themes. At this point the transcribed data started to be coded. Passages were firstly coded as per the original thematic framework which was created for the interview schedule. Further organisation of this initial framework was then completed by adding new emerging themes. *Third* is the indexing and re-sorting in order to establish what data are connected and belong together whilst annotating and labelling the data. This was achieved with the assistance of Nvivo (for the themes) and Post-its (for the sub-themes). *Fourth* is reviewing the data extracts in order to redefine initial thematic frameworks, to assess coherence of extracts, and, where needed, to change labels. At this stage data extracts of sub-themes where revised and further refinement of labels and sorting took place. Then sub-themes were further clustered into 2 groups, positive meaning and negative meaning. Then new Post-its were annotated with remarks of female considerations and inconsistencies. *Fifth* is the data summary and display to account for and summarise what each participant is saying about a particular theme. At this stage the researcher was working with two NVivo screens (one to navigate between the interviews summary sheets and the other to navigate between all the data extracts coded under the same theme) and a board with the sub-themes on Post-its. At this stage Post-its (subthemes themes) were compared to the interview summary sheets and revised against coded extracts (main themes). This helped to recall the whole context of the interviews which supported coherence and triggered further coding or sorting. This stage was a sign-off to validate the final version of the thematic structure to be used during the abstraction and interpretation stage. Then after revisiting the date extracts, interview summary sheets for each data extract and the sub-themes, memos for each theme were written with potential quotations highlighted to be used. These memos were then used as basis to start writing up the findings and analysis chapters.

Once the data was organised following the above steps, the interpretation analysis commenced. This involved interrogating the data, identifying, analysing and explaining patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2012). At this stage memos were written explaining the rationale describing the themes and sub-themes which were then linked to relevant themes (nodes) in Nvivo to be easily trailed. Memos were also used as the structure to write up the findings chapter. Once all memos were written explaining the meaning of themes and sub-themes, linkages between them were explored and further notes were added to the nodes. Explanations were then interrogated to explore and explain the four pre-defined dimensions of analysis: 1. Why and how a particular sub-theme was communicated as positive; 2. Why and how a particular sub-theme was communicated as negative; 3. The links and differences between the extracts from male and female respondents but only concerning the themes raised by the male population (focus on the male perspective, not comparative design); and 4. Critical scrutiny concerning the inconsistencies between what people said and what they actually did about their WLB by recognising all passages as perspectives or events. Furthermore, at this stage the link between the answers amongst all three sets of questions were explored; i.e. links between the meaning of work and life (first set of questions), their personal strategies (second set of questions) and their WLB experiences with employment (third set of questions). Throughout this process further notes were added to the memos linked to each sub-theme (node).

Nvivo

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) has been known to provide several benefits to managing and supporting analysis of qualitative data, such as facilitating organisation, navigating and finding patterns in the research data, and adding rigour to qualitative research (Richards and Richards, 1991; Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012). Equally, it has been argued that such software cannot replace the analytical expertise of the researcher (Roberts and Wilson, 2002). The use of software has also been criticised as being an unreliable tool for exploring the meaning of the texts (Kelle, 1995) and for distancing the researcher from the data in the wider context (Barry, 1998).

Welsh (2002), on the other hand, is taking a pragmatic view and suggesting a combination of both manual analysis and the use of software as a means to achieve the best results.

For this research, the data management (organisation and navigation) aspect of Nvivo proved to be extremely helpful in terms of keeping easy access to the original data extracts whilst connecting the data with the theoretical framework at the very the initial stage of coding (Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012). Furthermore, considering the duration and number of interviews undertaken for this study, without Nvivo the processes of data abstraction and reconnection to the original extracts would have been problematic. The automation of the coding and classification linked to the memos allowed the researcher to navigate and tune the findings throughout the process. However, finding patterns and adjusting the sub-themes proved to be more complicated, even with the interview summaries and working with two computer screens. The researcher felt that it was more dynamic to use Post-its to visualise sub-themes, re-clusters and to write notes whilst keeping in mind the contexts of each theme and sub-theme. This process was repeated 14 times until all 14 main themes were explored.

3.2.5 Time horizons

Concerning time horizons, Saunders et al. (2012) pose two questions to be asked when planning a piece of research: "Do I want my research to be a snapshot taken at a particular time or do I want it to be more akin to a diary and be a representation of events over a given period?". The answers to these questions may lead to cross-sectional studies (phenomena at a particular time) or longitudinal studies (observing people and events over time (Saunders *et al*., 2012). In this case a cross-sectional study was adopted. This approach allowed for defining a larger sample with individuals from different backgrounds in terms of gender, care responsibilities and age groups, whilst considering the differences between the respondents (Ritchie *et al*., 2014).

3.2.6 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

Assessing the credibility of a qualitative research is rather complex due to the predominance of the traditional ways of assessing research in terms of quantification and scientific status suitable for natural science (Symon and

Cassell, 2012). That is why historically there have been many attempts to apply the concepts of reliability and validity, as developed in the natural sciences, to the social sciences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This has given cause for debate and dissatisfaction, given that each tradition has considerable epistemological differences (such as positivist and postmodern) and has very different outlooks on how validity and reliability can and should be measured (Ritchie *et al*., 2014).

Concerning reliability first in qualitative research, maintaining reliability in the data is less of a concern than its usefulness in terms of generalisation, the main challenge being how that generalisation will be addressed (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed a view of generalisations in qualitative research and referred to qualitative generalisation as "transferability" of knowledge from the research setting to similar contexts. Ritchie et al. (2014) suggest this type of generalisation can be described as inferential generalisation, which can be used to inform a variety of further variables which might be further tested by way of empirical research. For the purposes of this inquiry, generalisation will be addressed as transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To this end, close attention will be given to a detailed description of the research settings and of potential contexts which could benefit from application of the research output. Transferability in this study can then be taken into consideration for similar organisations in terms of male dominance with heterosexual, white-collar professionals operating in an international context. Equally, other elements in reference to research limitations must be considered when analysing transferability (please refer to section 3.4 Research Limitations). It is accepted that in the nature of this type of research, there will be always an element of uniqueness, and that various elements will need to be taken into account when assessing applicability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Furthermore, reliability in qualitative research has been referred to as quality control (Kvale, 1996) and as audit trails from raw to processed data (Kvale, 1996; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Campbell (1996), for example, suggested that reliability in qualitative research could be assessed by examination of the raw data, as well as data reduction and process notes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) concluded that since there is no validity without reliability, and reliability is not

suitable for qualitative research, a demonstration of validity should be sufficient to demonstrate reliability. Patton (2002) agrees with this position by highlighting that reliability is a consequence of validity in qualitative research.

Consequently, moving on to validity in a qualitative inquiry, Kvale (1996) opined that validity was connected with the quality of craftsmanship, on the basis of which a researcher might make a defendable knowledge claim. This would involve strategies such as checking (for credibility, plausibility and potential sources of bias), questioning (why and what before how in order to test or reject statements), and theoretically interpreting finds (evaluating the theoretical concept of the observed). Furthermore, such quality controls could be seen as an ongoing process throughout the research instead of being only a discrete inspection stage at the end. Ritchie et al. (2014) conclude that qualitative validation is focused on how well participants' meanings have been captured and interpreted. Symon and Cassell (2012) describe a varity of frameworks which can help to guide the assessment of a qualitative research. Some frameworks are universal and deploy techniques suitable for any qualitative methods like the use of reflexivity; some are more aligned with the research paradigm and others are more specific to the research method like Kvale's interview steps. Spencer et al. (2003) provides a comprehensive framework for assessing qualitative research evidence. This framework is composed of 18 assessment questions which starts with appraising the findings, then through different stages of the research process (including design, sampling, data collection, analysis and reporting) and it closes with features of research conduct (like reflexivity and neutrality, ethics and auditability). Consequently, considering the debates around reliability and validity in qualitative studies and the options to assess credibility of a qualitative study, this research does not distinguish between validity and reliability, but instead applies a number of stages proposed by Kvale (1996) which improve quality control within the inquiry whilst ensuring the research question is answered (refer to appendix 3 Seven Stages of an Interview Research by Kvale, 1996). The assessment framework by Spencer et al. (2003) was also taken into account particularly in terms of how the research was conducted which addresses issues like reflexivity, ethics and auditing.

It is worth remembering at this point that the researcher was also a full-time practitioner at the company where the respondents were recruited. Although this inquiry was initially conducted by a practitioner-researcher, during the main analysis phase, the researcher ceased to be employed by the organisation in question, which helped to focus on the collected data and minimise the risk of bias at this stage. Saunders et al. (2012) list several benefits to be derived from carrying out a practitioner-researcher study. For example, the researcher can gain access to known environments, which saves time in making connections. It also permits them to understand complexities within the organisation and practice (Anderson *et al*., 2001) which may be less visible to an outsider researcher; equally it also represents a major risk concerning assumptions and biased input (Saunders *et al*., 2012). This leads to the next section highlighting the importance of reflexivity for the credibility of this inquiry, not only for its qualitative nature but also the practitioner-researcher aspect of this study.

The importance of reflexivity in this study

Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 23) state that all research will be influenced by the researcher and there is no completely "neutral" or "objective" knowledge. Within the practice of a social research context, this has reflexive implications; that is, the researcher must remain aware of the fact that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower but equally must understand the threat which non-reflexive bias represents to the credibility and accuracy of the output of the research (Steedman, 2000). In particular, for researcher-practitioners engaged in conducting interviews, which is the case here, reflexivity is crucial if the interviewer is to stay vigilant to the potential impact of power relations between those involved as interviewers and interviewed respondents (Kvale, 1996). It is also important to retain their identity as researcher and interviewer (Cassell, 2005). Consequently, this section aims to address reflexivity in two contexts. First, the role of reflexivity for any interview research and second, the importance of reflexivity in practitioner-researcher projects.

Reflexivity and Interviews

There are three activities often described in the literature as key for reflexivity when conducting interviews. First, the familiarisation and transcription stage

was also used as a reflexive activity (Spencer *et al.*, 2003). This was possible because all interviews were audio recorded. Silverman (2004) outlines that working with audio recording and transcripts can address some issues concerned with reliability by capturing a high level of detail whilst giving the research an audit trail back to the original data. By recording all interviews, listening to them and reflecting upon her own assumptions, the researcher was able to anticipate risks of bias; for example, with passages with which the researcher felt personally connected. This happened particularly when handling passages referring to childcare. The researcher became a mother for the first time in 2012 and faced issues with WLB when returning to full-time employment and caring for a 6-month-old baby.

Second, there was use of an audit trail and memos linked to data extracts. In alignment with the framework approach and with the assistance of Nvivo, analytical decisions and explanations were recorded in the form of memos and often trailed back to original data extracts for further verification via links. Furthermore, by using a single document per theme to record not only thematic and analytical explanations but also reflexivity pieces, the researcher was constantly mindful of potential bias attached to each analytical decision. For example, there were several conflicting passages in which respondents referred to their families as being the most important thing in their lives and yet examples of WLB events showed resources being withdrawn from family to attend extra demands from work. Initially, reflexivity notes assumed that this behaviour was associated with gains in terms of work identity and personal satisfaction. By making this assumption visible, the researcher explored further the process of prioritising work over family and uncovered that the behaviour was more associated with a habitual response than a decision based on priorities in life. Birks and Mills (2011) suggest that memoing enables reflexivity to be kept in a written format for ongoing revision and should be done throughout the research in order to improve quality. Memos were written throughout this research which enabled ongoing reflexivity.

Third, 'empathic neutrality' was applied throughout the research from data collection to analysis (Spencer *et al.*, 2003). Patton (2002) states that empathic neutrality can be achieved by consciously trying to understand participants'

answers without judgement; this also involves qualities of openness, sensitivity, awareness and responsiveness. The researcher, mindful of judgemental writing or thoughts, then automatically shifted her mindset by repeating to herself "interesting" and "why". Thus, a clear separation between the researcher and practitioner roles was made at the beginning of each interview. Respondents were reminded that they were the experts on their own WLB perspectives and therefore, the focus was on what they were saying. The interviewer's opinion was irrelevant. This introduction proved to be very beneficial as in many cases, after describing the meaning of WLB or awareness of WLB provisions available to them, the respondents asked for the interviewer to verify their answers by saying, "Am I right?", "Is that right?" At this point the researcher was able to refer back to the introduction and to reinforce the importance of their views rather than her own. In addition to audio recording, notes were taken during the interviews. This way, the practitioner-researcher was able to focus on exploring and capturing the descriptions of the accounts for the notes instead of attempting to start analysing what was said. This leads to the importance of reflexivity for practitioner- researchers.

Reflexivity for practitioner-researchers

There are several benefits of being a practitioner-researcher in relation to offering a deeper understanding of the research context, for example, potentially having existing rapport with respondents and easier access (Saunders *et al*., 2012), however, there are also some negative implications which reflexivity can help to minimise. First, bias, Saunders et al. (2012) raise the concern that it is harder for practitioner-researchers to be independent from knowledge construction but also the practitioner might be influenced by knowledge observed outside the research design. For these reasons the elements listed above like practising empathetic neutrality, recording all interviews, familiarisation with the data, memoing are important to help the researcher to identify risks and bracket biased data from the analysis. Another step taken which has been suggested by Cassell and Symon (1994) is to make a record of presumptive ideas about the organisation and respondents under investigation prior to the field work taking place then to confront these notes

regularly during all phases of handling data, from collection to explaining and analysing.

Second, there is an issue about power relations and how much respondents will be truthful based on their perception of the interviewer and interviewee roles and power (Kvale). This proved to be rather complicated due to the seniority of the researcher in the organisation. However, as Head of HR, the researcher also benefited from the nature of her work in the sense that respondents already positioned HR as a function relatively safe to confide in. Equally Kvale (1996) emphasises that practitioner-researchers need to be open to assessing whether interviewer-interviewee interaction has been exacerbated by presumptions arising from previous dealings, professional experiences or occupational assumptions leading to unequal power relations (Kvale, 1996). In order to offset such risks, Cassell (2005) states that the identity of the interviewer is actively constructed through the interview process and such identity should be aligned with the epistemological approach used in the research. In this case, as a critical realist conducting a more person-centred approach, the researcher adopted and 'investigator' identity and made sure that respondents were aware of their roles as 'experts' from the very beginning. Respondents were then empowered through the interview to own the interview content (Cassell, 2005). Also throughout the interview process, the researcher reflected on her own interference and probing questions and often checked understanding with the interviewees to make sure her interpretation was correct. This approach then limited the construction of accounts mostly to respondents' own subjectivity.

Third, ethics and confidentiality, Tietze (2012) highlights that one of the implications of researching your own organisation is the extent to which anonymised techniques realistically work. Tietze (2012) provides an example of work which has never been published as some respondents felt that their identity could be easily traceable by the context of the accounts. This was often the case in this research due to the personal nature of the WLB topic and the existing rapport between the interviewer and interviewees. In several instances quotations and detailed context were avoided in order to protect the respondents from any risks of identity breach. For example, during the

interviews, several respondents felt safe enough to share personal stories involving violence, mental health, affairs, death and sexuality which then needed to be handled carefully and with sensitivity by paying great attention to confidentiality. This leads to the next section which addresses ethics and steps deployed in order to overcome such risks.

3.2.7 Ethics

This study was considered a low-risk research project. Individuals were selected on the basis that they were happy to talk voluntarily about their experiences with WLB. Kvale (1996) outlines that a minimum of three ethical guidelines should be taken into account when conducting a human research study. These are: 1. informed consent; 2. confidentiality; and 3. consequences.

Details on how these guidelines were met within this research have been outlined below and supporting templates are available in the appendix (Appendix 6 Participation Information Sheet and Appendix 7 Consent Form).

Informed consent

Information was critical for individuals to make an informed decision concerning their participation in the study. Also in alignment with the research assessment tool designed by Spencer et al. (2003), during the course of data collection a few steps were followed. Firstly, participants were further reminded that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time prior to their interview data being included in the analysis. Secondly, participants received a participant information sheet with details of the research and with instructions on the withdrawal procedure; this was done prior to the interview. Thirdly, participants were informed that any request for withdrawal could be in writing and addressed to the researcher before the analysis phase, where a deadline was provided for clarity. If a request for withdrawal was received, a confirmation letter was to be given to the participant within five working days, along with the transcript of their interview. This was also required in order to satisfy ethical rules as outlined by the University guidelines. Fourthly, a consent form was collected from all participants just before the interview

started, and another introduction to the topic given out by the researcher. However, in the event, no requests were made.

Confidentiality and data protection

In the interests of data protection and security, all data (including notes of interviews, recordings and transcriptions) was saved on an encrypted laptop only accessible to the researcher. Backups were made on a private external drive and files were password-protected. The data was prepared for analysis by removing respondents' identifiers from transcriptions and replacing their names with codes. Participants were subsequently referred to by pseudonyms in any publications arising from the research (Spencer *et al*., 2003).

Consequences

During this introduction participants were reminded that the dialogue would be conducted with the interviewer in the role of researcher and not of practitioner, and that each participant would be understood as the expert on the topic during the interview. It was also envisaged that in the process, participants could possibly develop a level of dissatisfaction with their own WLB after reflecting on the subject. In order to identify this risk group, a question at the end of the interview was asked in relation to how much each individual's participation in the study had changed their views and/or feelings towards their WLB. When any individual demonstrated an additional concern about their WLB as a result of their participation in the study, they were encouraged to speak to their local HR representative and/or management to discuss their concerns, or to seek independent advice from their Employee Assistance Programme.

Furthermore, Spencer et al. (2003) discuss the potential harm or difficulty through participation, and how situation like that should be avoided. Consequently, it was also anticipated that some adverse or unexpected feelings might arise in relation to this topic, given that it touched on the personal life of every individual interviewed, and that, in many cases, certain conflicting emotions and expectations might arise in regard to the organisation's WLB practice. This anticipated potential issue was discussed with participants at the

onset of the interviews, at which point they were reminded that they were not obliged to answer all questions, and were free to stop the interview at any point as they wished.

Although self-reflective silence was rather common during the majority of the interviews, the most adverse situation in this study was experienced by a couple of respondents who cried when trying to explain their feelings associated with an experience. The first respondent was a female who tried to explain the guiltiness she felt by leaving their children poorly to attend work or missing out school events like sports day. The second incident was experienced by a male respondent when describing how his life priorities changed when he lost his best friend. In both situations, participants were given the time to express their emotions, they were comforted with sympathetic body language and silence, tissues and water were available on the table and the option to stop the interview or at least jump the question was given. However, both respondents wanted to proceed a few minutes later once feeling emotionally recomposed.

3.3 Reporting Outputs of the Research

Kvale (1996) highlights the balance between presenting the output in a scientific and controlled manner or in an illustrative and engaging way, and reminded researchers of the ethical implications of using lively and descriptive narratives. Ritchie et al. (2014) suggest a number of other considerations to be taken into account when reporting qualitative data. Discussed here are those applicable to this study. Firstly, there was the need to decide upon writing style and what language to use; and secondly, there was a decision as to how to use quotations and citations.

Concerning the style and language, the author of this study will be absent from the text. The researcher will report observations as facts, while the interviewees' perspectives will be described as such; that is, no interpretations will be drawn from subjective formulations and assumptions (Spencer et al., 2003). The report is also presented where appropriate in the third person and refers to findings in the past. This approach is known and described by Flick (2009) as offering a realistic tale.

As regards citations, Ritchie et al. (2014) highlight some points to be taken into account before using verbatim quotations: 1. It is appropriate to cite passages for illustration rather than demonstration; 2. The overuse of citation can make research boring to read; 3. In substantive research, the value is not in the re-telling of 40 individuals' stories but in providing the reader with a summary of synthesised narratives of accounts. Thus, this research has aimed to use explanation summaries for each identified theme and to use quotations as an illustrative aid.

In terms of the Framework Approach to analysis, Ritchie et al. (2014) suggest that explanations should be clear in how they are formed, explicitly or implicitly. Explicit explanations can be achieved by describing the reasons given by participants with reference to a particular phenomenon. This can be presented in a list or text format with some verbatim quotes for illustration. Implicit explanations are constructed by the researcher from implicit connections or following a logical route (Ritchie *et al*., 2014). In this study explicit explanations are used with quotations mostly throughout the chapter on findings where implicit explanations were constructed and presented in the chapters titled Analysis and Conclusion and Recommendations.

Lastly, as outlined in the next section, an important element when reporting outputs is to generate explanations, including those linked to the limitations of the research context and the limits concerning transferability of empirical knowledge developed by the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A section in the Conclusion and Recommendations chapter addresses the boundaries and implications of this study.

3.4 Research Limitations

This research study has been able to identify, explore and contribute with 14 themes and 56 sub-themes covering various aspects concerning WLB from the male perspective. WLB for men has so far been relatively understudied in the academic setting, particularly when considered in relation to women's experiences (Burnett, et al., 2012; Dermott, 2008; Gatrell et al., 2012; Lewis and Humbert 2010; Miller 2011). This contribution was achieved by adopting a more

generic research question and deploying a large set of qualitative data which emerged from 40 interviews of 60 to 90 minutes each. However, there are some limitations to this study associated with adopting a single data gathering method but also in relation to the characteristics of the sample which need to be reviewed when considering the findings and recommendations. Overall the combination of having a generic research question (not specific or temporal), a qualitative approach and a large number of respondents limited the suitability of methodological options normally used to enhance scientific rigour and generalisation. These limitations have been grouped into 3 areas, method, sample and context.

Method

Firstly, interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate and only method to answer the research question. The implication of utilising interviews as a single qualitative method of research is around the debates on establishing how much of the knowledge constructed during the interview is derived from the interviewee and how much from the interviewer (Kvale, 1996; Ritchie *et al*., 2014). Intersubjective agreement was part of the interviews where knowledge was often checked and verified between interviewer and respondents. Also, the interview schedule of this study took the accounts and actual experiences of male participants as a starting point (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) and this echoes the core aim of this research question. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the credibility of this interview research cannot apply the concepts of reliability and validity, as developed in the quantitative research. Consequently, findings from this study should not be generalised, but close attention to the characteristics of the research sample, context, design and quality can support the level of knowledge transferability as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Secondly, this investigation was conducted by a practitioner-researcher. Saunders (2012) highlighted issues regarding the credibility of the study, such as status (inhibiting the interaction between researcher and participant) and assumptions. Although measures were taken to minimise these risks, including reflexivity as discussed in the methodology chapter. The interaction between the researcher and participants were positive and open; however, as the

researcher was known as Head of HR as well, answers could be modified with the risk of prejudice in mind. The last implication in terms of the methodology is in relation to the progression and changes in legislation concerning shared parental leave. Between the stage where the interview schedules were designed, interviews were conducted and findings were analysed, there has been a major change in legislation driving more paternal sharing between men and women which this research was not able to capture and explore.

Sample

Although this study presents key elements of a case study approach (theory-driven investigation and case-organisation setting; all respondents from the same company), there are also elements which mean that a full case study strategy are not met. This is mainly because of the nature of the research question being generic, and the interviews focusing on the context of respondents' entire careers (past, present and future) rather than just their immediate organisational experiences of WLB. The case organisation presented separated business units and cultures due to their history of acquisitions, and the study sample reflected this variety, there is a risk where individuals' contributions were influenced by a wider corporate culture which has not been explored to promote further understanding. Equally, although it was not intentionally, the sample profile reflected traditional heterosexual and breadwinner family set-ups which becomes irrelevant for others family dynamics. Furthermore, by including only professionals in the sample who were working under UK legislation and culture, the transferability of WLB knowledge developed in this study might be limited to similar environments and individuals' profiles. For example, in this study job security did not seem to have a strong influence on how male respondents were experiencing WLB. However, this might be a reflection of notions of employability which male professionals might experience differently from male manual workers.

Context

There are some elements to consider which are particular to the research setting and journey. Firstly, this research has taken a person-centred approach

(Kossek, 2012) and focuses on individuals and not on the case organisation. Therefore, the contribution is less beneficial for practitioners who are trying to bring the WLB agenda to the table. This research has not been designed to explore the benefits of WLB from an employer's perspective. Furthermore, the findings reported in this study that relate to individuals' responsibility for their own WLB can be a reflection of the scope of this research. The research design has focused on individual' reconciliation initiatives like boundary management strategies and preferences rather than WLB interventions and culture in organisations.

Second, the practitioner-researcher aspect of this study needs to be taken into account. This includes the reflexivity activities and the research journey so transferability and limitations can be analysed in a wider context. Particularly in relation to power relations and how much respondents could have changed their answers to conform and protect themselves from prejudice. Furthermore, the researcher had a child between the phase 1 and phase 2 of the data collection stage. As covered inmore detail under the section '6.5 The Research Journey', this impacted on her identity work as an interviewer from the "investigator" to the "learner" role. Often respondents offered the interviewer advice on juggling a 6 months old baby and full-time work. Most of this identity shift happened during the interviews with the female respondents. In this case further reflection prior to and after the interviews and memo-ing became critical to identify where the researcher was over empathising with the WLB dilemmas for women.

Third, the protracted nature of this project for reasons that have been explained has meant that the discourse has evolved. Nevertheless, as numerous researchers have declared, an imbalance between WLB as it is experienced by men when compared with women persists (Burnett *et al*., 2012; Dermott, 2008; Gambles *et al*., 2006; Gatrell *et al*., 2012; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012; Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Miller, 2011). The imbalance frustrates the development of a shared ideology of parenting and unpaid work and it to this issue that this research contributes.

3.5 Chapter Summary

Qualitative research was regarded as the most appropriate for this inquiry, given that it seeks to explore the "what?", "why?" and "how?" of world phenomena rather than the "how many?". As such, it takes the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) and this echoes the core aim of this research question ("How do male professionals think, behave and feel about WLB?"). From a philosophical perspective there was discussion of the ontological and epistemological dilemmas concerning the nature of the WLB gender reality and how knowledge concerning this phenomenon can be accessed and developed. This is because there is a reality of WLB external to the actors of this phenomenon and associated with gender and this influences individuals' wishes and actions (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Haas, 2000; Lewis, 2007). For this reason, critical realism was the philosophical position with the closest match to this inquiry. This is because it offers flexibility in mixing some characteristics of both positivist and interpretivist views in terms of ontology and epistemology (Frazer and Lacey, 1993), and allows researchers to focus on the research purpose instead of conforming to limiting philosophical traditions (Ritchie *et al*., 2014).

This chapter also outlined the reasons for using semi-structured interviews in alignment with theory-driven critical realist interview practices whilst adopting the critical scrutiny technique from the realist ethnographic approach as suggested by Smith and Elger (2012). This means existing theoretical frameworks guided the collection and analysis of the data from 40 semi-structured interviews whilst deploying critical scrutiny to explore any gaps between what respondents say and what they actually do about WLB in their social contexts. In terms of managing and analysing the data, the framework approach (based on thematic analysis) as outlined by Ritchie and Lewis (2003) was used to guide the analysis of the interview findings. Concerning the credibility of the study, it was discussed how the study adopts interview research as a sole strategy by using Kvale's "seven stages of interview" framework to improve quality and rigour. Reliability was discussed in the context of validity and tactics like reflexivity and audio recording were also reviewed as part of the quality measures adopted (Spencer *et al*., 2003). The practitioner-

researcher aspect of this study was also presented by discussing the benefits and limitations which included the impact of power relations and the researcher identity. Then research ethics were addressed and it was explained how some key ethical principles in human research were met; that is, consent, confidentiality and consequences were addressed (Kvale, 1996).

Finally, the chapter outlined a 'realistic tale' approach (Flick, 2009) to report the inquiry. The thesis was also written in the third person and refers to findings in the past. Summaries and quotations were used to improve transparency concerning implicit knowledge (researcher's interpretation) and explicit (respondents' accounts) knowledge (Ritchie *et al*., 2014). Lastly, the chapter covered the research implications in terms of limiting its knowledge contribution to transferability to similar environments due to the interview research method and sample selected.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the themes emerging from the findings, organising them into three main areas of analysis (which is aligned with how data was initially collected) and four dimensions of analysis for each main theme (which is securing the PhD contribution). The positive sub-themes dimension emerged from passages and statements communicated by the respondents as they had or have a positive influence on their work-life balance. The negative sub-themes dimension emerged from passages and statements communicated by the respondents as they had or have a negative influence on their work-life balance. The female considerations dimension examined data emerging from the male respondents in relation to the data emerging from the female respondents. The inconsistencies dimension considered gaps between male respondents' thoughts and actual experiences and events shared during the interviews.

The following diagram summarises the development of main themes and sub-themes.

Figure 4.0 Main themes & sub-themes

First Area	Second Area	Third Area
Individuals' Perspectives	Work-Life Interface & Reconciliation	WLB Experiences with Employment

+ Meaning of Work -

Financial provision	Overwork
Personal growth	Personal instability
Identity	Reputation loss

+ Intergenerational Influence -

Breadwinner	Absent dads
Working mum	

+ Most Important Role -

Family	Regrets
Professional	

+ Meaning of Fatherhood -

Responsibilities	Strains
Rewards	Poor early attachment

+ Life-Changing Events -

Positive changes	Negative changes

+ WLB Reconciliation Strategies -

Bargain	Reprioritise & reduce
Separation	Set limits
Personal commitments	Work-centred
Flexible (time & place)	Delegation

+ Physical Exercise -

Enhanced performance	Lack of exercise
Leisure	Irregular commitment

+ Childcare -

Family/friends support	Schooling hours
Full-time mum	Inadequate rights

+ Flexible Working -

Unforeseen demands	Limited managerial trust
Global professionals	Mobile work demands

+ Work (W) & Life (L) Conflict -

Acceptable W-L Conflict	Destructive W-L Conflict
Acceptable L-W Conflict	Destructive L-W Conflict

+ Workload Intensification -

Being busy at work	Triggered by individual
	Triggered by business

+ Gendered Treatment -

Gender roles at home	Parents vs non-parents

+ WLB Provisions -

Formal v. informal	Absent WLB ethos
Homeworking benefits	Homeworking implications
Preferences	

+ Manager's role -

Role model	Inconsiderate
Result-driven	Workaholic

Main Themes   **+** Positive sub-themes   **-** Negative sub-themes

4.1 First Area: Work-Life Contexts and Meanings

4.1.0 Meaning of work

The meaning of work theme mostly was originated from a scheduled question used during the interviews (What does your work mean to you?). This question was usually the first topic discussed during the interview and collected 101 references (passages or statements) from all 40 respondents. However, contributions to this theme were not limited to this question and multiple coding from other questions was also often the case. For example, as illustrated in the extract below, passages referred to work as being at the centre of individuals' lives when they were talking about work-life reconciliation strategies or even when they were simply accepting that they find it hard to switch off from work because work can be exciting and stimulating.

> *"So quite often I can be at home and have an idea or think about something. These guys have heard some days, you know, 'I was thinking about this in the shower this morning'"* (Allan, age 50s).

In general, the meaning of work was portrayed as having a positive and negative impact on WLB. Table 4.1.0 shows a summary of six sub-themes. Most positive sub-themes were associated with work as an enabler of a lifestyle, personal growth and pride. The negative sub-themes were more associated with losses – loss of WLB, loss of financial stability and loss of credibility and status.

Table 4.1.0 Meaning of work sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Financial provision	Overwork
Personal growth	Personal instability
Identity	Reputation loss

4.1.0.0 Positive sub-themes (Meaning of work)

The **Financial provision** sub-theme refers to work as paid work. Apart from some cases, work was typically conveyed as instrumental in life from a financial perspective and other parts of life (like fatherhood, for example) were more associated with identity. Under this theme work meant having the means to make money in order to afford a lifestyle outside work, like the extract from Paul's description of the meaning of work:

> *"We all work for the same reason, we work for money. I never met someone who likes work because he likes so much to go to the office and would work for free, I guess. But in the end of the day you want to work in an Industry, environment that you enjoy"* (Paul, age 30s).

In the context of a professional career, individuals recognised that they not only need to be well paid for their jobs but also they need to enjoy what they do for the stimulation. Equally, for some individuals, if they did not have to work for financial reasons they would find something else interesting to do with their time; like Ken, for example, who attributed his work commitment to his personality as opposed to the nature of the work itself.

> *"I suppose on one hand I'm well paid. I am interested in what I do. I want to challenge myself and fulfil the challenges, but in many ways it fills up a lot of time. I take on more to fill time, I think. I think it's I'm the sort of individual that it's all like 100%. If I wasn't working and I could go walking, I would be walking all the time. I tend to do lots of that sort of stuff, you know"* (Ken, age 50s).

The **Personal growth** sub-theme refers to work mostly as fulfilling personal needs and aspirations. The monetary value of paid work in this context became secondary and almost like a consequence, as described by Ben.

> *"I suppose it means undertaking a professional activity that is enjoyable and challenging and getting some remuneration for doing it, which is somewhat inevitable, isn't it?"* (Ben, age 30s).

The need to experience personal development and feel that work is enabling the development of self and others was also important for a few respondents. For example, Scott described his basic expectation towards work in terms of teaching and learning from others.

"I think I can learn lots in the right direction, when you reach that wall when you are not learning much then I just go and do something else" (Scott, age 40s).

The **Identity** sub-theme refers to respondents who defined work as something they are and not something they do. The importance of enjoying work, the benefits of interacting with other people and being mentally stimulated by work, was often mentioned during the interviews when describing what made respondents happy when they thought about work. However, this sub-theme specifically represents only a few respondents who felt very strongly about work, and their examples of the meaning of work were associated with their sense of being. George, for example, was open about his strong connection with who he is.

"… work defines me, it is a re-affirmation of who I am, then to be paid for it is an extra bonus" (George, age 40s).

Different from the personal growth sub-theme, this connection with work for these respondents was beyond enjoyment and excitement. It was about identity and personal necessity. They could not detach themselves from work and looked at pay as an emotional reward referring to their worthiness and not as an enabler of a lifestyle. The following data extract demonstrates this strong connection with work can quickly shift from something positive to negative. For example, although Gus talked about the meaning of work in a positive way, he also expressed how easily his happiness and well-being can be affected if things at work are not good.

"Work means more to me than is actually healthy for me. I take a great deal of pride in doing my work and being good at what I do. Work is actually really important to me and in the same ways detrimentally so" (Gus, age 30s).

4.1.0.1 Negative sub-themes (Meaning of work)

Overwork was a negative sub-theme – one of the causes for a love/hate relationship with work. Passages from this sub-theme showed enjoyment with the nature of work but equally complaints about the stress it caused because work often represented an enemy in terms of taking more time and energy than planned. The first factor was the "amount of work" and the weight placed on

individuals' shoulders, usually caused by extra tasks above their initial job responsibilities. These included expansions of roles to absorb additional responsibilities, temporary increases of workload caused by corporate changes or even covering for absent or underperforming peers. Oscar, for example, expressed during his interview his frustrations when he needed to work beyond his expectations in order to compensate for his peers; he worked extra hours to improve the quality of a project and keep the client satisfied.

> *"I feel concerned when the budget disappears. I feel pretty angry when it happens because usually you need to work more than you should to make up for other people's mistakes"* (Oscar, age 20s).

The second factor was associated with the unrealistic deadlines and the responsiveness promised to clients in order to remain competitive. This stress was often described as a source of discontent due to its impact on interviewees' lives outside of work. The following data extract from Leo demonstrates how the international business services culture can easily contribute to work spilling across life in order to meet extra demands and remain competitive in this environment.

> *"… it is very demanding in terms of both, it runs around the clock, you might have clients around the world firing emails over the weekends and evenings making requests and expecting a quick turnaround so it is difficult to stop yourself from checking your phone and checking your emails and trying to be responsive to clients, that is difficult. But also it requires a lot of effort to keep up to speed with what in going on in the business in different countries so you can appear well informed. The learning curve never really flattens off. It is very stimulating but it is also very pressuring and it adds more to the workload"* (Leo, age 40s).

The **Personal instability** sub-theme referred to distress caused by conflict between people at work or disputes. In these cases the negative emotions affected individuals' moods at work and home. John, for example, mentioned that he can cope with any workload but he finds it hard to cope with people issues.

> *"Workload is not a problem for me, disputes and internal fights make me upset and instable outside work"* (John, age 50s).

Joseph had similar ideas about work and personal instability as John; however, he recognised that this is his personal development need and it is down to him to learn to be more resilient when dealing with disagreements at work.

> *"I think I handle workload pretty well. But as a person I don't take negative comments very well. I would like to be able push those off a little bit easily but unfortunately that is my mentality. For example I had an email from a colleague just 20 minutes ago with an unnecessary dig and a negative comment. It upsets me and annoys me more than [it] probably should"* (Joseph, age 30s).

The **Reputation loss** sub-theme was connected with reputation loss caused by poor quality of work and lack of control. In particular, respondents with an engineering background demonstrated a greater level of ongoing concern in relation to the quality of their work. The extract from Clifton's interview shows his acknowledgement concerning the importance of quality of work in their line of work.

> *"Well, you represent an organisation and so if you give bad advice or you provide bad service to your client, you know the effect can be, you know it wouldn't be one person, but you know the potential is for you to lose a good client for instance which affects the whole company, it wouldn't just be a one-off thing, but you know you have a level of responsibility to maintain good client relationships and not to cause problems to the company, I think"* (Clifton, age 40s).

Equally, a lack of control seemed to be an issue associated with reputation loss which stopped individuals from achieving their desired results and maintaining their status. Nick, for example, showed a great level of frustration about corporate policies and their impact on his performance.

> *"I have no problems with workload but I do have an issue with head office trying to centralise everything and taking away from us the ability to innovate and do what we are good at"* (Nick, age 40s).

4.1.0.2 Female considerations (Meaning of work)

Very similarly to the analysis which emerged from male respondents' interviews, work as a financial necessity and/or as an enabler of social and personal growth was a common themes amongst females. However, female respondents hardly referred to work as being who they were. They mostly referred to work as something they did. Passages from female respondents who demonstrated to

be very driven were mostly associated with the need to prove themselves. A female respondent shared an experience she had with other single female peers in the office. She said they were often staying behind and working long hours. One day they were having a chat about working long hours and they asked each other:

> *"Is that to do with our commitment and attitude with work and producing work with quality or it is to do with us trying to perform better than men in order to get a promotion?"* (Katy, age 20s).

4.1.0.3 Inconsistences (Meaning of work)

After the meaning of work question, a couple of follow-up questions were asked to see how the meaning of work oscillates as result of respondents' state of mind. They were asked to explain when they feel happy about work and when they feel concerned about work. Some respondents were inconsistent with their meaning of work. When they felt that work was good then work meant a lot to them and they were happy to work longer hours. But then when talking about their concerns, they not only gave examples of putting boundaries in terms of their commitment towards work, but also described work just as instrumental and a place to make money. John (age, 50s) is a great example when he described work as enjoyment and how interacting with people and being intellectually challenged at work was important to him. But then when he talked about work concerns, he never mentioned the importance of enjoying work and finding a new job when things are bad at work. Instead, he shifted his priorities in life and his enjoyment came from interacting with family and friends which then became his top priority for that moment in time.

4.1.1 Intergenerational influence

Participants were asked to talk about their parents and the set-up in their household when they were children. Some passages only described the set-up, attributing little or no value or meaning to their current experiences.

> *"Dad had the full-time job, my mum worked all the time from when, as long as I can remember, but it was always part-time work around the school hours so she was the main carer, very traditional, you know"* (Clifton, age 40s).

However, other passages attributed some level of judgement and/or positive changes they made to their own households when comparing their lives with those of their parents.

> *"I don't let my work impact on my family in the same way my father's work impacted on him. We look at our own parents and own families and I don't want to be like him, my father. He let work to impact on the family quite badly for periods of time and I did not want to get to that point so I made a conscious decision that I would not let that happen. I never put work first, it is very important because it pays the bills and I have personal and professional ambitions but I would not let these ambitions to compromise my family"* (Thomas, age 50s).

The analysis from the intergenerational influence theme was grouped into three sub-themes as described in Table 4.1.1. The sub-themes of breadwinner dads and full-time working mothers were communicated in a positive way and that of absent dads was communicated in a negative way.

Table 4.1.1 Intergenerational influence sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-theme
Breadwinner dads	Absent dads
Working mums	

4.1.1.0 Positive sub-themes (Intergenerational influence)

The **Breadwinner dads** sub-theme was often mentioned. Most of the intergenerational passages described the traditional male breadwinner model as most respondents' fathers were the main earners in the household and their wives followed them in their careers without work or with part-time work once childcare was no longer an issue.

> *"Well, my father did just go to work, that was it. My mother didn't go to work. That was how it was, so literally it was my mother looked after us and my father went to work, until we left home and then my mother went and got part-time work"* (Jeff, age 40s).

Passages from this sub-theme also referred to the breadwinner set-up as positive and respondents followed their fathers' steps in terms of taking the ownership of breadwinning and work ethics.

> *"When I was young my mum was a nurse and stopped doing that to become a full-time mother, my dad he worked all hours, he owned a small business so we never had holidays, so I think I got my attitude towards work from him"* (George, age 40s).

Nevertheless, when compared to their parents, there was recognition that the breadwinner role had evolved and respondents described a more even relationship with their female partner despite who was responsible for paid or unpaid work.

> *"My mum was a stay-at-home mum and my dad would give her an allowance to say this is what you have to spend for that, but me and my wife we don't have those limitations, my wife is stay-at-home mum but we have joint accounts and everything in terms of the finances side of it"* (Peter, age 50s).

Equally, greater involvement with children was communicated as an expectation of modern dads where financial providing was no longer sufficient in order to be a good dad. For example, expectations of dads from previous generations were limited to financial providing. Usually their time away from work was considered their free time to rest and enjoy as a reward. Most respondents on the 30s and 40s were expected to provide financially and be very active with their children during their time away from work. Scott, for example, demonstrates this shift in expectations with his comment concerning his dad when compared to himself.

> *"I did not have a lot of involvement with my Dad mainly because he used to spend his free time doing things for himself. But now my relationship with my daughter is very different. I am very involved with her"* (Scott, age 40s).

Robert (age 40s) highlights this shift by showing how he manages to fit his personal interests around his children's schedule; for example, going for a run once his children are already in bed. Max (age 40s) describes how after having children there is a new version of "me time" and how you need to be creative with that in order to fit things in.

"You have to learn the difference between what you want and what you need. If you are not a selfish person you do what you need first but then it is your attitude about me time, you can also fit me time around things you need to do, for example driving someone for a horse-riding lesson, you can see that as an opportunity to then go for a walk in the countryside, you need to learn to be flexible with your me time too after having kids" (Max, age 40s).

The **Full-time working mums** sub-theme was developed with passages from interviews with respondents who had both parents working full-time. The majority of their mothers were in education to combine family commitments with work. There were no negative passages concerning mums' absence due to full-time work. Thus, in some cases, passages referred to working mums with pride like Paul's statement about his mother, for example.

"My Mum is the most important woman in my life and no woman will ever take her place. She always gives me everything without asking anything back. My mum also worked full-time as a teacher and she was able to manage everything and handle four children. But I never saw my mum watching TV or resting for example. I don't understand why some women complain about working full-time with only two kids" (Paul, age 30s).

In households with full-time working mums, fathers seemed to be more engaged with the care and domestic role but their mums were still leading the household responsibilities. Even in dual-earner households, gender role expectations were evident in some of the passages giving credit for mums with full-time paid work or helpful fathers with domestic responsibilities. Eddie's interview extract highlights this point by stating that his father was surprisingly helpful with housework, although he was only doing 30% of the domestic work in a dual-earner household.

"Both my parents were working when we were children and their salaries were very similar, maybe my father was getting a little bit more but 10% 15% more so there was no main breadwinner. I would not say that housework was equally shared, my father was surprisingly helpful but not during the week, my mum did all the cooking for example. Between my parents, let's say my mum was doing 70% of the work at home and my dad was doing the other 30%, but I used to do 10% 15% helping my mother" (Eddie, age 30s).

4.1.1.1 Negative sub-themes (Intergenerational influence)

The **Absent dad** sub-theme emerged from passages where respondents referred to their fathers with resentment and their father–son relationship as being worthless when compared to paid work. More often, absent fathers were associated with work in a negative way, like an obsession or selfishness, instead of a positive way, like work ethics for example.

> *"Mum was offered a promotion to deputy head when my Dad was offered a job in USA and there was no discussion. He was very dominant! We moved around the world changing schools to follow my Dad, he was obsessed with his career. Dad was not interested in babies then he was not interested in us between the age of 5 and 16 either. I am very different with my kids, well … at least much better than my Dad was with me"* (Robert, age 40s).

These same male respondents who shared these negative feelings also emphasised how much they ensure they do not make the same "mistakes" with their kids. Brandon, in particular, felt very sad when talking about absent parents and described his own experience as a child in a boarding school.

> *"My Dad was an international professional for an electric utility company and as you did at the time when kids reached an age where the company could no longer provide schooling, the kids were sent back to the UK to boarding schools. I did not have a good experience in boarding school. I would never do that to my daughter. There is no point to have kids then outsource their upbringing to someone else"* (Brandon, age 50s).

4.1.1.2 Female considerations (Intergenerational influence)

Female respondents mostly compared themselves with their mothers and not with their dads. Working mums for some female respondents were perceived as role models.

> *"Mum was a teacher and was able to manage full-time employment and childcare. It was very important to me to see my mum having a career and knowing that she was responsible to other people as well. Not only her children. My mum was a role model to me in terms of pursing my own career"* (Sophia, age 40s).

Thus even in dual-earner households, respondents' mothers seemed to spend more of their time away from work with their children and have a closer relationship with them when compared to the fathers. Katy revealed:

> *"Mum and dad always worked although mum was great, we have a very close relationship. I am a mum's girl … Now my dad. He was like an outsider"* (Katy, age 20s).

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that there was one female respondent in her thirties who accepted not getting along with her mothers and questioning her professional life when her dad passed away. She said that it felt like she worked very hard to prove to him that she was capable but then, when he went, she did not feel she had to prove anything else to anyone and her professional drive had decreased since then.

4.1.1.3 Inconsistences (Intergenerational influence)

Male respondents who missed or resented the poor interaction with their fathers were also the ones seeking more interaction with their own kids. Nevertheless, these same respondents controversially followed their fathers' steps in terms of dedicating large amounts of time and energy to work whilst letting work cross over into the time and energy initially allocated to family. For example, as mentioned previously, Brandon (age 50s) was very open during the interview about how much he was affected by his dad's career demands, which included growing up in a boarding school away from his parents. Brandon then provided several examples of allowing work to take over his own private life. These included choosing a commuter lifestyle going home only during the weekends, an international assignment which demanded 24/7 availability from him in order to meet work demands, missing the birth of his daughter through attending a project kick-off meeting and associating his marriage break-down to his poor WLB. Robert (age 40s) also expressed his feeling towards his "*dad's obsession*" with work and equally gave several examples of finding it hard to disconnect from work during time with his family, to a point where his wife started confiscating his mobile during their holidays. Thomas (age 50s) constantly needed to remind himself how bad he felt when he was a child and his dad had worked all the hours in order to force himself to disconnect from work. Thomas described deploying physical boundaries; although working in another city he left work no later than 6pm as a strategy to minimise the impact of work on his family. And yet he also shared passages showing an ongoing battle he has with work in trying to keep himself emotionally present at home.

4.1.2 Most important role(s) in life

Respondents were asked to comment on their most important role(s) in life and their fulfilments. Most of the answers mentioned their role as a father, and some of them recognised their roles as husbands too. Frank, for example, did not mention work in his answer at all.

> *"The most important thing in my life is being a husband and a father, they are the two key things for me so having a happy family is totally essential for my state of mind and well-being"* (Frank, age 30s).

Overall, work was hardly listed first and in the context of most important things in life. Work was associated with money and mentioned as an enabler of a lifestyle for the family, as Anthony described in his answer:

> *"The most important things are to have a happy family with enough money to be able to not starve but the two go hand in hand so, to have enough cash to be able to enjoy ourselves but to have a successful family"* (Anthony, age 50s).

There were two exceptions from the above statement. The first relates to passages from single male respondents who did not feel strongly about any particular roles in life; however, it was anticipated as changing when they started their own families, like Daren, for example, who said:

> *"I think these things, these roles evolve after you get married and after you start a family. Before that you just, you know, you just do what you were doing and I don't think you really focus on that until then"* (Daren, age 30s).

The second exception was Nick, who referred to work as the most important role in life. However, it is worth mentioning that Nick had a remarkably difficult family life; he was divorced and was dealing with some severe problems with his children. Nick also referred to his upbringing in a way where emotions and attachment were not displayed by his own parents. Nick started answering the "most important role in life" question by saying:

> *"It was easier to find the answer by thinking about what role I would miss the most in life. If I was not blessed with kids, I would still be happy, but I could not live without my work"* (Nick, age 40s).

Nick then reflected and explained that if he were a father working in a supermarket stacking shelves he would feel worse than being a professional worker without children. He also mentioned that other people might feel the same but would be afraid of coming across as if they did not love their children or were ungrateful for them.

In summary, the most important role(s) in life theme was divided into three sub-themes as shown in Table 4.2.2. Family and professional sub-themes emerged from positive passages. Nevertheless, negative answers were also given when talking about respondents' assessment of their most important role in life and situations of regret for not fulfilling this role. Consequently, regret has been listed as a negative sub-theme in this context.

Table 4.1.2 Most important role(s) in life sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Family	Regrets
Professional	

4.1.2.0 Positive sub-themes (Most important role(s) in life)

The **Family** sub-theme in the context of this question was not so much associated with the provider role. Most passages referred to families but in the context of making their families their priorities and being engaged with them. Some answers distinguished the husband and the father roles, some answers referred to family as implying both and some highlighted the role as a father. Answers included "husband and a father" (Thomas, 50s), "family comes first" (Leo, age 40s), "making sure my family is happy" (Joseph, age 30s), "making myself available to meet my family's needs" (Anthony, age 50s), and "being a good father" (George, age 40s). Frank, for example, explained in more detail what the role of being a husband and a father meant to him:

> *"… as father it is about providing, guiding but helping the kids to learn from their own mistakes and find their own ways without being too prescriptive. As a husband it is being caring, supportive and having a laugh"* (Frank, age 30s).

The **Professional** sub-theme in the context of most important role in life was sometimes mentioned after family. This role was associated with individuals' contribution not only to their employers but, most importantly, to the world. Material possessions or status were not mentioned in this context and passages included terms like the "bigger picture" (George, 40s), "making a difference" (Adam, age 50s) and "contribution to society" (Scott, age 40s). This might be a reflection of the nature of the type of work respondents had. For example, engineers were working with nuclear safety matters and renewable energy and management consultants were tackling world issues like climate change and energy supply. For example, Gus (age 30s) after a solid career in oil and gas, he moved to the renewable energy sector because he needed to feel that he was contributing to some of the world's issues. This career change was reported by Gus to be a very painful process which included relocation, learning a new job and building up a new business which he did not know much about. It is important to highlight that his answers referred to the importance of individuals' professional roles and not their employment. The name of the company they worked for was never mentioned in the context of most important roles in life. For example, Scott described his professional role thus:

"My professional role means more than making money. It means contribution to the world and optimisation of my skills" (Scott, age 40s).

4.1.2.1 Negative sub-themes (Most important role(s) in life)

The **Regrets** sub-theme, in the context of respondents' most important role in life, was mostly related to family and time in terms of being present, especially with children. George (age 40s), for example, who also mentioned being "addicted" to work during his interview, talked about how much he already regrets the little time he had spent with his daughters. He also mentioned his lack of patience with them and how much he keeps thinking about work instead of enjoying quality time with them. Another example was Brandon who was on an international assignment with his pregnant wife in Australia. She was far away from all her family and network of friends; she had only her husband there. The date of the birth of their child was the same day as the kick-off meeting for a project where he was one of the key appointed project managers.

> *"I missed the birth of my first and only child to attend a kick-off meeting at work and I never forgave myself for it"* (Brandon, age 50s).

Another cause for regret was associated with the lack of time dedicated to their ex-partners and wives. Brandon (age 50s), John (age 50s), Lewis (age 50s) and Robert (age 40s), for example, referred to regret in terms of poor WLB leading to marital problems and in many cases causing divorce. Only Oscar (age 20s) associated regret with work by feeling bad about not spending more time doing sales instead of focusing only on technical work.

4.1.2.2 Female considerations (Most important role(s) in life)

Female respondents with children never mentioned work in the context of the most important role in life; most said "mother" without hesitation and some said "mother, family and friends". Only one married female without children referred to work as the most important role in life. In contrast with some male respondents, female respondents hardly mentioned their roles as spouses, apart from another married female who did not have children either. Some male respondents talked about regrets for not spending enough time with their children. On the other hand female respondents often referred to guilt instead of regret. For example, Olivia (age 40s) revealed:

> *"You put your head down, you don't think about it, you just do it. You go into work and you just try and close off from home. You don't think about them because when you do think about the kids, that's when the guilt trip kicks in"* (Olivia, age 40s).

Another example was a statement from Robert describing how his wife feels guilty when she needed to travel with work.

> *"For some reason it seems easier for men to be selfish and prioritise work over their families and children. I cannot explain why but it seems to be like that. Even with my own experience my wife seems to have more guilt trips than me when she needs to stay away with work, for example"* (Robert, age 40s).

4.1.2.2 Inconsistencies (Most important role(s) in life)

When talking about the most important role(s) in life, male breadwinner respondents did not acknowledge the financial providing role. The focus of the discussion was around being an engaged father. Being an engaged father was

communicated in a positive way in terms of the importance and the emotional rewards of it. Equally, not being an engaged father was communicated with regret in a vicious circle where passages often showed individuals making work choices which impacted on their presence with their children; individuals felt bad about it but then kept making the same choices. For example, Marcus (age 50s) described fatherhood as the most rewarding experienced he ever had in his life and yet he gave examples of having arguments with his wife for not switching off from work during his days off. He shared a trivial incident, for example, where he was travelling with his wife and his young daughter for the first time. They were going through security at the airport when his mobile rang and it was his boss calling. Marcus decided to answer the call, leaving his wife to sort out the luggage and the toddler who already seemed to be distressed. Then Marcus concluded:

> *"I did not need to answer the call or I could ask to return the call in 15 minutes, but I did not. I constantly feel that I need to be available and responsive to be good at my job"* (Marcus, age 50s).

Female respondents hardly acknowledged the existence of their husbands in the context of the most important role in life whereas most married men acknowledged their roles as husbands. There were passages demonstrating that when individuals have children the role as a husband is pushed down in the priority list but they still acknowledged their wives in their answers. For example, Robert, when talking about his most important role in life and priorities, said:

> *"Most important roles in my life … well … my wife would say that my priorities are work, children, sports then her"* (Robert, age 40s).

4.1.3 Meaning of fatherhood/motherhood

Respondents were asked to describe the meaning of fatherhood or motherhood. In total, seven males and four females were excluded from this question as they had not experienced fatherhood or motherhood. However, 2 males and one female had step-children and felt that the question was appropriate to them as well. They had been involved with their step-children since they were small and they feel very strongly about them. Another male who also had one step-daughter said that he was able to experience some elements of fatherhood and although his wife always mentioned that he would be a

wonderful dad he recognises that his step-daughter will never be like his own. Data from this topic was grouped into four sub-themes as per Table 4.1.3.

Table 4.1.3 Meaning of fatherhood sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Responsibilities	Strains
Rewards	Poor early attachment

4.1.3.0 Positive sub-themes (Meaning of fatherhood)

The **Responsibilities** sub-theme in the context of fatherhood was connected with being present in their children's lives. Although the providing role was implied, they talked more about engaging experiences. A few examples follow from different male respondents.

> *"I want to look after him, make sure he is safe, well, as well as he can be at that age, off to nursery to catch everything under the sun. Yes, I mean, keep him entertained as well, and go out at the weekends and sooner or later I'll buy him his first bike"* Jeff (age 40s).

In the extract above from Jeff's interview, listed responsibilities were mostly associated with the carer role. It is interesting to highlight that Jeff is the main breadwinner and yet he only mentioned about buying a bike at the end of is statement. Thus buying a bike in the context of his answer was more related to providing an experience and being part of it than only providing material things. Robert, another breadwinner, did not mention about financial providing when talking about his responsibilities with his children.

> *"From getting the kids out of bed in the morning and preparing their breakfast, helping with homework, encouraging them to do things instead of watch things, etc"* (Robert, age 40s).

Leo is another example who did not mention the financial providing and he expressed during his interview that he would feel "selfish" if he were to do things for himself when he is not working. Leo mentioned that any free time he has away from work is quality time to be spent with his daughter.

> *"I will always leave work to get home around 6pm to spend time with my daughter and I hardly break this rule. If I need to work I will do it once she is in bed … I don't like to work weekends either because this is my quality time with my daughter"* (Leo, age 40s).

The **Rewards** sub-theme represents passages and statements about the emotional reward of being a parent. Expressions to describe the reward were various; for example, "immense sense of pride" (George, age 40s), "meaning to my life" (Allan, age 50s) and "I look forward to coming home from work every day to see my son" (Erik, age 40s). Marcus compared the enjoyment he gets from work with the enjoyment of being a father:

> *"It means a lot of happiness and joy, you get a lot back from it, it is another source of … you get more reward from that than from a lot of things you achieve in your career just to put things in perspective"* (Marcus, age 50s).

In fact, some male respondents described fatherhood mostly as deep purpose, joy and satisfaction without acknowledging any negatives. For example:

> *"Um, it's an ability to love somebody and to enjoy seeing them develop and for them to reciprocate their feelings to you. So, um, and the satisfaction of seeing them get on in life and them, err, for them to reflect the ideals that you would like them to share in terms of their relationships with other people …"* (Anthony, age 50s).

4.1.3.1 Negatives sub-themes (Meaning of fatherhood)

The **Strains** sub-theme referred to being a father as hard work and constant worry. Passages feeding into this sub-theme came from a few respondents who felt more of the worries than the joy of fatherhood. However, it is important to point out that these respondents also had additional complications in their personal lives which contributed for additional demands on them. For example, Nick was divorced and during the interview talked about ongoing health issues with two of his four children. Nick acknowledged that being a father was hard work.

> *"Fatherhood is a pain and a misery from time to time. You just need to let them get on with life and when they are about 30 and you can have a constructive conversation you engage with them again"* (Nick, age 40s).

Another male respondent had become a single dad since his wife, who was also a full-time mother, died from cancer. His kids were 11 and 14 when that had happened. Although he did not hesitate to say that the most important role in his life is to be a father, and gave several examples of happiness with his children after their loss, he accepted it was hard work. At the point of the interview his children were 23 and 20, already living away from home, but he still worries about them and about trivial things on a daily basis.

"Mmmm, well you worry I suppose I still do it ….' You worry about how, how safe they are, if they are eating well, you worry about how well they are going to get on … you worry all the time" (Adam, age 50s).

The **Poor early attachment** sub-theme was raised by a few male respondents as a negative thing and it was associated with the perception of their lack of ability in handling and interacting with the baby phase of their children's lives. For example, Joseph was open about how he felt disconnected from his children when they were babies.

"My experience of being a father has been the more time it goes on the more it matters. I think that probably as a person I cope better and I am better with young toddlers than I am with babies so I am kind of … naturally the older the children get the more the whole thing means to me. My relationship is stronger with them as older they get" (Joseph, age 30s).

Thomas shared the same opinion as Joseph. He felt that the baby phase is the mother's time with the child. He mentioned that if babies are not sleeping they are breastfeeding so he did not see the point of staying at home when his children were just born. He concluded:

"I don't see the point of staying at home with a new-born baby, fatherhood really starts when they can interact with you" (Thomas, age 50s).

4.1.3.2 Female considerations (Meaning of fatherhood)

Female respondents hardly mentioned about the "providing role" and their presence with their kids was almost implied. They often referred to motherhood as the supporting and disciplining role as illustrated on Lauren's interview.

"I mean I feel that I am very much her anchor, my daughter's anchor, that I am the one, I am the constant in her life that is there at the right moments and does the right thing at the right moments which might not always be pandering to her every whim. It's about setting boundaries and making sure that I keep those boundaries even though I'm tired and I don't want to do it anymore but I still do it so, um, I think it's still it's keeping loving even when it's hard, it's really hard to do it, so it's just, it's that unconditional love thing, isn't it. That's what I think" (Lauren, age 30s).

In contrast, for the male respondents "presence" was more about playing and enjoying fun time and "discipline" was more about guidance and advice.

Like some male respondents, some females also referred to motherhood as what one of them described as a *"thankless task"* (Rachel, age 50s). Another female described the downside of motherhood by sharing the following passage:

"My son went to York with the school a couple of weeks ago and I think it was more difficult for me than it was for him. He didn't phone me all week. He didn't need to, apparently. I was glad that he didn't because it meant that he was enjoying himself and he didn't feel homesick. But the other part of me was – now I know why my mum comes on the phone and goes 'You remember me? You remember my name? You remember my number?' Yes, now I know how you feel, mum. Not getting that phone call, not having that conversation" (Olivia, age 40s).

4.1.3.3 Inconsistencies (Meaning of fatherhood)

For male and female respondents, having children has been, paradoxically, the most rewarding experience in life and the most challenging one too. Joseph explains this very well by saying:

"I always felt I wanted to be a father but then when you have children you kind of see the issues that go with that but equally you would not change it. I just think that when you have children some things are probably better than you hoped but somethings are definitely a lot worse than you expected" (Joseph, age 30s).

4.1.4 Life changing events

All respondents were asked to describe any life-changing events which changed the way they managed their work-life balance. All events which were described promoted positive or negative changes in life as perceived by them, some changes more permanently and others more temporarily. The context of

the life-changing events was also very important in order to judge the impact. For example, in many cases increased working hours was perceived as negative, particularly after a divorce or death. Nevertheless, increased working hours were perceived as positive when work was used as a distraction for serious health issues like cancer, tumours and severe depression. The same applied to being money-conscious for example; after divorce it was perceived as a negative thing but after the birth of a child it was perceived as a positive thing. Data from this topic were grouped into two sub-themes which mainly conveyed whether the life-changing event promoted a positive or negative change in respondents' WLB.

Table 4.1.4 Life changing events sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Positive changes	Negative changes

4.1.4.0 Positive sub-themes (Life-changing events)

The **Positive changes** sub-theme was associated with a positive impact on individuals' work-life balance. Several passages about life-changing events described during the interviews were stressful life experiences like divorce, death, and their own serious illness. Most individuals were able to make positive changes to their lives as result of their stressful experiences. Positive changes mainly referred to more time spent outside work and less money-consciousness. The only stressful experiences which meant that individuals were working more were associated with serious illness but not work-related. In these cases, work was used as a coping mechanism and distraction from the illness.

Divorce was mentioned several times. From a population of 40 people (29 men and 11 women), 20 people were in their first marriage, 9 people were divorced with 5 of them re-marrying later on. Divorce was mentioned as a life-changing event which altered individuals' attitudes in a positive way towards WLB and made them reassess relationships in their personal lives in general and give

less attention to material things. These life-changes seemed to be more permanent and change individuals' attitudes in the long term. Lewis revealed:

> *"I mean, one of the things was that my whole life changed back in 2003 because I had been married for 22 years. I had been with my former wife for 28 years and I came home one day and she told me she was leaving, with no warning, and then you sit back and look at your life and maybe my outlook on life changed that day and don't think I worry about stuff like I … you know, I don't worry about things any more, it doesn't matter. A thing is a thing, money is money, a car is a car, it gets you from A to B, um, your values all change"* (Lewis, age 50s).

John (age 50s), another re-married respondent, referred to his second marriage as his second chance in which he was not prepared to make the same mistakes in terms of working all the hours available and neglecting his family.

Death of loved ones was mentioned by respondents as providing a moment of reflection concerning their own lives and their WLB choices. Similarly to divorce, respondents reflected on the amount of time dedicated to work, as illustrated by Peter, who mentioned that, a few years before, that a colleague died at 46 from an ulcer. Then he said:

> *"He was working too hard that he did not to go to the doctor's because he did not have time and this thing ended up killing him. It was a wake-up call for me to do more things for yourself and your family"* (Peter, age 50s).

The importance of money was also another matter for reflection after the death of loved ones. For example, Ken shared his thoughts about money after his mum died but then accepted that after a period of time he went back to his old ways of working long hours.

> *"It was when my mum died first … now the way that it affected me was, what I realised that mum was being treated with it, is that no matter how much money you have got, it does not matter how much money you have, you can be the richest person on the planet, but you can't, you never have enough money to get over that, you cannot cure it. You know we can be the best that money can buy, but you still cannot ultimately deal with that kind of situation you cannot change it. So I think for me I realise that money is not everything … but then the time pass and you – I – end up going back to the same way"* (Ken, age 50s).

However, in contrast with divorce, death seemed to promote temporary changes to individuals' views on WLB and money. Changes were not sustained after a period of time and respondents were conscious of returning to their old ways. Peter also accepted this by saying:

> *"This* [the death of a friend] *was something I thought of, leading up to my sabbatical. I saw differences at first with my WLB but then you go back to the old ways sometimes"* (Peter, age 50s).

Serious illness was the only stressful life-changing event which contributed to individuals working harder whilst seeing this change as a positive thing. This was mainly because work was used to bring some structure to the individuals who were experiencing severe health issues and helped them to cope and recover from this stressful life experience. A male respondent who found out that he had a brain tumour mentioned that work helped him to bring some normality to his life; he said:

> *"So basically, work helped to put it back as far as I can. I have to take pills every day, you know, they upset me in other ways, side effects, that sort of thing, but I get on with it. I have to go for scans and checks and things like that because it is still there, so, er, you get on"* (Jeff, age 40s).

In addition to the stressful life-changing events discussed above, two more life-changing events were communicated but as more positive life experiences. The first one is the birth of a child. Although this experience was seen as a positive one, its impact had positive and negative consequences on WLB. The second positive life-changing event was paying off the mortgage, which also had a positive impact on life.

The negative changes caused by the birth of a child will be discussed later on under the negative sub-theme. The positive changes caused by the birth of a child was mainly around spending less time at work and being more efficient with time. Frank (age 30s) mentioned that before having children he used to stay at work beyond office hours, particularly when he was involved with an interesting project but now he needs to get home as soon as possible to help his wife and see his children before bedtime. Max explained that he learnt to be more efficient with his time after his children came along but equally he needed to learn to let go other things.

"Having the attention seeking of two children and one adult makes sure you don't have enough time to over-analyse things, in our child-free days we probably took things a little bit more to heart and spent time over-analysing things which did not need to be over-analysed" (Max, age 40s).

Paying off the mortgage was a positive change which helped individuals to be more resilient in relation to stressful situations at work. The underlying worry of job insecurity seemed to be diminished by not having a mortgage to pay. Adam, for example, even after experiencing the death of his wife and becoming a single dad of two children, still explained how paying off the mortgage had a greater impact on his attitude towards work.

"Erm, in the past it used to be very difficult, I tell you what the big change was, and the biggest change was when my wife died and my mortgage got paid off. And I was in the situation then, that, really if people pissed me off too much here, I just said, bye, I'm going. I would just go sit and bum in the garden, and it, and it's odd because I was talking to a friend of mine and her husband, and I was telling her about this and they made a big effort to pay off their mortgage at least she said the same thing happened to him, he would switch off from work because the big driver with it is to pay for your house and when that goes, the amount of money that you actually need to exist drops like a … really down, so you actually all, so now I don't worry, because if it all goes ape shit, I'll just go" (Adam, age 50s).*

4.1.4.1 Negative sub-themes (Life-changing events)

The **Negative changes** sub-theme referred to some life-changing events which were conveyed during the interviews as having a negative impact on individuals' work-life balance. The first life-change was related to health and how life and work became restricted and harder. Jeff, for example, explained that although work played an important role in keeping him going after finding out that he had a brain tumour, he also found great difficulty in returning to work and being productive.

"The first seizure did quite a bit to my memory and when I can back I had to learn virtually how to do the job again. So I had pretty much forgotten what I did. So that was it. I used to play football but I had to give that up when the head went wrong, so I also gave up snowboarding as well" (Jeff, age 40s).

The second life-changing event which had a negative impact on WLB was the birth of a child. Although most respondents acknowledged that before having

child people are not very efficient with their time, they also recognised the extra demands that take over individuals' lives. Anthony, for example, tried to explain how you lose control of your own time after having a family.

> *"My own time is probably about 1% of my time outside of work, the other 99% is decided by other people … my wife and daughter …"* (Anthony, age 50s).

Robert explains that when you have children they become the priority number one and time management is more about fitting things around the children than the other way around.

> *"When you get married you can still be selfish with your time but then when you have kids they take priority and is about squeezing other things to fit them in but not about squeezing the kids. You have work, personal interests, and partner then kids arrive you cut down personal interests and partner and make work more flexible to fit around the kids"* (Robert, age 40s).

4.1.4.2 Female considerations (Life-changing events)

The majority of stressful life-changing events had similar impact on female respondents in terms of reflecting on the time spent at work when compared with the time spent with family, friends or doing things they enjoyed outside work. However, for male respondents the impact of children on WLB seemed to be more associated with the "time squeeze" where for female respondents the impact was more fundamental. All professional female respondents with children in this population referred to a change in priorities in a more philosophical way after the birth of their children, not only in relation to time. They were more concerned in performing well as a mum than performing well in their jobs. For example, Lauren explains this shift of priorities by saying:

> *"I used to be very career-driven but now my most important job I think is being mum, and making sure I don't muck it up at home, as long as my daughter turns out alright, then I think I know it doesn't matter really how, you know what titles on my business card or how much money I'm getting paid as long as she's alright and that I don't do anything major to muck that up. So that's my main job"* (Lauren, age 30s).

Another interesting observation between both genders is in relation to being money-conscious. Passages associated with paid work and materialism emerged more from male interviews than female. Therefore, when faced with

major life-changing events like divorce and death, male respondents like Ken (age 50s), Lewis (age 50s), Allan (age 50s) and John (age 50s) questioned their need to make more and more money. This is not to say that no female respondent acknowledged the importance of their income for their families, particularly taking into consideration that four out of six mothers in this population were single parents. Julia (age 40s), for example, explained that after her divorce job insecurity really affected her because she was the main person providing for her family. The observation was in the sense of their jobs generating income to meet material needs, like a new car, for example, as mentioned by Lewis (age 50s).

A final point in relation to life-changing events and gender is related to serious illness. From the male population, four respondents mentioned about serious health problems which impacted on their WLB. These included a tumour, cancer and heart diseases. Work was then used as a distraction from the health problem although they also mentioned struggling to perform as a consequence of their poor health. Female respondents also mentioned about serious health problems like severe depression and anxiety disorders which impacted badly on their WLB and still do from time to time. However, these health issues initiated from work-related stress. Therefore work for them was never used as a distraction or as a coping mechanism to recover from illness. Work was the main issue causing the poor health. Tina, for example, revealed:

> *"I thought I had a brain tumour. I was suffering from work-related stress which led to depression. One day I was driving home then I stopped the car and did not remember who I was or where I was driving to. If I start being overloaded my brain shuts down again and I start having problems with my memory"* (Tina, age 40s).

4.1.4.3 Inconsistencies (Life changing events)

Although death represents a permanent loss it seems to have less of an impact on WLB in the long term when compared to divorce. The "failure" associated with divorce seems to promote a more sustained change towards WLB than death, which seems to be difficult at the time but then people might just go back to the old ways.

Another inconsistency is the type of health issues raised by the male and female respondents. Male respondents who reported health problems used paid work to help, then to recover, and reported health issues as physical. Female respondents who reported health problems associated them with paid work and most of them displayed mental health issues. An exception was a young female, Amelia (age 20s) who needed medication for over one year to control high blood pressure: this was a physical problem but it was caused by work-related stress as well. This inconsistency raised a question about male respondents: they did not talk about work-related stress during the interviews and/or about any mental health issues they experienced. Either they are not as open as the females or they have never experienced such problems. This was particularly interesting when considering the number of passages complaining about workload issues.

4.2 Second Area: Work-Life Interface and Personal Reconciliation Strategies

4.2.0 Reconciliation strategies and choices

This question provided great insight on the ways in which different people prefer to manage their WLB but, most importantly, how their personalities and psychological boundaries seemed to influence WLB more than their personal circumstances and physical boundaries. For example, in some cases, despite of physical boundaries being in place, constant worrying about work seemed to be more difficult to manage than the actual working long hours. Some respondents who reported constantly thinking about work also mentioned that their work-life balance improved from the perspective that after having children they were forced to physically get away from work in order to meet their parental roles. However, it did not mean that they felt less stressed about their workload. They struggled to effectively absent themselves from work emotionally and mentally. Consequently, they introduced strong physical boundaries to help them switching off in the attempt to manage the negative behavioural impact of their professional worries on their families. On the other hand, other respondents who were able to effectively switch off from work despite of their parental demands still used physical boundaries but for other reasons. They wanted to retain control whilst managing interruptions from work during their private time.

That is why in most cases, the attitude towards work and personalities seemed to be more decisive in terms of work-life balance than the workload itself. Answers from the reconciliation strategies and choices were grouped into four sub-themes as described in Table 4.2.0.

Table 4.2.0 Reconciliation strategies and choices sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Bargain	Reprioritise and reduce
Separation	Setting limits
Personal commitments	Work-centred
Flexible (time and place)	Delegation

4.2.0.0 Positive sub-themes (Reconciliation strategies and choices)

The **Bargain** sub-theme emerged from passages where respondents were happy to have their work spilling over into the rest of life as long it was compensated for. This compensation varied from a monetary value to time off. For example, Joseph (age 30s) mentioned that business travel impacted on his family by putting extra pressure on his wife looking after three children. However, because of an incentive of a daily cash allowance for travel, the respondent was more comfortable with the travelling as he felt he was being compensated for the time away from his family.

> *"Our expenses system at the moment is suited to someone like myself who travels quite a lot. I think it is very fair on that. I do hope that it does not change. It would cause all sorts of problems. It means you do want to travel if your expenses are fair with that and you feel more comfortable about it"* (Joseph, age 30s).

Another example was given by Brandon in regard to time off in lieu. He said that by compensating for the loss of family time, it was easier to negotiate with his family about extra time to work. Therefore no one was grumpy and he felt better about work and family. He gave an example of talking to his wife about working

on a Saturday in order to finish a piece of work and then taking the following Friday off:

> *"This way your family is part of the decision making, they support you to do the extra work and they don't feel they are less important than your job"* (Brandon, age 50s).

The **Separation** sub-theme referred to a clear separation between work and life outside work as a WLB strategy. This was referred to as a coping strategy for the ones who struggled to switch off but also as a management tool to impose boundaries on work interfering with life outside work whilst giving respondents space and time to move from one domain to another.

> *"I need quiet time at the weekend before I go back to work on Monday, particularly if it is going to be a busy week. I don't like to start the week tired. The problem is my manager calls me sometimes on my personal mobile because of work. When I started working I wanted to make a good impression and used my private time for work and now my manager feels that it is OK to call me on my personal mobile. Sometimes people take advantage if they know that someone is willing to make a good impression"* (Darren, age 20s).

Other passages also referred to situations where respondents did not mind work spilling over into home during the weekdays but they avoided this happening over the weekends; for example:

> *"I tend to try and keep the spillage into non-work hours to weekdays and try to avoid intrusion at the weekend"* (Anthony, age 50s).

In some passages the clear-cut strategy was deployed with physical boundaries; for example, shutting off any work-related equipment like mobiles and laptops.

> *"I don't mind as much if I need to work long hours during the week but normally I go home Friday night that's it and I forget work completely, switch off. I don't look my emails or mobile unless it is something urgent like an estimate or budget that I haven't managed to do it during the week, I will do it"* (Adam, age 50s).

A few respondents also mentioned that it is good to live away from work so they are able to use the commuting to switch on and off from work. Thomas (age 50s) made a point and said that he even lives and works in separate cities on

purpose so he can keep private life and work apart in order to be able to switch off from work. Frank (age 30s) mentioned that train journeys to and from work are good for switching off from work but also as giving him some personal time between work and family.

> *"Being on the train it is the only time I have for myself since I had kids so I would not change the commuting time"* (Frank, age 30s).

The **Personal commitments** sub-theme meant that having commitments outside work is a natural way of balancing work and life; for example, having children. You would not mind staying at a work meeting at the end of the day which is running late if you are childless, but then if you have kids you just need to excuse yourself and leave the meeting. Another example was having a private schedule ideally involving others so you then tend to be disciplined and put work aside because you do not want to let those people down. John gave an example of a daily personal to-do list:

> *"I live my life with to-do lists, before it was just about work but since three years ago I started writing a personal to-do list too, usually things I want to do with family stuff. Before it was my work to-do list and then my personal to-do list, recently after my heart problems I changed the order of the lists with a line between then so I have a physical reminder of my priorities in life"* (John, age 50s).

The **Flexible (time and place)** sub-theme referred to passages from respondents who recognised the importance of being flexible with time and place in modern society in order to manage competing demands from all areas of life. Some passages, particularly from respondents with families, discussed the unpredictability on a daily basis. So if individuals are not able to be flexible, creative and adjust those demands on a daily basis, they struggle to sustain paid work and family.

> *"I think flexibility is a good way of enabling the people in the company to be respected and enable them to undertake their chores and work in a manner that is modern really, I suppose, isn't it? I think that turning up at 8 in a bowler hat and going on until 5, it doesn't work like that anymore, does it? It's a 24/7 society and people have different requirements, commitments and whatever else"* (Ben, age 30s).

4.2.0.1 Negative sub-themes (Reconciliation strategies and choices)

The **Reprioritise and reduce** subtheme emerged from passages mostly from parents who accepted that, after having children, individuals need to learn to be more efficient with their time and also to let things go. The reason for this sub-theme being communicated in a negative way was because passages also had examples of repercussions in terms of conflict with others when they were not the priority or the feeling of losing out. For example, Max (age 40s) shared during his interview how his tolerance for poor timekeeping became even lower after having children.

> *"It is importance of being efficient and good at timekeeping when you have kids. It was already in my DNA but now with his kids I am even less tolerant with things like people turning up late to meetings, not being prepared, unproductive meetings, meeting running over at the end of the day. I just excuse myself and leave etc"* (Max, age 40s).

In terms of losses, Thomas (for example) mentioned about losing his personal time and growing apart from his extended family after having children.

> *"After having kids I needed to make time from somewhere some my own time and time with extended family became non-existent"* (Thomas, age 50s).

The **Set limits** sub-theme emerged from passages where respondents felt that reconciliation was about setting limits from the start. This sub-theme was communicated as negative due to the need for saying no when things start getting out of hand. John for example mentioned that in many cases individuals push themselves to the limit without the need because they assume something cannot be changed. He then concludes:

> *"You would be surprised how people can be understanding and accommodating … if you just ask without imposing, the problem is … we always assume that it is wrong to ask. … for example you can always ask the client to meet later in the day without even giving reason for it so you can fly out in the morning and sleep in your own bed. It is individuals' choice* [to] *not even try so they end up missing out on their evening with their families because they did not ask the question"* (John, 50s).

Frank discussed the danger of individuals making themselves available 24/7 via emails and then raising clients' expectations in terms of responses outside office hours.

> *"My work has little or no impact on my personal life because this is the way I manage my clients. I don't make myself available 24/7 and usually turn off my mobile and laptop when I get home. If you leave them on you are automatically making yourself permanently available which you can if you wish so but this is not my option"* (Frank, age 30s).

The **Work-centred** sub-theme referred to passages from individuals who would approach work-life reconciliation by prioritising work in their lives and fitting the rest of life around work. The reason why this sub-theme was communicated in a negative way is because respondents also showed some level of regret for prioritising work over their families. For example, Allan justified this approach of putting work at the centre and fitting things around it by saying:

> *"… by being the breadwinner I can be selfish and prioritise work which I take a lot of pleasure from without feeling too guilty".*

George was another example of putting work at the centre of his life. He mentioned that nowadays his weekly hours "are not as bad". He works 50–60 hours a week where before he said "I could do 80 hours a week easily with travel". George mentioned that because of his travel and working hours he has little life outside work. He referred to his "work ethics" as something positive and fulfilling. However, when talking about his attitude towards work and his family, his statements show a mixture of acceptance of how much he enjoys work, that being the main reason why he puts his work at the centre of his life, and regrets when talking about his children. Following are three extracts from George's interview:

> *"I feel lost without work; I enjoy so much the subject of my work that when you take that away from me I feel … I have no enthusiasm like when I am on holidays for example".*

> *"I don't give the time and priority they deserve"* [when talking about his family, wife and children].

> *"I don't spend enough time with the girls because I am always busy with work. Now that they are getting older I am losing touch with them"* (George, age 40s).

The **Delegation** sub-theme represents passages where respondents demonstrated that by delegating some of their work to others. The negative spillover happened due to unmanageable workload or during holidays, for

example, when individuals kept working remotely because they did not have anyone to cover for them. Although delegating to others was seen as a strategy to reduce work-life conflict, it was also a source of concern. That is why it was communicated as negative. One example was Adam reflecting on trust when talking about delegation as a WLB reconciliation strategy.

> *"You got to delegate the work because you can't do everything yourself. Yeah, You see it with other people as well, they don't trust other people to do the work, you know that they'll constantly say well it's quicker if I do it, well yeah it is in the short term but in the long term, that nobody else is going to develop unless you let them, you have to have some degree of trust"* (Adam, age 50s).

Another example was Leo, who mentioned about being able to delegate as something which would improve his WLB. However, it was communicated in a negative way because he felt that he hadno one to delegate to. He explained that, particularly in smaller offices, you simply do not have anyone to delegate to, then he said:

> *"I often struggle to take my holidays entitlement because I don't have anyone to cover for me and all the members of my team are just too junior to delegate to"* (Leo, age 40s).

4.2.0.2 Female considerations (Reconciliation strategies and choices)

In terms of reconciliation strategies, female respondents mentioned about managing boundaries concerning family needs as well as work. Lauren, for example, explained that mothers need to be able to manage boundaries from work and children. She said that children will often place unnecessary pressure on mums just to get their attention. Following is an extract from Lauren explaining how she rationalises the demands from her daughter.

> *"It's drawing that line between knowing when they need it and knowing when they are taking it because it is on offer and then knowing when they are taking the mick and knowing you're taking it too far now"* (Lauren, age 30s).

Another female consideration was associated with working from home as an ongoing arrangement for female respondents. They showed preference to mainly work from home in order to reconcile domestic work with paid work or childcare. For example, Rebecca (age 30s) said:

"When you work from home you can just take a few minutes here and there to do the washing and dishes so you don't need to do them in the evening when you are already rushing around with homework and getting kids ready to bed" (Rebecca, age 30s).

Olivia mentioned about working from home and the benefit of being at home when her children finish school. This way she can also spend more time with them by stopping work earlier and then going back once her kids are in bed.

"I'll take a day working from home rather than working in the office, so that they can come straight home from school. Things like that. And I will stop slightly early, because I know I am doing stuff when they have gone to bed. So the stuff I do from home as in the evenings, any extra I have to do on the servers in the evening, gets done when they go to bed so that it doesn't impact on the time that I have with them" (Oliva, age 40s).

Only a couple of female respondents mentioned that they did not like working from home. One is Sophia (age 40s) who has no children and a house-husband: the other is Katy (age 20s), single with no children, who said that she does not like to work from home because she needs to keep the separation between work and private life. Katy said: *"I need a physical door to shut in order to separate work and private life".*

On the other hand the views from the male respondents concerning working from home were more associated with the provision as an emergency rather than an ongoing arrangement. Reasons for this varied; for example, "lack of interaction with colleagues" (John, age 50s), "ineffective" (Allan, age 50s), "intrusive" (Dom, age 50s), "distractive" (Eddie, age 30s), and "impractical" (Frank, 30s). Working from home as an ongoing arrangement was only mentioned a few times. For example, Joseph (age 30s) mentioned about the convenience of working from home after and before business travel. Passages addressing preferences in terms of flexible WLB practices from a male perspective were more associated with start and finish time. For example, Allan, Dom and Darren explain how being flexible with their working hours can help them to keep up with life outside work.

"I do informally compensate myself I suppose by, if I need to leave early or have a lunchtime errand. I won't feel embarrassed about that time. I do also take some weeks an extended lunchtime to go and play tennis with a group of friends but then normally end up I suppose, I do enough

hours over the week anyway. And then certainly if you add in the travel which isn't compensated" (Allan, age 50s).

"I prefer to have flexibility around start and finish time. For example on Fridays I prefer to start working earlier so I can go home earlier to start the weekend" (Dom, age 50s).

"Being flexible with time means that you don't need to book a half-day holiday just to attend a couple of hours appointment for example" (Darren, age 20s).

4.2.0.3 Inconsistencies (Reconciliation strategies and choices)

Some respondents who deployed a separation strategy of reconciling work and life still found it hard to switch off emotionally from work when at home, even with the physical boundaries. A great example is Thomas (age 50s) who decided to live in another city than that of his workplace in order to keep both separate: he leaves work at 6pm every night and does not work over the weekends. Equally he also mentioned:

"I go to bed thinking about work and wake up thinking about work".

Then Thomas said:

"I don't work over the weekends but then I worry the whole weekend about a report that needs to be in by Monday lunchtime".

Thomas also mentioned about his negative behaviours at home because of work worries:

"I get short-tempered at home sometimes because of work".

Another example is Darren who mentioned about not working outside the office and yet during busy periods he finds it very hard to switch off. Darren illustrated that by saying:

"When work is very busy I find it hard to switch off. I think about work all the time. It takes me about two hours after being home to be able to disconnect on a weekday" (Darren, age 20s).

4.2.1 Physical exercise

There was no direct question in the interview schedule about physical exercise. This main theme mostly originated from questions around WLB and the impact on health issues with workload or leisure, for example, or when talking about

their wish lists and things they wanted to change about their WLB. The awareness concerning the importance of physical exercise was particularly high across the sample. Often exercise was referred to as a recovery strategy in order to release stress and increase stamina to deal with busy life styles. *"The busier it gets the more exercise you need to cope with it"* (John, age 40s). Data from physical exercise were organised into the following four sub-themes as displayed in Table 4.3.2.

Table 4.2.1 Physical exercise sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Enhanced performance	Lack of exercise
Leisure	Irregular commitment

4.2.1.0 Positive sub-themes (Physical exercise)

The **Enhanced performance** sub-theme in the context of exercise covered all passages associating exercise with better physical and emotional health which was required in order to perform well in all areas of life. For example, Oscar (age 20s) mentioned "*without exercising I feel less motivated with life in general*" and Robert (age 40s) said that "*I am a better human being when I exercise*". Some passages also referred to exercise as a recovery strategy from work. It was natural for some respondents to exercise as a response to a stressful situation. It was almost similar to having a coffee when you feel sleepy at work. When they were stressed they went to the gym over lunch to get rid of the stress. For example, Frank said:

> *"I often find myself stressing out about something then I go exercise and when I come back to the problem then I question myself … why I was getting all stressed about this?"* (Frank, age 30s).

Furthermore, respondents who use exercise as a strategy for recovery were less particular about what type of exercise they did so they often fit whatever they can with the time they have available. This might include going to the gym for 20 minutes during lunch break (Robert, age 40s), stopping at the public pool

for swimming on the way back from work (Jeff, age 40s) or taking running shoes on a business trip (Nick, age 40s). Nick also said:

"Exercise makes work to be a better place" (Nick, age 40s).

The **Leisure** sub-theme referred to exercise more than its positive impacts on health; it was about enjoyment. Some respondents appeared to have a particular interest in a type of sport for which regular training/practising was part. For example, Robert, who did triathlons, revealed:

"I am a very competitive person by nature so competing allows me to use this energy in a constructive way in the right place and at the right time instead of letting this side of my personality to come out at home or at work" (Robert, 40s age).

Scott (age 40s) described how he keeps himself busy outside work with sport. He mentioned that running can be done anywhere so he managed to do at least 20 hours per week of running and cycling.

"Running takes over my life outside work, weekend I will be racing once at least. I practise 20 hours a week easy. It has being going on for years" (Scott (age 40s).

4.2.1.1 Negative sub-themes (Physical exercise)

The **Lack of exercise** sub-theme was developed from passages where respondents acknowledged the benefits of exercising but found it difficult to exercise regularly. These passages emerged from questions where respondents were asked to reflect on things they would like to change concerning their work-life balance and well-being. Their instant answers were to do more exercise. Max, for example, attributed his lack of exercise to "laziness" by saying:

"I know I should do more exercise actually and I am trying to do that but laziness … In fact I eat too much. It is a fundamental issue … It is like you sit in your living room and think I rather open a bag of crisps and bottle of wine or go for a run. That is straightforward" (Max, age 40s).

Gus (age 30s) mentioned about getting older and having problems with his knees which limited the type of sports he could do. Consequently, he said:

"Then you end up ended up having fewer interests outside work and start spending even more time at work and being less fit" (Gus, age 30s).

The **Irregular commitment** sub-theme referred to passages where respondents mentioned about being unable to have regular commitments and exercise because of the mobility of their jobs. Nick, for example, mentioned that because of the nature of his work he prefers running and swimming because he can go swimming from any location. Then he also said:

"I would like to do other sports but it is not convenient. I would do some boxing but I can't because it requires regular commitment. I would need to go the boxing gym at least twice a week" (Nick, age 40s).

Robert also mentioned about the regular practice which is needed in order to enjoy playing some sports. Then when individuals cannot commit to regular training, the enjoyment of the playing is no longer there.

"You miss the practice during the week and keep going to games during the weekends you end up not enjoying it anymore because you just don't do well" (Robert, age 40s).

4.2.1.2 Female considerations (Physical exercise)

Male and female respondents were similar in terms of accepting the benefits of exercise but females tended to report doing less exercise than male respondents. Some female respondents also recognised exercise as a performance strategy; for example, Mary mentioned about being more productive after exercising in the morning.

"If I exercise first thing in the morning I work better. If I don't I get grumpy" (Mary, age 40s).

In the case of most female respondents, childcare seemed to occupy a large part of their time outside work. For example, Rebecca (age 30s), when asked about exercise, highlighted a daily struggle to keep up with daily routines at home.

"I don't have time. I'll be honest, we go home at night and once you have done homework, made dinner, bathed the kids, it really is time for bed. In the summer time I like to run and at the weekend, but then your weekend is spent with the children. Trying to do their swimming, their music lessons, you know" (Rebecca, age 30s).

4.2.1.3 Inconsistencies (Physical exercise)

From 29 interviews with male respondents, 15 of them who also exercised regularly did not have passages complaining about their workload, even when they were probed about it. For example, Nick mentioned that exercise helps people to put things into perspective, so when he was asked if he felt stressed about his workload, his answer was:

> *"Stress is a non-sense thing. When people feel stressed they need to go for a run and they feel better about things. I would understand about stress if we were in the wild with a lion trying to eat you"* (Nick, age 40s).

On the other hand, respondents who did not exercise regularly often provided passages and views complaining about their workload and work-related stress. An example is Peter (age 50s), from the same office as Nick, who also had fewer responsibilities and less travel than Nick. Peter mentioned that he did not manage to exercise regularly because of the time spent at work. Peter's interviews (age 50s) had several passages talking about his workload as per the following extracts:

> *"My workload can be a problem".*

> *"I get stressed with workload. You just get your head down until it is done".*

> *"My wife reminds me when I am working too much and that helps me to refocus".*

4.2.2 Childcare

From a sample of 29 males and 11 females, 22 respondents were fathers (two of them were step-fathers) and 7 were mothers (one of them was a step-mother). Consequently, 29 participants contributed with passages explaining how they managed childcare with paid work in any time of their lives. Findings from this theme were grouped into four sub-themes, two displaying positive meanings and two displaying negative meanings, as shown in Table 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.2 Childcare sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Family/friends support	Schooling hours
Full-time mum	Inadequate rights

4.2.2.0 Positive sub-themes (Childcare)

The **Family/friends support** sub-theme was developed from passages describing all sorts or provisions fathers had in place with their partners so both could do paid work. This sub-theme was communicated as positive as passages mostly referred to extra help usually received from grandparents and a network of parents outside school or private childcare hours. Robert (age 40s) explained that private childcare alone does not work because if there is an emergency or a delay at work individuals struggle to go back home on time. Robert explained that his family's grandparents did not live near him and his wife so he found that relying on the local network of parents was very beneficial.

> *"In our parents' network, we are always exchanging favours particularly with pick-ups from after school clubs"* (Robert, 40s).

A few passages also described how childcare was organised in dual-career households. For example, Joseph explained that he and his wife used to share time off from work to deal with childcare emergencies.

> *"My wife is taking a career break to spend time with the kids but when she was working full-time, the issues with childcare were split between both employers so we would manage between us, for example taking half a day each. So the pressure was not just on one person and one employer"* (Joseph, age 30s).

The **Full-time mum** sub-theme emerged from passages of fathers who had their partners/wives as the primary carer in the household. It did not necessarily happen from the birth of the first child. In some dual-earner households childcare became difficult only after the second child was born. For example, Nick described:

> *"By the time we had our second child and the first one started school it was too stressful to manage all with both of us working so my wife needed to stop working"* (Nick, age 40s).

Some passages described that by having wives/partners as primary carers it meant a lot of pressure was taken away from some of the male respondents. For example, Oscar revealed:

> *"I don't think I would cope with childcare all the time. I would be constantly exhausted. I don't think I would cope. It is too hard work. It is constant on the go"* (Oscar, age 20s).

Equally, other passages also raised the pressure of being the only breadwinner and the responsibility of providing for the family. For example, Ben described how he felt when his wife stopped working to look after their daughter.

> *"I suppose it takes a lot of the pressure off me, I suppose, but you do feel a bit more of a responsibility being more the sole breadwinner with the financial commitments but otherwise, yes, no real problems"* (Ben, age 30s)

4.2.2.1 Negative sub-themes (Childcare)

The **Schooling hours** sub-theme was developed from views and passages addressing the difficult of combining paid work for two people and additional childcare arrangements to cover before and after children's school times and holidays. For example, Leo mentioned that his wife stopped working because the hours of the schools did not match the hours of office work. He quoted:

> *"It feels like public school in the UK is designed to give a break to stay-at-home mums than actually support parents who need to work"* (Leo, age 40s).

The **Inadequate rights** sub-theme was developed from findings which emerged from fathers' opinions concerning the support they received from paternity legislation. It was communicated in a negative way as neither pay nor length of time was perceived to be helpful. Jeff (age 40s), for example, explained his frustrations with the principles behind paternity pay. He mentioned that when you have a child and your wife is on maternity leave, this is when you need money the most as compared to two people working full-time without an extra person to provide. He quoted:

> *"When you need the money the most is when it is taken away from you"* (Jeff, age 40s).

Ben shared the same idea as Jeff and referred to having children as an expensive hobby as not everyone can afford to take one person in the household away from full-time employment. He also compared paternity and maternity benefits and said:

> *"It always strikes me as one of the more sexist of laws, I think, yes, it's an expensive hobby to have kids, isn't it?"* (Ben, age 30s).

The second issue related to statutory paternity provisions was in reference to the short duration of the benefit. Jeff, for example, was not only disappointed with the rate of paternity pay but he was clearly frustrated with the inadequacy of the length of the paternity leave. He also said:

> *"It's that initial time when the mother needs someone else to help, if she has had a particularly bad time with the birth or whatever, the father is there and he has got to offset the, you know, the new baby, where for example he may be learning to look after the new baby as well if it is the first one, whatever. But he has got to offset relatives having to come around and, you know, crowding and all that sort of thing. And to get two weeks to actually learn all that thing and then, you know, being paid at a low rate for that as well is a, I think, is a very poor show actually"* (Jeff, age 40s).

Frank agrees with Jeff but also raises the time needed to settle in order to be functional at work. Frank mentioned that he did not feel fit to go back to work with a two-week-old baby.

> *"Two weeks is not enough, it takes at least a month to understand what has happened before you can be functional again to return to work"* (Frank, age 30s).

4.2.2.2 Female considerations (Childcare)

Female respondents tended to compromise their career more than males in order to accommodate childcare. Several interviewed female professionals who had children had also a career break beyond maternity leave. For example, Lauren (age 30s) explained that she had taken a couple of years as a career break and only did some unskilled job because she felt that it was very difficult to do a demanding job with a young child.

Another consideration was in relation to female professional workers and male professional workers and childcare. Most mothers from the sample were also primary carers with careers and full-time employment. Rachel (age, 50s) mentioned that even nowadays there is an assumption that women will always be the primary carers. She gave an example of going for a job interview for a full-time employment and being asked how she would manage a small child and employment at the same time. Rachel then said:

> *"I remember of being so annoyed by that question and actually saying to the interviewer … my husband is a stay-at-home dad. And he was at the time – that is why I went for that particular job in a first place. This was because I was a woman. They would not ask this same question if I was a man. There was a lot of discrimination in the workplace"* (Rachel, age 50s).

4.2.2.3 Inconsistencies (Childcare)

In dual-earner households, grandparents from the father's side were not mentioned to be involved in helping out with childcare. Passages always mentioned the mother's side. Robert (age 40s) believed that his wife's parents were more willing to help than his own parents.

> *"Our parents are alive from both sides but my wife's parents have a more positive attitude to help"* (Robert, age 40).

Another inconsistency was in relation to household set-ups where mothers were the primary carers. For some male respondents this meant a relief from not needing to be concerned with childcare and being able to focus on work, such as Peter (age 50s) and Oscar (age 20s), but for others like Ben (age 30s) and Frank (age 30s) it was also a worry and meant extra pressure for being the only breadwinner in the house. Frank mentioned that after having children work becomes more important in the sense of making money.

4.2.3 Flexible working

Respondents were asked to elaborate on their views concerning flexible work. Most passages referred to flexibility of time and place at work, hardly connected to childcare provisions by fathers and often mentioned in connection with the nature of their jobs in terms of autonomy and mobility. Therefore flexibility in this context of the male respondents did not mean planned and fixed flexible

arrangements to meet childcare needs, except for some male respondents without children who felt that parents, both fathers and mothers, benefit more from flexible working than employees without children. Also, passages exploring flexibility at work referred to both individuals' and organisations' needs to be flexible (temporarily or permanently) in order to meet competing demands between paid work and the rest of life. In general, respondents from this sample were used to a flexible working environment and appreciated the benefits (when individuals were taking advantage of it) but equally accepted the challenges of it (when the company was expecting flexibility from employees to meet a business demand). Consequently most of the passages were communicated in a positive way.

> *"I think everybody would be the same type of opinion and they all agree that a reasonable amount of flexibility in the way you work is good and you know as long as it's not taken advantage of, I think it benefits everybody" (Ben, age 30s).*

The benefits of flexible working were most recognised from an individual perspective as a work-life reconciliation strategy; however, some passages also acknowledged the positive effect of flexible working on individuals' performance at work.

> *"People who need some level of flexibility that they can do what they are expected to do and it makes their life easier then, it should make them more effective at work and if they are not worried about, oh God, I have got to run out to collect the kids from school or, you know, I've got to, you know, if you can make that flexibility and technology, modern technology should help to make that, you know, that provided they can take that and people can deliver what they are expected of them actually it should be better if you can make them work with flexibility sensible, then you should, it should be a good thing for the business as well as for the people because if the people feel comfortable then there will be, in theory, they should, you know, work better" (Clifton, age 40s).*

However, a few passages were also communicated in a negative manner and it was related to two separate views. The first one was associated with lack of managerial trust and fairness and the second was related to work mobility, particularly travel and pressure on their families. Table 4.2.3. shows four sub-themes concerning work flexibility from both employers' and employees' sides.

Table 4.2.3 Flexible working sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Unforeseen demands	Limited managerial trust
Global professionals	Mobile work demands

4.2.3.0 Positive sub-themes (Flexible working)

The **Unforeseen demands** sub-theme arose from passages where respondents appreciated flexibility from both place of work and time in order to meet an unexpected and private commitment or emergencies. This sub-theme was communicated in a positive way, as passages referred to the use of flexible time to meet unexpected demands outside work without using paid leave like holidays. This flexibility included working from home or being flexible with start and finish time. Often passages discussing flexible working referred to the need for being flexible with unpredicted demands from work too:

> *"The last thing you want if I have got someone coming around to fix the washing machine, can I take some work home, because we can do that, you know, for a couple of hours while I'm sitting there for somebody, rather than having to take a half-day holiday which some companies provide. It removes that resentment, that tension. But equally you can't ask somebody to stay longer if you are not prepared to also give and take on the other way. So I think that is how we encourage some of our commitment"* (Allan, age 50s).

The **Global professionals** sub-theme was developed from passages which associated flexibility with the type of the work in the international professional area. In general, respondents' views were that flexibility was possible in professional environments as individuals tend to naturally have a certain level of autonomy anyway. This autonomy was associated with how performance was judged by results and not office presence.

> *"In professional environments it should be what you deliver within a deadline instead of time watching and time keeping"* (Max, age 40s).

Equally, autonomy associated with remote work and travel was already the reality for the majority of the respondents from the sample.

> *"The type of business requires some levels of engagement and collaboration face to face to exchange knowledge but as long as it is frequent, flexible working is OK. But the business also requires individuals to be out of the office with clients so there is already a flexible nature in the business"* (Nick, age 40s).

The international element of the business was also mentioned in terms of flexibility. A few respondents recognised that you cannot be rigid with work either in terms of flexibility as in many cases by working for an international company individuals need to accept that some level of flexibility comes with the job. Nick (age 40s), for example, also mentioned about different time zones and working with the Middle East when he needed to attend conference calls on Sundays when his contacts actually start their working week. Leo (age 40s), another example, mentioned that often he needs to make calls in the evening due to his international client base operating from different time zones. In WLB terms this means leaving the office earlier to spend the evening with his daughter, then going back to work once she is in bed.

4.2.3.1 Negative sub-themes (Flexible working)

The **Limited managerial trust** sub-theme in the context of flexible working was often referred to as a managerial issue. The trust element was associated with the lack of managerial control over individuals' work and the need to have a trusting environment to enable flexible working. This was mostly experienced by respondents in the sample from the support functions (IT, HR and Finance) and young engineers with office-based types of work. Trust was also commented on by more senior respondents who were happy with their own autonomy but related to the need for trust being in place to enable this flexibility.

> *"One of the biggest drivers is trust actually and you've got to be able to treat each other like adults and you need to be able to trust"* (Ben, age 30s).

The **Mobile work demands** sub-theme referred to the implications of irregular schedules with travel and international assignments which expected individuals and their families to be flexible with amplified work demands. In terms of irregular schedules some respondents mentioned about not having the ability to commit to any regular activities outside work. Travel was typically mentioned by

male respondents as a hindrance to WLB and in some cases as a stress point which produced work/family conflict.

> *"Travel impacts in terms of social life, in terms of being able to make arrangements, when you can see friends or when you can plan to play tennis, in terms of you booking courts, in terms of booking a holiday. And some of it is very short notice. So can you be somewhere in two days time? Well, no, I've got a meal arranged with some friends that evening. Where does the priority lie? And that happens quite a lot, nowadays"* (Allan, age 50s).

Concerning international assignments there was one respondent in particular who experienced the expat lifestyle during his career and described such experience as being more traumatic then enriching. Brandon (age 50s, divorced) attributed the international careers of himself and his partner as the reason for their marital problems. Both gave up international careers in order to restore their families but agreed that once the damage has been done it is difficult to recover. Brandon said:

> *"An international assignment is a very sensitive experience for many couples, plenty of my expat colleagues have also divorced from their spouses. You start questioning some fundamental issues about the marriage. It is like all the bad things come to surface at once and all the good things stay behind in your home country".*

4.2.3.2 Female considerations (Flexible working)

Most passages from female respondents with children associated flexible working with childcare and referred to flexibility as an important arrangement for combining work with motherhood. Flexible working meant all sorts of arrangements for them, including working core hours, like Rebecca (flexible with start and finish time), accruing lieu time or working from home, like Oliva, and taking the time off and then making up for the hours, like Mary.

> *"I prefer to start early in the morning and I like to finish early so that the one thing I do like to do is, I like to do the children's homework"* (Rebecca, age 30s).

> *"Flexible hours – you can't beat it. That and toil. Because I don't use my … If I do overtime I don't get paid overtime, I don't ask for the overtime. I go for toil because it means that if the kids are ill and I have to cover for them being ill, I have to work from home or I have to be home with them,*

I've got the extra time on my toil to allow me to do that without impacting on my holidays that I want to take with them" (Olivia, age 40s).

"Flexibility is useful to attend things like parents' meetings. It is good to be able to leave earlier and make up for the hours another time" (Mary, age 40s).

On the other hand, male respondents' passages addressed all types of commitments outside work which could benefit from flexible working but also discussed their entitlement in relation to the type of work they did and how their performance was measured. Passages from female respondents addressing entitlement and other types of commitments were only a few in number and emerged from interviews with females who did not have children. For example, Sophia, when talking about flexible working, also addressed the difference in treatment between employees with children and those without by saying:

"Work should allow people to have flexibility of time as long as they do their work without judging the reason for it. Flexibility should be aimed at people who need to do something as trivial as taking a cat to the vet, as something as important as taking a child to school" (Sophia, age 40s).

4.2.3.3 Inconsistencies (Flexible working)

Flexible working from the male perspective was less associated with childcare and seemed to be more related to the nature of their work mobility and their ability to deliver results beyond usual office hours and office presence. However, for some respondents *without children*, the practice of flexible working seemed more connected with childcare than the nature of work, as claimed previously, which automatically excluded them from entitlement. The following extract from Rachel addresses both, the increased demand for childcare but also a concern about individuals using childcare as an excuse to use flexible working in order to deal with other personal commitments.

"It is wrong to assume nowadays that mums take the primary responsibility for childcare. Equally there are cases where both parents use their childcare commitments to excuse themselves from work when actually the reason for it is something else. Having said that, you must be sensitive also with the fact that nowadays, with mobile workers, less and less people are having family support which has been fundamental in the past to help out with childcare emergencies, for example" (Rachel, age 50s).

4.3 Third Area: Work-Life Balance Experience with Employment

4.3.0 Work & Life conflict

Respondents were asked to share their experiences when they found it hard to reconcile work and life outside work. In this context, "work" meant paid work and "life" meant all personal affairs including family, own health, personal interests, etc. In the context of the findings for this research, work-life conflict refers to work spilling over into life and taking time, energy and resources initially allocated to life outside work in order to meet a demand from work. Life-work conflict is the opposite. It meant when life was spilling over into work, taking away time, energy and resources originally allocated to paid work.

There were situations where conflict was expected and dealt with as part of life, for example the extract from Jeff's interview below describing a life-work conflict situation:

> *"Yes, last Friday in fact, for my little boy. As I said he had a big nose bleed, so I had to. On the Thursday he was at nursery and he stuck his finger up his nose and he had a big nose bleed, and then on Friday he, as you do, he tripped over and hit himself and next thing my wife knew there was blood all over the sheets and so she phoned me up going 'Help', so I went home" (Jeff, age 40s).*

On the other, there were passages where conflict was conveyed in a problematic way. Often the conflict was also a source of ongoing distress and mostly reported as a work-life conflict. For example, Brandon explained how he used to answer his work calls during meal times and how it was causing friction between him and his wife.

> *"One day my wife said … ask your boss to speak to him the next day unless it is urgent. At this point I realised that I should not be expected to stop having dinner with my family to answer the phone. No one was going to die if we waited until the next morning"* (Brandon, age 50s).

Consequently, four sub-themes emerged from passages and statements referring to conflict between one or more roles in life and work (Table 4.3.0). Two sub-themes reflect conflicts which were acceptable and manageable by the respondents and two sub-themes meant conflicts were perceived as problematic and destructive.

Table 4.3.0 Work & Life conflict sub-themes

Positive themes	Negative themes
Acceptable work-life conflict	Destructive work-life conflict
Acceptable life-work conflict	Destructive life-work conflict

4.3.0.0 Positive sub-themes (Work & Life conflict)

The **Acceptable work-life conflict** sub-theme emerged from passages where respondents experienced work-life spillover. Equally, they were comfortable with the spillage. In most cases respondents felt that they had a choice or received some sort of compensation. Leo, for example, explained a situation where his client called in the evening to ask him to retrieve an old presentation to be used in a meeting the next morning. Leo said:

> *"If I did not answer the call then the service would be too late. It took me less than 10 minutes and my client was very happy so I did not mind"* (Leo, age 40s).

Another case where work-life conflict was acceptable was when work was used to compensate for issues outside work. Nick, for example, during his interview said that he welcomed any work spillage because not only did he not like his work very much but also he was using work to forget about his problems outside work.

> *"I use work to shut myself away from any emotional problems. Sometimes I might feel frustrated with the amount of work but then my strategy is to work more. I don't need to switch off from work. I enjoy the subject I work with. It is not about work, it is about my life"* (Nick, age 40s).

The **Acceptable life-work conflict** sub-theme emerged from passages showing issues outside employment which impacted on work in terms of absence or performance. Passages from this sub-theme were usually associated with emergencies like sickness or death. However, passages were communicated as part of life instead of something negative which required change.

"There's one stage where every member of my wife's family in Ireland seemed to be dying, you know, there's, you know, that has quite a big impact because you were having to work round that, what can you do?" (Adam, age 50s).

Respondents also appreciated that the situation was out of their control. In this case employers' support was often referred to as an essential help to cope with the unforeseen matter. Jeff, for example, experienced two major issues outside paid work which affected the same employment. Jeff accepted that he could not control these issues and therefore decided to manage the situation in the best way he could.

"Well, work has got to take a back seat at the moment until I got my head straight. So I had a couple of months off work. The first seizure did quite a bit to my memory and when I can back I had to learn virtually how to do the job again. So I had pretty much forgotten what I did. So that was it" (Jeff, age 40s, second major life-work conflict).

"I mean, this company, if you've got to do something pretty bad for them to say no, you can't do this, or you can't do that. My dad died a few years back and they were supportive straight away. I had to go down and help my mum. My mum lives down south and straight away, yes, no problem, go and do this, go and do that, so again they helped" (Jeff, age 40s, first major life-work conflict).

4.3.0.1 Negative sub-themes (Work & Life conflict)

The **Destructive work-life conflict** sub-theme developed from situations where respondents did not feel under control of demands upon them and were uncomfortable with the work-life spillage which caused inconveniences outside work. For example, Allan mentioned about having to travel at short notice and how it was difficult to manage this requirement without disappointing his wife.

"I suppose it is difficult particularly when my wife wants to do something, when we are planning to do something, or the opportunity to do something and then the need to travel crops up" (Allan, age 50s).

Besides travel there were other examples showing how unplanned commitments with paid work might affect individuals' home lives. Robert, for example, shared his frustrations concerning the management of workload in a project work:

"Some people also forget the impact of their work on others and the chain of events that needs to be concluded before the client deadline. For example sometimes I am emailed on Friday 5pm of things that still need to be worked with to meet a deadline by Monday" (Robert, age 40s).

The **Destructive life-work conflict** sub-theme was developed from passages where a few respondents felt uneasy about issues outside employment impacting on work performance. These issues were often related to family. Nick, for example, complained about issues related to his children not collaborating with him when he is working from home.

"I get annoyed when I have to make phone calls and the kids are fighting. That is the high stress for me because I am trying to say to them, look, I need to make a phone call. This is a business call, you just need to stop this and go somewhere else. But they won't stop. I find that particularly irritating" (Nick, age 40s).

Another example was Brandon who shared during his interview his experience with an international assignment and how he felt uneasy trying to manage his family in an expat lifestyle. Although Brandon was empathetic with his wife for going to a country where she did not know anyone, he also felt stuck between trying to make his family happy whilst learning a new job and performing well enough to justify their premium salaries. This situation of trying to meet increased demands from family and work led Brandon to experience exhaustion. He felt that he could not get his family to understand the pressures from his work.

"It was very hard for spouses as well because they become very dependent on you and needing you more than usual. So if you say I need to work half day on Saturday it becomes a big thing because your family has been waiting for you the whole week to spend some family time. They don't understand that in expat work you are expected to work longer hours and be more available that you would never have to be if you were working at your home country. This type of experience puts a lot of pressure in your relationship surfacing a lot of fundamental questions about the relationship" (Brandon, age 50s).

4.3.0.2 Female considerations (Work & Life conflict)

In general, male and female respondents understand that it is part of life to manage conflicting demands. Female respondents who have children seem to be more affected by life-work conflict than male respondents. This might be a

reflection of the breadwinner nature of the male part of the sample. Seven of eleven female respondents had children and were the first carer for their children as well. Therefore any unplanned work meant of a lot of reorganising in their private lives. For this reason Lauren explained how she needed to manage her clients in order to make full-time employment and motherhood possible.

> *"It's making, knowing what is acceptable to me and making my limitations clear to the other people as well because my clients do know that I am a parent and that I can't go and see them every day and If I do go and see them that I am not going to arrive until, you know, late in the morning and if I have to pick up then I have to leave early in the afternoon and so I think it is management of expectations"* (Lauren, age 30s).

Rachel mentioned that, in her case, when her son was five years old she returned to full-time employment; however, she was not able to allow work to spill over into life because of childcare. Consequently this compromised her ability to progress in her career.

> *"I was not able to progress in my career for that time because I was not able to put the long hours in and compete with people without primary childcare responsibility"* (Rachel, age 50s).

4.3.0.3 Inconsistencies (Work & Life conflict)

A few passages showed that respondents were not happy when work-life spillage happened. Equally they also struggled with their urge to monitor their emails and mobile outside working hours. This ongoing checking was in some cases causing the conflict in the first place. For example, John gave an example of being on holidays with family and friends, he said:

> *"… having a great time then having my world collapsing because of something I read from work on my mobile which made me annoyed and upset, then I leave the room to see my friends again with a transformed mood, people don't understand what is going on and I cannot hide, it spoils for everyone actually!"* (John, age 50s).

Robert is another example who demonstrated how technology can make work-life conflict more frequent. He talked about his habit of checking his mobile before going to bed and how this can be problematic as he cannot just put the mobile down afterwards and go to sleep.

"I am the type of person who needs to get things done. When I see an email before bed in which I know that I can sort out I can't just go to bed and wait until the next day" (Robert, age 40s).

4.3.1 Workload intensification

This main theme was generated from several questions and passages during the whole interview. Workload intensification received one of the largest references of statement and passages within the whole data set. However, it was not necessarily the case for all respondents. Fifteen respondents in total did not see a problem with their workload. They were happy to manage even if it was a demanding role. However, respondents then who complained about workload spent a lot of time in the interviews talking about it in a repetitive way and describing how negatively it was affecting them. That is why the number of references was high. Previously under the meaning of the work sub-theme overwork has been already discussed as a sub-theme associated with stress and concern. However, due to the number of passages generated by workload intensification further exploration was carried out in order to gather further understanding concerning the reasons for the workload and how individuals dealt with workload differently. As result workload intensification has also been developed as a main theme and Table 4.3.1. shows how findings for this significant part of the data were further grouped. Passages and opinions concerning work intensification were often described as something negative. Individuals who did not have problems with work intensification just did not talk about it and when they were probed they only contributed a short statement. Interestingly, individuals from the same office and similar duties had different views concerning work-intensification. For example, Joseph and Leo worked in the same office for the same line manager and yet they had very different opinions on how work intensification affects them.

"Workload is not a problem, we are fairly organised here" (Joseph, age 30s).

"There are two aspects on how work affects me, tangible and mental. Tangible is when I need to work on Saturdays for example and the mental aspect when I am with my family but finding hard to switch off because I am constantly thinking about work" (Leo, age 40s).

Table 4.3.1 Workload intensification sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Being busy	Triggered by individuals
	Triggered by business

4.3.1.0 Positive sub-themes (Workload intensification)

The **Being busy** sub-theme was developed from passages which emerged from a few interviews where lack of work was a reason for concern. Due to the nature of project work the decrease of workload was quickly visible which created an immediate sense of job insecurity and stress. Equally, seeing people busy meant job stability for everyone and less pressure to sell new projects. For example, Lewis and Allan provided different perspectives concerning workload:

"I get concerned over low workloads, I get concerned over lack of depth in the customer base but at the same time I try not to let that impact" (Lewis, age 50s).

"It is having the financial resources in order to support the business, because of the pressure on maintaining workloads" (Allan, age 50s).

4.3.1.1 Negative sub-themes (Workload intensification)

The **Triggered by individuals** sub-theme emerged from examples which were mostly from current employment and was perceived as a negative thing, but equally often, examples were related to individuals' personal working style in paid work. Increased workload intensification was often observed from respondents who came across as completer-finishers, quality-driven, competitive and worriers. Workload intensification, in the context of this research, meant increase of time performing work but also how much respondents were thinking about work outside employment. The following extract from interviews with Peter and Leo exemplify findings on how individuals can increase their workload based on their personal expectation concerning increasing tasks to ensure quality.

"I am a perfectionist and I take time to complete tasks, for example reading an email 3 times before sending it out" (Peter, age 50s).

172

> *"I recognise that I am not the fastest person with work, I like to present things with high quality in terms of presentation but also in terms of content. I want to be sure my facts are right so I spend a lot of time cross-checking and validating my data"* (Leo, age 40s).

Equally, the following extracts from interviews with Robert, Max and Anthony illustrate another situation where workload intensification is perceived as an ongoing pressure and constant thinking is required because of individuals' styles of commitment and responsibility towards work and/or their clients.

> *"I am not only being a completer-finisher but also a collaborator so it does not help with workload because you are often trying to be helpful instead of prioritising"* (Robert, age 40s).

> *"In my child-free days I probably took things a little bit more to heart at work and spend time over-analysing things which did not need to be over-analysed"* (Max, age 40s).

> *"… particularly when you have to break promises with clients and miss deadlines and that is the worst thing for me because I'm afraid I'm very much by fulfilling things I promised to do, I suppose we are all like that but I tend to take things to heart"* (Anthony, age 50s).

Technology was mentioned as something which aggravates workload intensification for individuals who can create more work for themselves due to their attitude towards paid work. This meant constant work presence due to technology and little physical separation between work and life outside work. Marcus, for example, mentioned about feeling that he needs to be constantly reading and replying to his emails or answering his mobile. When I discussed the reason behind his attitude concerning his availability towards work, he accepted that it was his personal idea of being productive.

> *"Presenteeism, I think that they call it. If you are not sort of seeing to be available and doing all sort of things … you know … is not good"* (Marcus, age 50s).

Marcus was then asked: Do you think this presenteeism comes from your peers or line manager?

> *"No there is no pressure, it comes from me actually!"* (Marcus, age 50s).

Robert also mentioned that when you are the type of person who thinks about work constantly, access to email via mobiles can make the situation even more complicated because work can be with you all the time.

> *"Mobiles with emails make my life harder. There is also the influence of the organisation culture and how sometimes people – they will just expect you to be available after work or weekends, particularly with seniority"* (Robert, age 40s).

Some respondents acknowledged that workload is more related to their mindset and attitudes towards paid work than the work itself. For example, the following extracts from interviews with Scott, Ben and Adam show their answers when they were asked to describe how their workload affected them.

> *"Workload is a personal problem and people can create their own pressure. For example when you have a long-term project you procrastinate and rush at the end and then make noise at the end without realising that you created the problem to yourself"* (Scott, age 40s).

> *"It depends on the individual really, doesn't it, to some extent. I was informed that if you come, one person once informed me that if you can't do it in a 37½-hour week then you haven't planned, resourced or managed it properly. So that was one viewpoint on life … Yes you know, you have to deliver, that's what the aims of our job are but of course if X does it by doing 100 hours and I do it by thinking 20 minutes in Sainsburys – well, you know it's the same result at the end of the day"* (Ben, age 30s).

> *"I think it is to do with your mindset, I deal with things much better because I deal with them calmly, rather than panicking. So when there's, you know, like a stack of stuff of things to do, in the past I would probably have panicked, but now I just methodically work my way through, I say well that's the first one to do, that's the second, that's the third, that's the fourth, rather than in the past I've been trying to do them all at once, see it's just, it's just …"* (Adam, age 50s).

The **Triggered by business** sub-theme was developed from passages where individuals felt that they did not have control over the increased workload. There were two recurring ideas about the reasons for intensification of workload, the first being the deadlines and the client-focused business culture and the second seniority and accumulation of roles. This sub-theme is also aligned with ideas which developed the overwork sub-theme under the meaning of work theme but

also provided further insight on why deadlines and accumulation of roles occur in the business environment.

Deadlines and client-focused culture referred to working for international business services where individuals feel that they have to be responsive and reliable with the client if they want to retain the business. The following extracts from Marcus and Jeff's interviews convey a client-focused culture which can increase workload intensification by expecting individuals to work beyond office hours in order to meet clients' demands.

> *"Managing consulting is well known for poor WLB because it is a very client-driven business. This means very demanding clients and short deadlines to get things done. You need to make yourself available to work around the client's demands and in many cases. Sometimes you need to sacrifice quite important personal things. You are driven by the clients' agendas"* (Marcus, age 50s)

> *"Ultimately we are a client-based organisation, so without the clients we don't do the work so we don't get paid. The company doesn't get paid. So you do worry about upsetting the client if you are not there when they want"* (Jeff, age 40s).

In terms of seniority and accumulation of roles, some passages addressed issues around accumulation of roles as a consequence of seniority, poor business structure and corporate initiatives. In many cases workload become unbearable for short or long period of times. Extracts from interviews with Leo, Gus and Adam expressed their views on increased workload as a consequence of the extra business demands.

> *"As a manager your workload increases a lot in consulting as you keep the normal workload in terms of delivery but add on the admin, people management and client relationship. Your workload definitely increases with level of seniority"* (Leo, age 40s).

> *"In the professional environment you spend a lot of time teaching graduates or young engineers, for example. If you have too many juniors then you spend a lot of time explaining and teaching and the workload is increased. When the structure is not aligned with the projects it is hard to meet deliverables. So workload is not only to do with unrealistic deadlines promised to clients but the structure and resources needing to be right. Then when you are performing more senior jobs you cannot just walk out, you need to make it happen"* (Gus, age 30s).

*"Unreasonable demands by the group. And of those it is probably the latter that is most annoying. People … some of these initiatives that come out of the group are a waste of f****** time. I am trying to remember the last one that really got up my nose. There's just too many. I just can't think of one, I mean most of them annoy me because they have ridiculous timescales on them … and it sort of dies a death"* (Adam, age 50s).

4.3.1.2 Female considerations (Workload intensification)

The main female consideration was that six of the eleven females reported work-related stress and health issues because of workload intensity. As already discussed under the life-changing event main theme, work-related stress caused some fundamental changes to their lives temporarily or permanently. In one case workload intensity became less manageable when combined with childcare, such as for Lauren (age 30s) who left employment for two years after she tried to go back to work full-time with a young child.

"I felt that I couldn't say no to, or I couldn't get enough separation of myself from what was happening at work and I was becoming overwhelmed by the demands of work and also the demands at home and it, it was too hard and stressful and so in that instance I withdrew completely, gave up my job, erm, and erm, and took, you know two years out really, so that, I didn't think that was a particularly good way to manage it but at the time that's what I ended up doing. Now I'm more proactive about doing it as I'm going, umm, and try to be more aware of when I'm too tired to be able to operate effectively at home or to have fun at home because I'm just too tired so I try and manage it better, I'm still not great at it though" (Lauren, age 30s).

Childcare combined with a demanding job was not the case for the others. For example, Sophia (age 40s, no child) suffers from chronic migraine triggered by work-related stress; and Rachel (age 50s, independent son) and Tina (age 40s, no child) were both on long-term sickness with depression caused by work-related stress and were still on medication, Julia (age 40s, independent children) suffered from depression previously caused by work-related stress but still takes occasional sleeping tablets and medication for anxiety. Amelia (age 20s, no child) had to take pills to control her blood pressure for over a year and there were two others who were still being treated for work-related stress. Some male respondents shared serious health issues but they were not work-related.

Only Amelia (age 20s) and Lauren (age 30s) were able to recover fully from their work-related stress. Lauren explained that she needed to change her mindset to survive a demanding job and being a mum at the same time. The following extract from her interview conveys this change in mindset.

> *"I was too, I was focusing on goals that were too far away, and I was focusing on things, yeah, and when my daughter came along, I had to focus on the here and now because getting through one week, and it was just a case of Thank God we got to Friday, Amen and Hallelujah, we did it and suddenly your, but the … you are then much more focused on the now rather than on the potential future so in some ways I am better now at work because I am thinking, OK, what's today's goals? If I can get through today's goals then tomorrow is a different subject"* (Lauren, age 30s).

4.3.1.3 Inconsistencies (Workload intensification)

The main inconsistency was in relation to the passages where workload intensification was somehow triggered by the individuals themselves because they were replying to work emails outside their working hours or because they could not switch off mentally from work. The perception of the difference between workload intensification caused by their work and by the individuals themselves is not consistent across the population even from candidates from the same office; for example, there is Peter (age 50s) who says that workload can be a problem and John (age 50s), from the same office with more responsibilities than Peter, who says that workload intensification is not a problem for him. Equally, John (age 50s) and Joseph (age 30s), for example, talked about workload being fine but equally shared passages where they felt emotionally distressed outside work because of people issues from work.

On a separate note, as mentioned previously under the life-changing events theme, it is important to highlight that illnesses reported by male respondents were physical and not associated with workload and stress. Consequently there are some questions which remain to be answered to understand how much workload intensification affects men in relation to women or how much men feel more or less comfortable, aware and able to talk about work-related health issues.

4.3.2 Gendered treatment

This main theme was a combination of passages explaining how paid and unpaid labour was organised in relation to respondents' female partners and answers from a direct question exploring how male respondents felt in relation to their female peers. In particular, male respondents were asked if they had ever experienced men being treated less favourably in the workplace concerning WLB practices and preferences. They were encouraged to share their own experiences or any events they had witnessed.

Table 4.3.2 Gendered treatment sub-themes

Positive themes	Negative themes
Gender roles at home	Parent vs non-parents

4.3.2.0 Positive sub-theme (Gendered treatment)

The **Gender roles at home** sub-theme emerged from passages where male respondents described their breadwinner household set-up as being something positive and which made it easier to manage paid work from their own perspective. In these cases inequality started from home where their partner took the majority of carer and domestic responsibilities whilst male partners focused on their breadwinner role. This division of labour between paid and unpaid work between male respondents and their partners was communicated positively in terms of being less stressful for some male respondents to juggle multiple responsibilities. The breadwinner set-up was not exclusive for older households. This was the case for younger professionals too, like Ben and Oscar, for example, who were the breadwinners in their households.

> *"With my wife being at home I suppose it takes a lot of the pressure off me as a father"* (Ben, age 30s).

> *"My personal life hardly interferes with my work, my wife covers everything, she organises the childminder and on Thursday when I work from home the kids go to the childminder"* (Oscar, age 20s).

In general, respondents referred to the breadwinner set-up as a practical decision in order to reconcile work and family in the household. Occasionally gender stereotype words or gender role expectations were used during the interview by the male respondents. Peter's extract is an example when gender role words and gender stereotypes were used.

> *"Women by nature take more time away from work than men. Maternity leave but also to the caring nature of woman like when a child is sick, a man would be less empathetic than women. I would expect the women to take the time off unless the man is a single parent"* (Peter, age 50s).

Male respondents were also asked to comment on gendered treatment from a work perspective when comparing themselves with their female peers. Most passages did not demonstrate men being treated less favourably than women at work. The following extracts were answers from interviews with Joseph and Frank where they were asked if they felt that men were treated less favourably than women at work in terms of WLB practice.

> *"I have certainly not experienced any difference. It would be interesting to ask a woman the same question. If my child had to go to the doctor's for example and then I had to take them which has happened. I never feel that someone was going to say why is your wife not taking them and if they did it would be because my wife is at home as the primary carer but nothing to do with gender"* (Joseph, age 30s).

> *"I think here in amongst of the consulting staff there is not much a distinction between men and women. The only time a distinction crops up is when one of the ladies is pregnant and the, you know, the expectation on flying is different and we do reasonably alter"* (Frank, age 30s).

Brandon made a point that the gender equality issues are not associated with the gender itself but are associated with the notion of availability and unconditional commitment towards work. He shared his own experience of losing his job to a female peer who had no family and was prepared to work long hours.

> *"I never confronted my boss about my working long hours. I would just leave 6 to 7pm when my boss would work until 10pm. My boss had a macho contractor mentality. My boss then repositioned my role without consulting me … it was like a demotion. I was fine because I felt it hard to try to please my boss and my wife. The job was then given to a*

woman with no kids who was happy to work all the hours" (Brandon, age 50s).

Consequently, when exploring the gender differences in terms of WLB from a male perspective, in most of the cases the differentiation was between respondents and their female partners and how they organised paid and unpaid work amongst themselves but not how paid work was organised between male respondents and their female peers.

4.3.2.1 Negative sub-themes (Gendered treatment)

The **Parents vs non-parents** sub-theme emerged from a few passages where respondents raised concerns related to equal opportunities between parents and employees without children. Darren (age 20s) had only male peers in his team and he was the only one without children. He mentioned that he was treated less favourably than his male peers because he did not have children.

> *"I can't see that* [differentiated gender treatment] *from the role that I am, to be honest, male and female in the company pretty much seem to have exactly the same treatment … However, whenever I have asked for flexibility I have always been told that I need to take it as holiday even when it is only one or two hours out of the day when others in my team can just take it whenever they like. I know that 50% of requests from others are because of childcare arrangements but the other 50% are more about convenience"* (Darren, age 20s).

Gus also mentioned that employees with children are more often allowed to leave work behind in order to meet family commitments. Then he said that the company has a more flexible attitude towards parents then employees without children. He also gave the example of school holidays and how people without children are expected to be flexible and cover the workload of parents and therefore had no option to have leave during summer.

> *"In school term, when I arrive in the office and half of the people are not there, then the ones who are still working like me need to pick up the workload"* (Gus, age 30s).

4.3.2.2 Female considerations (Gendered treatment)

Some female respondents did not see any difference in treatment at work which was associated with gender; similarly to some male respondents they saw the difference in treatment as between parents and non-parents. For example:

"I think it goes back to yet again if you are a parent or if you are not a parent" (Rebecca, age 30s).

"I would say that people that have got family is probably equal. I don't know about single man and single woman. But I would say that people with family would probably request more so" (Mary, age 40s).

On the other hand Rachel and Lauren did not experience childcare legitimising WLB practice in being to their benefit or as a favourable treatment. In fact they expressed no empathy from employers towards their conflicting demands. The following extracts exemplify their experiences as working mothers.

"I left my son poorly with others because I was just worried of being made redundant if I started asking too much for time off. It was assumed that working mums would need to manage the conflicting demands without compromising work if they wanted to work" (Rachel, age 50s).

"I was the only one and I was the only one that was part-time and I was the only woman who had childcare responsibility, the guys they just relied on their wives to do it or girlfriends to do it. It became, I think, a sore point almost for some of the others that it seemed as though I was getting special treatment because I just happened to be a mother and I kept thinking you have no idea how hard this is, so there wasn't a lot of, a lot of support on that front at that time, now I get much more support" (Lauren, age 30s).

4.3.2.3 Inconsistences (Gendered treatment)

Although most male respondents did not experience any difference in treatment between themselves and their professional female peers, they were also the main breadwinners in their household which perhaps meant that they had less demand for it. Consequently, there were limited passages from the data to explore the gender differences in practice. The only provision which was similar amongst male and female respondents was working from home. In this case the favourable treatment was more associated with childcare, not gender. For example, Amelia from the female population (age 20s no children) also mentioned that employees with children are automatically entitled to work from home whereas employees without children need to give a justification and seek approval.

"Gender is not a problem it seems to be more between people with children and without children. I feel that if I need to work from home I need to give a reason and my reason is under judgement ... where

sometimes … people with kids there is no need to explain" (Amelia, age 20s).

4.3.3 Work-life balance provisions

Respondents were asked about WLB arrangements and provisions available to them or any new provisions that they might benefit from. Then they were asked to give their opinions concerning such polices. Most of them referred to their current employment. As shown in Table 4.4.3. in total three sub-themes had positive meanings and two had negative meanings.

Table 4.3.3 Work-life balance provisions sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Formal versus informal	Absent WLB ethos
Homeworking benefits	Homeworking implications
Preferences	

4.3.3.0 Positive sub-themes (Work-life balance provisions)

The **Formal versus informal** sub-theme developed from positive ideas in terms of the benefits of both formal and informal approaches towards WLB provisions. The dilemma emerged with the reflection on the positive reasons given for each approach which could also represent restrictions and implications for the implementation of WLB. For example, formality can make WLB practice transparent and fair for all. Equally, it can undermine individuals' circumstances and personal needs which are outside the scope of such policies. It can also increase administration with the policy procedures. Marcus highlights the benefits of a more formal approach towards WLB in the following extract.

> *"A more formal approach to flexible working would ensure that people are treated more fairly so the person who asks for the most does not always get the best deal"* (Marcus, age 50s).

John was another example who raised the question concerning the formality of WLB policies. John was in favour of a more informal approach towards WLB in order to drive a WLB culture and improve individuals' sense of entitlement. John

highlights that when a working practice is not embedded in the culture, managers find a way around these policies.

> *"WLB should avoid complex and complicated rules so instead of giving flexibility you end up making things fixed. Driving commonality is hard but you can educate managers and drive a culture … because … even for fixed rules managers can always find exceptions to exclude themselves from the policies. It is better to work in the core and change how people think about WLB and their options as employees or managers"* (John, age 50s).

Both perspectives provide interesting insights concerning how organisations manage WLB and implications for each approach, formal or informal. In both cases, line manager's views and experiences related to WLB seem to be the ultimate factor which influences employees' WLB experiences from an employment perspective. As Marcus suggested when there is a common and more formal way of managing work-life balance there is less risk to treat people differently. Equally, John highlighted that WLB is about treating people differently because each individual will have specific requirements. John concluded that it should be at the discretion of managers to understand these requirements and propose arrangements which also would take into consideration the impact on business and peers. Nevertheless Marcus also discussed how formal policies can help individuals to feel entitled and express their needs in a first place. Otherwise it would always take the same type of person to make a request which also does not drive a WLB culture as a whole. It does not mean that others don't need or would not benefit from WLB. It means that they might not feel entitled or comfortable to ask for. Consequently formality and informality dilemma sub-theme was group as positive due to its recognition that WLB is complex and relies on a combination of considerations to be taken into account in order to promote and apply WLB practices in the workplace.

The **Homeworking benefits** sub-theme has been separated from the rest of the WLB provisions due to its regularity for the majority of respondents. This arrangement was the case particularly for the management consulting and support function teams. The advantages of working from home varied. For

example, Darren referred to working from home as an opportunity to benefit from non-interrupted time in order to catch up with work.

> *"Working from home is not only good to accommodate private commitments but also to allow some quality time to catch up. In the office you have plenty of interruptions during the day and I find hard to finish my work where working from home occasionally can be an opportunity to catch up"* (Darren, age 20s).

Joseph explained that previously he had not worked from home and he felt it very difficult to manage travel without this option. He said that since working from home had been agreed at least for one day a week, managing travel had become easier, particularly in terms of managing his family expectations and needs.

> *"I came back from Hong Kong this morning* [Thursday]*. It means that my wife was by herself with three small children since Monday. Certainly from my wife's perspective, if there is a certain degree of flexibility in return then she feels … she does not complain about it. In the past if we went back five years ago the culture was less flexible and my wife got quite frustrated to be honest because I was expected to travel four days a week and be in the office the next day with no flexibility in return. There were a lot of expectations that came from one way but not so much from the other"* (Joseph, age 30s).

The **Preferences** sub-theme refers to a variety of WLB favourite provisions discussed during the interviews, mostly associated with time. Some provisions were referred to as current benefits which respondents were taking or had taken advantage of and others which were referred to as desirable.

Flexitime was often referred to as "core hours" and meant flexibility on start and finish time in relation to daily working hours. It was often used for daily work-life reconciliations or even to accommodate delays with commuting, for example.

> *"It is good to have flexitime. As long as we stay within core hours in this office we can start more or less within an hour or so early or late and then finish as long as we do the hours early or late, as long as we stay within the particular core hours. It's something we do here. It's just something because the road network around this place is a nightmare. You never know what time you are getting to work"* (Jeff, age 40s).

"Buying" more holidays was another provision, referring to gaining extra days via salary sacrifice. This provision was often mentioned as desirable when respondents were asked to talk about their WLB provisions wish list:

> *"Buy holidays would be good because holidays are actually where you get to the point where you more easily find the holidays more useful than the money you might get from a pay rise. I could always use up all my holidays, that is never a problem"* (Clifton, age 40s).

Time off in lieu (TOIL) was described as a benefit to compensate for extra working hours. These extra working hours could be triggered by the individual in the sense of making up extra time off or by a work demand to meet busy periods within the project lifecycles. From an individual perspective, Max (age 40s), for example, talked about the "short Fridays" – the option of working longer hours during the week and then being able to leave work on Fridays earlier than normal. On the other hand, Robert refers to TOIL as a business compensation for the requirement to work long hours and explains that is important to be able to accrue time when you are working longer hours but then be able to take some of the time off afterwards.

> *"It is beneficial to be able to accrue time off in lieu in the case of consulting so you can work hard when a project requires but then you can rest later on"* (Robert, age 40s).

Experiences with sabbaticals from the current employer was mentioned by two male respondents (Clifton, age 40s and Peter, age 50s). Clifton was away for 12 months travelling and mentioned that the sabbatical was offered to him in order to retain his skills. Clifton was already thinking of taking another sabbatical but recognised the implications for the organisation.

> *"I don't know when, but I definitely want to do it again … it's like one of these things, you have to plan for one. Even if, you know, people say there is no planning sometimes with babies but there is still some time if you think about it. You know it's not like you have got nine months at least to think about certain things, haven't you? It's not something that is going to turn up and say next week I am not going to do this or the week before that, right I'll, you know…. There has got to be a reasonable level of expectation with giving the company a chance to make some plans, like I want to go on a sabbatical but I want to go next week. It's an unreasonable request, you know"* (Clifton, age 40s).

Peter mentioned that he developed the idea of a sabbatical since another director had taken a sabbatical after his 50th birthday. Since then he had wanted to do the same. After the death of a close friend, Peter then decided to take three months' sabbatical to follow the Olympic Games. Peter referred to his sabbatical as a life-changing event.

> *"Sabbatical helped to break the old ways and since I came back from sabbatical I am trying to get home early. Sabbatical is potentially a life-change thing"* (Peter, age 50s).

Sabbaticals were also often mentioned by other respondents as well as something to do in their WLB wish list. Ken for example enjoyed physical challenges like running and climbing. He mentioned about taking a sabbatical to have a break from work and pursue his physical challenges. Sadly, Ken passed away a couple of years later after his participation in this research project. He never managed to take his sabbatical but he died in an accident doing something he really enjoyed – climbing a mountain in Scotland.

> *"I would go away for three to six months and I would not think about anything related to the work I do, I would focus on something pretty physical, so it would be something like running or walking, I would probably going to something like I've been doing hiking for instance, in Scotland for a number of years now. I would go and finish it, and there is a lot to do now, but I can see myself getting very fit and, you know, just being able to think about things, you know, to get everything in perspective and, you know, to enjoy it and, you know, I could easily do that, get lots of sleep, get myself physically fit again, and get myself mentally active, you know, getting back into it doing something more physically demanding things"* (Ken, age 50s).

Reduced hours or part-time options were very popular WLB provisions discussed during the interviews, particularly amongst male respondents on their fifties. Anthony, for example, would like to work part-time approaching his retirement.

> *"I would like to do a little bit less in terms of hours, and I certainly look forward to the possibility of a, um, possibly part-time as an approach to retirement but that is something that I would like to pursue"* (Anthony, age 50s).

However, no male respondents reported working part-time during their whole careers. Respondents believed that reduced hours was not possible due to business reasons but without further investigating the possibilities.

> "*I would reduce my hours but that means I needed to delegate more and the team structure is not appropriate for it*" (Thomas, age 50s).

Although most provisions were associated with time, some well-being benefits and facilities were also volunteered for discussion when WLB provisions were the topic. For example, in the following extracts Peter talked about a massage chair, Max and Gus talked about a space to have a lunch break and Jeff talked about medical insurance.

> "*I've used the medical insurance extensively, so that's another, sort of from my work/life balance. I mean, obviously, if I am ill it keeps me off work. If the medical insurance can get me back to work that's obviously a good thing*" (Jeff, age 40s).

> "*I would like to have in the office a massage chair so people can go there when they feel too stressed*" (Peter, age 50s).

> "*I would like to have a place to have lunch and a proper break. In the office people need to go out or eat in their desk, they cannot have a proper break*" (Gus, age 30s).

4.3.3.1 Negative sub-themes (Work-life balance provisions)

The **Absent WLB ethos** sub-theme referred to the importance of having a culture underlining the WLB practice in order to be effective. A few passages addressing the informal or formal approach towards WLB already tapped into this sub-theme as well as those previously discussed. However, under this sub-theme the *negative* side of a lack of WLB culture was clearly stated. For example, Robert and Marcus raised concerns related to managers and the culture on the application of WLB.

> "*Trust is key in flexibility. Rules need to be based on principles and less prescriptive. It is impossible to capture everyone's needs and circumstances. But you need to be careful because, depending on your manager, your benefits/flexibility will vary if the policy does not drive fairness. Managers tend to expect their junior people to do what they do, for example if I work extra hours, or travel you should do the same*" (Robert, age 40s).

> *"Not being formal with WLB is a problem as people might feel that they are at the mercy of … well … their line managers"* (Marcus, age 50s).

Frank also mentioned that policies are not effective if people do not talk about WLB openly with each other. He said:

> *"It is important that WLB is more visible not only by communicating the policies available but also showing case studies, cases of people who have taken these policies and did not compromise others or results. It is just to break the paradigm. Unfortunately usually people talk about policies only when things go wrong"* (Frank, age 30s).

The **Homeworking implications** sub-theme referred to the negative aspects of working from home as a regular arrangement. This was mostly because of distractions and work-life spillover. Eddie, for example, mentioned that if he needs to work over the weekend he prefers to go to the office. For him it was better to keep work and life outside work separate.

> *"I don't like to work from home, it is too many distractions with the internet. I need this separation – work is focus, concentration and home is relaxing time"* (Eddie, age 30s).

Peter too did not like to work from home because of distractions but he also mentioned about the extended working hours he ends up doing when he works from home in order to complete his work.

> *"I don't not like it very much because of distractions and that you end up working longer hours to make up to it"* (Peter, age 50s).

Another aspect of working from home was limited access to others and inability to collaborate effectively. John and Nick discussed the implications of working from home regularly in terms of lack of interaction with others.

> *"I have mixed feelings about working from home … depending on the type of work you need to go to the office to interact with people and be visible"* (John, age 50s).

> *"You need to be frequently in the office … the type of business requires some levels of engagement and collaboration face to face to exchange knowledge"* (Nick, age 40s).

4.3.3.2 Female considerations (Work-life balance provisions)

Although homeworking was a popular arrangement for female respondents, as previously discussed under reconciliation strategies, females also raised similar ideas concerning the advantages and implication of working from home. Amelia, for example, mentioned that it is good to have the option of working from home to be able to concentrate without interruptions.

"Working from home is beneficial when I need to do payroll which requires a lot of attention without interruptions" (Amelia, age 20s).

On the other hand, Julia talked about the implications of working from home in terms of being focused.

"I used to work from home a lot but I was not efficient doing that. Now looking back I tried to combine everything like do housework and work but then the quality of work is not good because you don't focus. I am very reluctant nowadays even to take work home. I prefer to keep both separate I am at work I am in work mode and when I am at home I am in home mode" (Julia, age 40s).

Mixed views in relation to WLB provisions and culture were also a point of discussion which emerged from some passages with female interviewees. For example, Julia gave an example of some philosophical inconsistencies concerning the application of formal WLB policies. She said:

"On one hand I can benefit from working from home because of convenience and on the other hand I needed some time off because my best friend passed away but I was not entitled to compassionate leave because the person was not a member of my family … This person meant more to me than any member of my extended family and yet because the policy referred to family members only, HR did not authorise my leave as compassionate" (Julia, age 40s).

The main consideration was in relation to reduced or part-time hours. From the male respondents there was no evidence of individuals working part-time at any point of their working careers. With the female respondents with children part-time work was mentioned a few times at some point in their careers. For example, the following extract from Lauren's interview illustrates her experience of working for four days a week. Lauren did not feel that she could experience the benefits of part-time work doing four days a week. In fact she felt that she was doing the same amount of work as previously and feeling more stressed.

"I returned four days a week, working four days a week rather than five, and to begin with it was great, because they had thought about it and they had given me a nice job but then it became apparent that I was trying to do five days work in four days" (Lauren, age 30s).

4.3.3.3 Inconsistencies (Work-life balance provisions)

Although several male respondents mentioned about reduced working hours as a desirable option to improve their WLB, none of them requested this arrangement at work, as they believed it was not a possibility. It was unclear if the reasons behind not officially requesting a reduction in hours related to personal preferences or in fact the impact of the business. For example, John mentioned that he would like to work fewer hours during the week; however, he admitted that he would not pursue this option as he felt he would not be effective.

"I would work less hours a week [then he was asked if he would request officially to reduce his hours] … *probably not because I would not have enough control in order to be effective"* (John, age 50s).

Another inconsistency was related to provisions associated with time away from work. Although extra time off seemed to be the predominant preference concerning WLB provisions it was also an area of concern because of workload. For example, Gus (age 30) said that he never really enjoys holidays because of the stress leading up to it and then when he is on holiday he is dreading going back to the endless emails in his mailbox. Leo (age 40s) said that because of the inconvenience of going away on holiday from a workload perspective he always has plenty of unused holidays at the end of the year. Some of his entitlement was sold back to the company and some he just lost.

4.3.4 Manager's role

There was no specific question about the role of the manager in relation to supporting or hindering individuals' WLB. However, the data was rich with passages and examples of respondents interacting with their managers. Although large parts of the sample population had some level of line management responsibilities as part of their career path in the professional environment, respondents were asked to position themselves as employees and not as line managers. Consequently, passages which developed this main

theme mostly emerged from respondents talking about other line managers and not about themselves as managers. As shown in Table 4.3.4. all passages concerning line managers were grouped into four descriptive sub-themes based on the types of managers and how they interacted and/or influenced the respondents.

Table 4.3.4 Manager's role sub-themes

Positive sub-themes	Negative sub-themes
Role model	Inconsiderate
Result-driven	Workaholic

4.3.4.0 Positive sub-themes (Manager's role)

The **Role model** sub-theme emerged from passages describing managers who saw WLB almost like a cause. It was more than accommodating people's needs. It was about driving a culture to encourage people to have a good quality of life. Examples of this type of manager included investment on WLB training, managers going around desks after 6pm asking why people were still at work or even closing any unfinished meeting which they were chairing when the time was up. An example from the past was the interview with Brandon (age 50s) who described when he was working in Australia for a CEO who completely changed his approach to work. Brandon said:-

> *"…this man got where he was by being horrible and intimidating other people, then changed not only himself but the entire company" (*Brandon (age 50s).

Then Brandon (age 50s) explained that this CEO invested a lot of money designing well-being training with one of the leading consulting firms. He said that the CEO would kick off the training sessions by saying that he saw the light at the end of the tunnel and that he had realised that you do not need to be a horrible person to be successful. Brandon said that it was very weird to see so many introverted engineers attending a training to talk about their "purpose in life" and learning how to "meditate". Brandon concluded:

"I witnessed several times people saying in the corridors that the CEO was losing his mind, he was going to be fired or even that the share prices were going to drop when people found out what was going on there … But everything was fine for the three years that I was working there" (Brandon, age 50s).

More current examples emerged from a particular business unit within the sample which was led by a single father who was reported to be naturally very accommodating in terms of WLB for all employees and not only for direct reports. Respondents from this business unit often referred to this leader as being responsible for a positive WLB culture in their offices. This was the case even for individuals who did not report directly to this leader. For example, a few respondents highlighted the long hours which their own line managers worked but it did not affect them because their managing director had a flexible culture; therefore they saw the long working hours of their line managers as their choice and not as the expectation.

The **Result-driven** sub-theme emerged from passages where respondents felt a high degree of autonomy given by their managers as long as individuals were delivering results. Line managers from these examples were less concerned with personal circumstances or needs of individuals. Result-driven managers were interested in knowing where people worked from or if they started at 8am or 10am. They were more concerned with the results and felt that employees were adults and accountable to manage their demands from work and outside work. Those managers would just interfere if performance were compromised for the individual or the whole team.

"I think we have informal flexible working with our line manager here. So you know…if you need to work from home, if you are saying there was an emergency at home, our manager would be fine with anybody leaving at any moment in time to deal with it, so we have no problems with that. Or if you want to start at half 8 and leave at quarter past 5 then I know that's not a problem as long as you deliver, perform. We have a performance culture here. You know we have to perform" (Ben, age 30s).

4.3.4.1 Negative sub-themes (Manager's role)

The **Inconsiderate** sub-theme emerged from passages mostly from 10 to 20 years ago. This type of manager was mostly described as inconsiderate when it came to private commitments. They were the type of managers who prioritised

work and expected the same from their employees. Examples are from extracts from Adam (age 50s) and Max (age 40s). Adam gave an example of a situation where he needed to leave a meeting which was running late to take his wife to hospital for a chemotherapy session.

> *"My boss at the time was completely unreasonable. I remember sitting in a meeting with him, and I had told him that I had had to go 'cos I had to take my wife with cancer to the hospital, and he basically turned round to me and said, you go, you are sacked"* (Adam, age 50s).

Max's example was from his previous boss who did not allow people to cancel meetings or business trips to be in hospital with their spouses for the birth of their child. Max quoted:

> *"This man used to say … 'I missed the birth of my two children and everyone is functioning and fine, it is not you who is giving birth"* (Max, 40s).

The **Workaholic** sub-theme emerged from passages describing respondents' line managers working too many hours. Although a few respondents acknowledged that they did not feel their line manager was imposing the same commitment on everyone, they also mentioned that their line managers did not help the situation by failing to lead by example. Jeff (age 40s) explained that his line manager was very supportive towards his WLB but also worked very long hours which did not help to drive the WLB culture in the office.

> *"I do see a lot of the principles and line managers doing long hours but I think from that point of view they are possibly expected to work longer hours. I'm not sure, I'm not sure whether that's the case. But it does not help with setting the example"* (Jeff, age 40s).

4.3.4.2 Female considerations (Manager's role)

Although both genders provided examples showing how their line managers affected them in relation to WLB in a positive or negative way, more extreme situations were from the past. Examples referred to unreasonable managerial behaviour towards WLB and unrealistic expectations of prioritising work over family at all times. Although most female respondents also mentioned about the importance of the managerial role in supporting WLB, little evidence was given, with passages describing the inconsiderate type of manager.

4.3.4.3 Inconsistencies (Manager's role)

Some passages referred more to peer pressure compromising their WLB than managers' style. For example, Katy (age 20s) said that she had an arrangement with her manager to work longer hours in order to leave Fridays after lunch to attend a personal commitment; she said that she gave up because she was tired of the looks she was getting every time when she was leaving the office. Peter mentioned that he tended to increase his working hours to be aligned with his peers although he did not believe they were any more efficient than him.

> *"When I work 50 hours I do not feel I did enough because the others have worked 70 hours plus. I don't feel their performance is better either. But I get a bit of that pressure. I see … that's OK … I need to be doing this as well. If I am only working this week 50 hours it's because I am slacking, these guys are working 70 or something"* (Peter, age 50s).

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported a number of findings concerning topics related to WLB from a population of 29 males and 11 female respondents. In total, descriptions of 14 main themes and 56 sub-themes were used to describe the findings. These main themes were clustered into the 3 areas of analysis. The first area generated themes and sub-themes from individuals' perspective and meanings in relation to their paid work and also to their life outside work. This area provided rich qualitative findings to enable deep understanding of individuals' contexts and potential underlying motives influencing their attitude towards work-life balance. The second area provided themes and sub-themes representing actual WLB experiences (events) of how individuals reconciled and balanced work and life outside work and their preferences. The third area offered themes and sub-themes which emerged from individuals' descriptions of their WLB experiences in relation to employment. Sub-themes were separated into two groups, data originated from positive meanings and negating meanings as judged by the respondents themselves. Then it explored the data from 11 female participants, drawing on some female considerations on the overall sub-main themes originally raised by the male population. The last activity was to report any inconsistencies between what people say about WLB and what happens in reality for each main theme.

Chapter 5 Analysis

5.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter develops the findings of this study presented previously and examines the data in relation to existing WLB literature relevant to the emergent themes. Similarly to the structure of the findings chapter, each emergent WLB theme was reviewed in relation to existing studies and presented in four dimensions: positive themes, negative themes, female considerations and inconsistencies between perspectives and actual WLB events. This thesis has developed the argument of the importance of giving voice to men in terms of their WLB perceptions and experiences by expanding the variety of knowledge on the topics but equally opening new lines of inquiry for further research. Therefore, the analysis of each theme aimed not only to reflect upon existing literature in order to examine similarities and differences between studies, but also to flag opportunities for further research based on specific problem-questions arising from each theme.

5.1 First Area of Analysis: Work-Life Contexts and Meanings

5.1.0 Meaning of paid work theme

Taking into consideration the findings of this study, it became apparent that even for fathers who described work only as a means to have an income, work seemed to take priority over their families. Consequently, there was a mismatch between how male respondents felt about paid work in an instrumental way (Dermott, 2008) when compared to their families and how much extra energy and time they felt they were prepared to put into paid work by sacrificing time and energy with their families. This is the first implication for WLB from the male perspective if we take into consideration that good WLB means the alignment of role performance and life priorities as defined by Greenhaus and Allen (2011). Gatrell and Cooper (2008) associate this behaviour between men and work with notions of masculinity. Miller (2011), Gatrell et al. (2011) and Huffman et al. (2014) linked masculinity and paid work with the traditional provider role for fathers which makes both domains, family and work, very connected anyway. However, for this sample, prioritising work was mostly not associated with being the breadwinner and job insecurity; instead it was typically conveyed as an automatic response to work demands, as they were operating on autopilot.

Consequently, this might explain why most male respondents who described other areas of life, like fatherhood and family, as being the most important roles in their lives, also often described that they instinctively prioritised work over family domains and expressed regret this afterwards.

Gaylin (1992) has argued that nothing is more important to a man's pride than his work status. However, although concern about reputation loss and pride for some respondents was described in connection with the meaning of work, most examples referred to work as a financial provision instead of a conveyor of status. Work identity and connection with purpose was also mentioned by some respondents as suggested by Vaillant (2012); however it was still not placed with the same centrality as family. This gender association between men and paid work has altered due to the transformation of the dynamics of family and work with the increased participation of women in the employment market, and in many cases with dual-earner households (Crompton *et al*., 2007). The findings from this study have also shared a transformation of role expectations which male respondents placed on themselves, including care and some domestic work understood previously as solely a female arena (Harrington *et al*., 2011). More traditional views in terms of work and identity were mostly observed from older respondents' passages (age group 50s and some from the 40s). There was clearly a shift in the identity role (the importance of the role in life) (Stryker and Serpe, 1982) when respondents from age groups 20s and 30s were constructing the meaning of work during the interviews. This insight shows the shift from traditional beliefs around masculinity and gender expectations amongst younger generations of fathers as well, which is further explored later on under the intergenerational influence theme.

In summary, there is a paradox from this study illustrating the transition between traditional masculinity norms and contemporary gender expectation. On the one hand, professional male respondents are still very much connected with their jobs and often as default behaviour they conditionally prioritised work over family. On the other hand, professional male respondents seemed to be less concerned with paid work in the context of life and in some cases demonstrated that shared parental engagement and domestic work is what is expected from them. Consequently, the findings of this study have shown that notions of

masculine roles have mostly expanded, to include more fathering involvement, for example. But it did not mean working any less, it meant fitting it all in (Grant *et al.*, 2013; Miller, 2011). As highlighted previously most behaviours towards meeting unplanned work demands were described as unconsciousness reactions. In that very moment of letting work spill over into life most respondents just reacted, and only a few questioned themselves about the real consequences of not meeting the demands at that particular time. That is why work still instinctively took priority but then male respondents often mentioned regretting the extra time and energy spent at work afterwards at the detriment of their personal lives and family. This was especially so after reflecting on their own expectations towards performing other roles in life, like fathering. Males in this study seldom shared experience of anticipating regret as a regulating strategy to make work-life decisions more aligned with their priorities in life (Bagger *et al.*, 2014). Regret was something experienced as consequences of such decisions and it was a subject for reflection only after the events. Bagger et al. (2014) highlight that WLB decisions which are not aligned with the order of individuals role centrality cause stress, low self-esteem and compromise wellbeing. It is insightful to highlight that stress (as diagnosed illness) was mentioned by some female respondents due to exhaustion caused by combined workload from employment, childcare and household duties. Whereas for male respondents exhaustion has not been so much the case as they were able to focus at paid work and their partners were in charge of childcare and household. However, from the male perspective there was also a negative effect and dissatisfaction which was caused by regretting the ongoing prioritisation of work over family (with in most cases family being the role identity). Consequently, it is beneficial to explore how this type of regret will affect men's mental health in a long term and how much and how soon they will recognise and communicate the symptoms.

The above insights provide an overall background on how the positive and negative sub-themes emerged in this study. In terms of the **meaning of work** theme, in the context of paid work, this explains why the three sub-themes "Financial necessity", "Personal growth" and "Identity" emerged from the data originated by male respondents as something *positive*. Equally, the negative

sub-themes "Personal instability" and "Reputation loss" demonstrate the impact and importance of paid work for male functioning in all areas of their lives. The third negative sub-theme named "Overwork", which was also communicated in a negative way, represented a threat in terms of respondents' ability to perform well at work whilst still fulfilling their roles outside work, as a father or a husband, for example. Therefore when paid work was spilling across the other areas of life because of an increase in workload, they started to feel stressed by absenting themselves to meet work demands, then dealing with regret by not meeting the demands from rest of life, particularly those involving their families. Contrasting the positive and negative sub-themes, respondents who described work as financial provisioning in a positive way also complained about workload and how it can compromise their performance in other areas of life. Respondents who mostly described work as personal development and identity were concerned with personal instability and reputation loss. Work seemed to be important or a reason for concern for different reasons; however, in most cases it was not the most important thing in individuals' lives, although the prioritisation in practice showed something different. In fact, as also pointed out by Dermott (2008) most respondents referred to paid work as an instrumental part of life and not as their identity.

From a gender point of view, evidence from existing literature has shown that women are mostly encouraged to enter the employment market to actually supplement family income and not for equality in terms of personal growth and independence (Crompton *et al*., 2007). However, the meaning of paid work in this study was hardly mentioned by the female respondents in the context of money as status, unlike Lewis (age 50s), for example, who for talked about working hard to acquire a new sports car. For female respondents money was mostly mentioned in terms of financial necessity by mothers and of financial independence by married respondents. Typically, the **meaning of work** passages from female respondents in this study, were firstly aligned with opportunities for personal growth. Garcia (2007) claims that in general men and women identify themselves in terms of their work which goes beyond the financial rewards. However, female respondents hardly defined themselves by the work they did and mostly looked at their pay as a financial necessity instead

of attributing an emotional value in terms of recognition. Their passages also mostly addressed their performance as being good enough and not as exceeding in a competitive way like the male respondents. On the other hand, females without children reported stronger connections with work in terms of meaning and expectations yet they also referred more to personal growth and work relationships than money and status. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000, p. 133) highlighted this thus:

> *"Women are more likely than are men to value growth and challenge in their work, without emphasis on money, status and power we see among men".*

Finally, it was highlighted in this theme how respondents were inconsistent in the importance they gave to work when compared to family and the increased time and resources they invested in work beyond requirement. Typically, when they felt good about work they were happy to work longer hours. But then when things were not good, work was just a place to earn money and they were resentful towards working beyond their usual hours. This inconsistency might be reflecting the idea that male respondents still felt very accountable for paid work but it was not the only accountability in their lives anymore. As a consequence, when things were not going well with their employment they had other areas in life to focus on until things got better. Gaylin (1992) stated that traditionally paid work was so embodied in male identity that if things went wrong with their employment, their whole existence collapsed. But the findings in this research have shown that this was not always the case with these male professionals. Huffman et al. (2014) highlight that fathering is under re-construction and refer to this transition to the new father paradigm. An example illustrating this was a passage from a male respondent who shared the experience of watching his dad being made redundant and how much this affected the whole family and it was perceived as a disaster. The respondent then said:-

> *"Years later it was my turn to be made redundant, but by then I knew that work was just work and we are just numbers so it did not affect me as much"* (John, age 50s).

5.1.1 Intergenerational influence theme

Indeed the relationship between men and work, particularly fathers and work, have evolved from the traditional norms of masculinity and traditional

breadwinner expectations (Bjornholt, 2010; Harrington *et al.*, 2011). The findings from this study have shown that although most male respondents were also breadwinners like their fathers, their understanding of this role's expectations has evolved by adding further responsibilities. Financial provision became implied almost as a minimum expectation. Consequently, 'being a more hands-on father' became the average expectation. Miller (2011) states that this change in gender roles is happening at a very slow pace because of the persistent norms related to the breadwinner role; for example *"ideas that paid work is a choice for women but not for men"* (p. 43).

It is insightful to reflect on how realistic it is to add up responsibilities to the traditional breadwinner role model instead of transforming and reallocating time and energy in a more balanced way to the multiple roles a man would perform in life in modern society (Grant *et al.*, 2013). In this context it is important to understand how much intergenerational influences contribute to this slow pace of men in adjusting to modern family structures and roles. Townsend (2002) argues that intergenerational values, morals and orientations also influence family structures, roles and socialisation of children into their adult life.

> *"As parents and researchers, educators and policymakers, we need to more fully understand family socialisation process that are structural (societal) as well as psychological (individual), that involve intergenerational influences that are reciprocal (from child to parent as well as from parent to child), and that take into account family influences not only in childhood but also throughout the adult years. In doing so, we can address some broader questions posed by social theorists about continuity and change in society".* (Townsend, 2002, p. 8)

Consequently, although this research did not focus on intergenerational influence, more specific studies can support the understanding of how much traditional social process around gender values are passed on from fathers to sons and mothers to daughters and their levels of influence on the continuity of gendered organisations (Bjornholt, 2010). But most important is how such unconscious beliefs can be recognised and transformed in order to accommodate new demands on men and women in modern society (Bjornholt, 2010; Townsend, 2002). This way both men and women can rearrange their roles and expectations to fit in with available time and energy within their family

set-ups and to do this in a healthy way (Grant *et al*., 2013). Otherwise men, like women, will progressively suffer from stress caused by this increase of life responsibilities (Gatrell *et al*., 2011; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997).

There were three sub-themes unfolded under this intergenerational influence theme. The "breadwinner dads" and "working mums" were described as something positive and the "absent dad" communicated as something negative. As mentioned above, the breadwinner path proved to be the case for this study, the data across the sample showing that the male respondents saw themselves as the embodied breadwinner in their households and in many cases they compared themselves with their own fathers. Brannen and Nilsen (2006) stated that the persistence of the breadwinner identity for men is an example of intergenerational continuity. Brannen and Nilsen (2006) explains the concept of "intergenerational transmission" as what passes between generations without even being noticed as embedded in daily family routines and relationships. In his research, this breadwinner transmission was often communicated in a positive way in terms of finding a profession which was paid well enough to support their families and sustain a desirable lifestyle. Related to "full-time working mums", male respondents typically compared themselves with their fathers and female respondents compared themselves with their mothers. This gender association in terms of intergenerational continuity was also observed by Brannen and Nilsen (2006). For example, Paul (age 30s) referred to his mother as a hero for looking after four children, working full-time and doing the majority of the work in the house. However, interestingly, he compared his mum with his female peers and not himself. He projected his expectation onto other females by saying that he did not understand why female workers complain about working and having children as his mum did it without complaining.

Equally, the physical absence of fathers from previous generations was communicated in a negative way. In this study respondents typically referred to absent dads in association with physical and emotional separation. Most of them referred to being a good father as spending more time with their children and some of them referred to their absent fathers resentfully. Dermott explains that fathering absence has multiple dimensions:

> *"The absence of fathers has a number of dimensions: the physical absence of men from the households in which their children live; an emotional distance from children's lives; a relinquishing of the role of financial provider and thereby economic absence".* (Dermott, 2008, p. 10)

The economic absence was not mentioned by respondents in their roles as fathers or sons. Perhaps this was a reflection of the population of this study being made of professional breadwinners which in many cases were also sons of professional breadwinners. Consequently, economic absence might be limited to the respondents within this sample because experiences with job insecurity and inability to provide financially to their families were hardly mentioned. This might be a reflection of the profile of this sample which was made of professionals who might also experience higher levels of employability. The experiences shared during the interviews were in fact mostly associated with emotional and physical presence. Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) in their study stated that men sought to give their children a different and more positive childhood experience than the one experienced in their own lives with their own fathers. There was evidence in this study that respondents were consciously seeking to change fathering behaviours they had perceived as negative while growing up and led them to try not to replicate that experience.

Indeed, the data in this study has shown that intergenerational transmission has been mostly associated with fatherhood and the breadwinner role. Nevertheless, greater involvement with their kids seemed to be something new. It is also critical to reflect upon the expectations of fatherhood from the respondents in regard to their own children and how inverted intergenerational transmission is also shaping the picture of the role of contemporary dad. An example from the data in this research was a passage where the male respondent shared how he felt that when you have children, you lose control of your own time because you need to make yourself available to them in order to meet their needs.

> *"Because there are demands on you and you have family telling you what to do, you have to be subordinate to their activities … and you lose control of your own time, happily lose control over the balance of your life anyway"* (Anthony, age 50s).

In other words, the breadwinner role was passed on as a "given" from the previous generation. Equally, the breadwinner role was no longer enough; across the sample, being an involved father was communicated by the respondents as the normal fatherhood role expectation. In terms of childless respondents, the answers were very similar to fathers' responses. This happened because childless respondents projected the future and imagined themselves married with children.

From a gender perspective, as mentioned previously, in the same way the male respondents related to their fathers, female respondents related to their mothers. The main consideration was how some respondents perceived their fathers' careers as something negative which caused pain to their families and hindered their father–son relationships when compared to female respondents who perceived their mothers' careers as something always beneficial to them. Female respondents reported intergenerational transmission in relation to their working mums positively. They referred to them as role models. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000, p. 79) argue that:

> *"Mums involved with careers tend to benefit kids because their self-esteem is enhanced plus many kids feel good about themselves when they see their mom as someone with authority … mom becomes a role model".*

In terms of inconsistency within the findings, the most predominant one was about respondents saying that they were changing the patterns from previous generations in terms of greater length and quality of time spent with their children. Equally, several passages from the same respondents also demonstrated that they were still not happy with how much work was spilling across the time allocated to their family roles. When these respondents were probed concerning boundary measurements to stop this spillover, most of them agreed that if the demands are there, their first instinct is to respond even if they resent their decision. For example Marcus and Brandon (both age 50s) shared passages of them interrupting when playing with their children or having dinner with the family in order to answer a phone call in the exact moment it rang. Consequently, their decision to stop what they were doing in order to answer a work call created friction with their wives. Bjornholt (2010) states that

contemporary fathers find themselves in "neo-traditional" family set-ups whilst they still identify themselves with their traditional fathers; consequently this generates conflicts in this transition of meeting both practices, the old and new dad role expectations.

5.1.2 Most important role(s) theme

The "Most important role" theme provided the greatest evidence demonstrating the shift in terms of the expectations of fatherhood and how the breadwinner role has evolved for the majority of this male sample. Because respondents were asked to not only describe their most important role in life but also to explain if they were fulfilling this role and how, it became clear that financial providing was no longer predominant in individuals' minds as their most important role. In fact, it was hardly mentioned; quality time and energy with family and relationships were typically the case for most of the male respondents. This was not only communicated as pressure and expectations from their families and friends but also as a necessity to be happy and fulfilled in life. Levine and Pittinsky (1997) also recognise that although work is an unquestionably powerful source of male identity and satisfaction, family is equally strong. Work was hardly mentioned by their male respondents as their first priority either. Harrington et al. (2011) surveyed nearly 1,000 working fathers in the USA, reporting that two-thirds of their respondents agreed or strongly agreed that work was only a small part of who they were.

In terms of notions of masculinity, although the financial providing was less evident at conscious level, other elements of rooted masculine family roles emerged from the findings in a positive way. When respondents were asked to describe the most important role in their lives, typically family was mentioned first and their work last. "Family" then became a positive sub-theme. However, there was an order under the family sub-theme where "being a father" was the first one to be described which was then followed by being a "husband or partner". Both were often referred to as the family role, which places family in a very central position in terms of male's values and identity (Bagger *et al*., 2014; Stryker and Serpe, 1982).

On the other hand, the emerged negative sub-theme "Regret" – not spending enough time with their children and family – was discussed in the context of not fulfilling the most important role in their lives, which was associated with children and families. Regret was already addressed under the negative meaning of work in terms of the reason why fathers become absent from their families. However, in this theme, regret was associated with them feeling that they were failing to fulfil the most important role in their lives. Influenced to behave in a particular way, they then suffer regret and this causes pain and stress.

Although regret or guilt emotions were not covered in the literature review, it is important to recognise the contribution in which further studies can make in this field. Negative emotions are rather common on the process of making work and family decisions whilst trading-off competing demands (Simonetti *et al*., 1993; Bagger *et al*., 2014). The implication of the role identity theory in the context of WLB for this study is the oscillation or even the shift which male respondents have experienced with the nature of their role identity order. Valliant (2012) in the longest study on men's health and wellbeing highlighted the fact that what really matters are connections with loved ones. Nothing else had the most impact on participants' satisfaction, success and wellbeing throughout their lives. The work role identity became secondary for respondents when experiencing stressful life events or with maturity, but most importantly respondents with higher levels of wellbeing and success in life as a whole have family and love as their role identity. Work needed to be associated with a higher purpose to promote wellbeing but yet it did not replace the role of connectivity with others in the promoting of health, happiness and wellbeing. New findings on this area can then inform new regulation theories to support individuals to minimise the negative impact of such WLB related emotions but also deploy an ongoing assessment of their life priorities to allow such alignment and more efficient boundaries strategies. Furthermore, as highlighted previously, Bagger et al. (2014) reported that identity role performance which is high in centrality or value; have an impact on individuals' self-esteem and well-being which can be positive or negative.

In addition this study refers to regret as experienced not anticipated. There is another opportunity to explore the negative impact of experienced regret on health and wellbeing and functionality as a whole and how organisations and individuals can trigger anticipated regret before making work-life choices in order to preserve their own health, wellbeing and functionality. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000, p. 26) explain that:-

> *"Since our life role priority influences our decisions – our choices – about how we spend our time and where we invest our emotions, it is important to understand how these priorities develop".*

However, from most of this male sample this thought process was happening but it seems to be delayed in terms of their instant behaviours. Several passages demonstrated male respondents prioritising work first, reflecting on their life priorities afterwards, then regretting how much of their time and energy were not synchronised with their priority roles in life. They attributed not spending as much time with their kids as they wished to, to be a mixture between personal choice and/or struggling with the balance between work and engaged father expectations. In terms of personal choice, Burnett et al. (2012) state how the willingness of fathers to work long hours by sacrificing family time is related to their traditional masculine identities. The findings from this study support this by highlighting the examples where fathers' default decisions in terms of time and energy will typically favour work. Equally, Ranson (2001) suggests that middle-class, professional and primary-provider fathers, who are the profile in this sample, may struggle with conflicting demands between the breadwinning role/career and being an involved father. Findings from this study have shown that most male respondents' struggle comes from the belief that they need to be responsive towards work demands, no matter when and how. On the other hand, they also wanted to be the new version of the ideal father, which related to presence and quality time with their children. Consequently, respondents were adding more roles and responsibilities to their lives without taking anything out. Other studies like Burnett et al. (2012), Gatrell and Cooper (2008), Levine and Pittinsky (1997) and Miller (2011) have also shown that fathers started experiencing distress by trying to meet conflicting demands and pressures from maintaining their traditional masculine roles whilst embracing

their evolved responsibilities in contemporary society.

There are studies showing that the struggle comes also from external expectations, such as an organisational culture to work hard which can lead to job insecurity. For example, Gatrell et al. (2011) states that there have been profound changes in fathering roles and demonstrated that most of the fathers wanted to carry out their fair share of caring responsibilities whilst seeing their roles as carer and breadwinner balanced. Gatrell et al. (2011) also reported certain difficulties that these men faced in their organisational work culture, including financial barriers to taking time off to balance work and family as needed. However, in this sample with a critical realist approach, the findings questioned how individuals from the same office, with the same manager and with similar jobs had very different attitudes towards WLB in general. Personal beliefs were more aligned to individuals' WLB choices than employers' WLB culture, for example. This brings the discussion back to how intergenerational influence tends to impact on the application of WLB more than external factors. For example, we can take three respondents all working in the same office under the same management. For Robert (age 40s) work-life spillover happens because of his personal choice and he connected this choice to his personality and to achieve completion of tasks. George (age 40s) talked a lot about workload and attributed work-life spillover to external factors like client expectations and type of business. Frank (age 30s) did not feel that he needed to work longer hours, evenings or weekends to deliver what is expected from him and simply turned off his phone and laptop when he was with his family. Similarly, Marcus (age 50s), who manages Joseph (age 30s), complained about the service industry and how this constant client availability culture compromises his WLB. Joseph, father of three children, had a different perspective and thought that the professional and mobility nature of the industry brought autonomy and advantages to his WLB.

From a gender perspective and this theme of most important role, there were two differences noted within the findings. Firstly, when women were asked about the most important role in their lives, across the female group, there was no recognition of their husbands/partners and motherhood was typically the only

role mentioned. Cooper and Lewis (1995) reviewed employed mothers' dilemmas, suggesting that mothers feel guilty for leaving their children to go to work and in order to compensate for this time loss they tended to prioritise their kids even more by spending more time with their kids and excluding their partners. Dermott (2007), for instance, reported that men in her study did not tend to experience guilt for spending little time with their children, although controversially mothers were not happy with having only limited amounts of quality time with their children during the evenings. This is a reflection of female identities associated with primary accountability for childcare (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Murphy and Doherty, 2011).

Emotions can often be understood in the same way, Tudor and Proeve (2010) explored emotional and cognitive features of remorse, regret, guilt and shame. Although these emotions possess similar cognitive features in terms of wishing things were other than they are, the emotional features are different. They state the process of guilt has a personal nature and is usually associated with doing something wrong and violation of personal standards. On the other hand, regret is concerned with events and not self and is associated with lost opportunity. In the context of this research, these definitions fit with the context of each gender. Male respondents experienced the emotions of regretting the opportunity loss in terms of spending time with their children whilst female experienced their absence in a more judgement way, as they should not leave their children behind in a first place. Simonetti et al. (1993) reported the female workers did not experience regret when leaving *work* behind to look after their children. This links back in terms of their own expectation and standards when assessing their role as mothers. There is a potential to further explore the emotions of regret and guilt in the context of WLB, how it differs from men and women and most importantly the impact of these emotions on individuals' mental and physical health. Furthermore in 1993, Simonetti et al. highlighted that working parents did not experience as much guilt for spending less time with their children because of paid work. Respondents understood that it was a trade-off for financial security. But then when the study addressed long working hours, mothers experienced more guilt than men. Therefore there is consideration to be taken into account in terms of Grandey and Crompozano (1999) and the

emotions individuals experience when they feel obliged to allocate resources to other domains in life in which they were not expecting practically or emotionally.

In terms of inconsistencies between what respondents said and what they actually did, work prioritisation over fatherhood involvement was often described. Miller (2011) explores three main dimensions of this debate, to include men's experiences of a more active care role in fatherhood, changing masculinities, and how the meaning of paid work is constructed for men. These changes appear to be causing conflict and uncertainty for men. In this study the evidence demonstrated that conflict typically comes from an increase in the father's role expectations and responsibilities without decreasing expectations and responsibilities from elsewhere and the regret when time and energy is taken away from family to instinctively respond to a work demand (Grant *et al*., 2013). Some respondents felt that their fathers' physical and emotional presence were not good enough and wanted to change their own experiences with their children displaying high expectations on themselves, almost to compensate for their own fathers. In contrast, Dermott (2007), for example, concludes that fathers feel content with spending little time with their children because they unconsciously relate to their own father's uninvolved behaviour as a comparison. The mothers, on the other hand, feel uncomfortably less involved with their children because of their own experiences of their own mothers' intensive presence in their lives. In this study often respondents did not feel content about the time they were spending with their children, they regretted every time they prioritised work and showed strong concerns about not meeting their own expectations as fathers. However, because this study methodology separated what was communicated with a positive or negative meaning, it was easier to understand how respondents compared themselves with their parents and what that meant to them in terms of positive or negative associations. In terms of intergenerational influence and commitment towards work, it seems that behaviours have been replicated between fathers and sons because it was typically perceived as positive. However, considering intergenerational influence towards fathering and time spent with their children, it seems that behaviours have been transformed between fathers and sons because it was perceived by most respondents as a negative thing so they want to change. For example,

Scott (age 40s), Brandon (age 50s), Robert (age 40s) and Thomas (age 50s) related themselves to their fathers in terms of having professions but also made conscious decisions to not pursue a career at the detriment of their families. They all referred to their fathers in a resentful and negative way when it came to their father–son relationships. Consequently, they often caught themselves working hard and immersed in their jobs but then stopped because they remembered the negative role model their fathers presented to them.

5.1.3 Meaning of fatherhood theme

In the findings it became evident that the meaning of fatherhood is beyond the financial providing role. Although within this sample respondents were the main breadwinners in their household, the importance of fathers' presence, physical and emotional, with their kids was predominantly mentioned during the interviews. There were two positive sub-themes in the findings: "responsibilities" and "rewards". Responsibilities were associated with being present and "hands-on" as a carer, then as a result receiving the emotional "rewards" – the second positive sub-theme. Dermott (2008) suggested that contemporary fatherhood is more relational and intimate. This does not necessarily mean the quantity of time spent with their children, rather it means focusing on developing emotional connections with them. This was observed in this sample by passages from fathers describing daily interaction with children in a positive way, such as bedtime stories, bath times and play. Concerning other roles within the fathering responsibilities sub-theme, fathering studies have shown that financial provider, protector and disciplinarian roles are seen as the main contributions to parenting by fathers (Dermott, 2006; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Miller, 2011). Conversely in this study, the disciplinarian role was not mentioned by male respondents. This might be associated with their wish to be connected with children at an emotional level and therefore there is a natural shift from an authoritarian father figure to a more approachable and engaged one to enable this connection.

In the context of fatherhood or fathering experiences, the financial providing role was hardly mentioned. Perhaps because most of the male respondents were also breadwinners, the financial providing role was already fulfilled and not on

their minds. Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) highlight that there are multiple dimensions to fatherhood as fathers are expected to be more than providers, yet the providing role is at the core of fathering for the family (Connell, 2014). This might be why in the findings the providing role was there but not spoken about when talking about fatherhood. Fathers typically described the importance of feeling emotionally connected with their children in a reciprocal way, like Leo (age 40s) and Erik (age 40s) who described the feeling of coming back home from work and seeing a welcoming reception from their children. Indeed, the rewards, enjoyment and purpose of fatherhood brought to the respondents' lives were predominant topics which are also aligned with other existing studies. For example, Lamb et al. (1985) highlight that more involved fathers feel more confident as parents, enjoy closer relationships with their kids and have a greater sense of well-being. Levine and Pittinsky (1997) also report that fathers with the most troubled relationships with their kids had the most health problems. In general, most fathers in this study reported a sense of happiness and contentment in life as a whole after having children.

Concerning the negative sub-themes of fatherhood, two areas were discussed, "Strains" and "Poor early attachment". The first negative sub-theme "strains", meant the constant worry about their children and accountability for them. However, once again, fatherhood strains were not in the context of financial providing. It was more related to wellbeing, happiness and prospects as an adult. The breadwinner role seemed to be something they just did. It did not have any positive or negative values attached to it. Negative passages concerned with financial providing were more associated with loss of income with paternity leave, for example, which is addressed later on under the childcare theme. This was very specific to a temporary loss of income while on leave.

Although the fathers in this study were unintentionally breadwinners, findings seem to be inconsistencies when compared with existing studies linking working long hours with the breadwinner role. For example, the following studies have looked at working fathers' behaviours, traditional norms of masculinity and the need for job security. Dermott (2006) mentioned that working fathers work

longer hours in Europe. Miller (2011, p. 99) shares a passage from her study about what she calls "Catch 22", where work becomes more important in order to provide for family after childbirth, which in turn means spending less time with the family. This inconsistency might be the case because this study did not focus on fathering behaviours associated with the breadwinner role specifically. Instead it explored the overall meaning of fatherhood which for these respondents was mostly associated with being present and involved with their children. Equally, these findings then, were aligned with Dermott (2008) and Miller (2011) which also displayed ideas of what constitutes being "good fathers" as being there and present and "bad fathers" as being absent and not involved (Miller, 2011, p.57).

The second negative sub-theme related to fatherhood in this study was associated with fathers and the early attachment with their babies. In this study the relationship between fathers and early attachment was discussed; there were two aspects which were seen as negative, fathers' abilities to handle babies and their limited contribution at this first stage. Lloyd (2007) argued that fathers do not think they can significantly influence or participate in their children's live until they are more independent from their mothers. However, it was not the case for the majority of fathers across the sample. In fact, the importance of father–child attachment in early infancy was seen as positive for bonding and helping the family to adjust (Wilson and Prior, 2010). Some respondents even questioned the length of paternity leave and judged the time as insufficient for this purpose. They explained how going back to work prematurely made this adjustment to a new child very hard for them and their families. Miller (2011, p. 28) mentioned about men returning to work having less time to be involved, limiting their contribution to evenings and weekends. The involvement becomes "*fitted in*" to help the mother in terms of the caring/nurturing and having the provider and protector roles as primary responsibilities.

The female considerations for this study raised some interesting movements in terms of how mothers saw their roles. For the female sample they were asked about the meaning of motherhood; fatherhood was not discussed with them.

Mothers not only viewed their roles as nurturing and caring but being the disciplinarian too. Although Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) reported that the disciplinarian role was often associated with fathers as they held a more authoritarian figure in the house, in this study fathers hardly mentioned discipline but mothers did. "Being present" for the male population was more likely to be associated with quality of time and emotional connection (Dermott, 2008) than fatherhood responsibilities in a gender-traditional way. Hauari and Hollingworth (2009) also reported that leisure and physical activities were seen as fathers' contributions rather than those of mothers. Grant et al. (2013) highlight that the extra time fathers had from working remotely was referred to as more quality time with their families, where women used the extra time to performance care or domestic tasks. For mums in this study, motherhood was frequently conveyed as a "job" which you can fail or succeed at, with nurturing and disciplining at the core of their performance.

Examining the inconsistences in the data between individuals' perspectives and actual WLB events, it became evident that there is a transition between the traditional father/professional roles and contemporary roles. Passages have demonstrated changes in traditional roles; where the breadwinner role was retained (but not associated as being a good father), the disciplinarian role was weakened and the loving role was embraced and associated as being a good father. The studies which focus on fatherhood (Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009; Miller, 2011) raise the idea of "the family protector" being at the core of masculine ideas of fatherhood. However, this role was not evident in this study. This might be a reflection of the connection between the physical aspects of the protector and disciplinarian roles. Considering patterns of fathering roles across different age groups, ideas of being a good father were consistently associated with being present and involved, emotionally and physically. However, most respondents from age group 50s, described fathering activities more associated with play, sports and mentoring where fathers from age groups 30s and 40s, would refer to caring tasks and "hands on dad" as being a good father (Robert, age 40s; Jeff, age 40s; Max, age 40s; John, age 30s; Frank, age 30s and Joseph, age 30s). Furthermore respondents from age groups 30s and 40s, tended to refer more to parenting as opposed to fathering. This natural shift to a

more gender neutral approach towards childcare responsibility was also observed by Miller (2011).

Lamb and Oppenheim (1989) had already observed that the increase in fatherhood involvement has nothing to do with the idea of equal partnership; this involvement was inspired by men's curiosity and a wish to have contact with the child. In this study that still seems to be the case; only a few respondents in this sample referred to hands-on fathering in terms of doing their share or reducing the load of their female partners concerning the household tasks. Typically they wanted to be involved as fathers for themselves and for their children.

5.1.4 Life changing events theme

This research explored the positive or negative impacts of life-changing events on individuals' work-life balance. Most life-changing events, including the birth of a child, were associated with a positive change in respondents' lives in terms of spending less time at work and more time with family and friends. There are studies investigating life-changing events for men and work-life balance but these are mostly associated with the impact on WLB after the birth of a child. Some suggest that work-life balance improves because fathers are forced to spend less time at work because of their new responsibilities at home (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Gatrell *et al*., 2011) and some suggest that after the birth of a child WLB was worse because, as a father, job security is critical to meet the breadwinning role, so fathers tend to work even harder (Dermott, 2006; Miller, 2011). Although the data in this study did not show an association between the birth of a child and increased hours at work because of job security, there were passages around the birth of a child which were associated with time squeezes in the attempt to try to fit everything in as a consequence (Miller, 2011).

From a negative point of view, some life-changing events had a negative impact on respondents' work-life balance. In this research, health problems and work performance were mentioned. Some studies have made the link between poor work-life balance and stress (Gambles *et al*., 2006, Gatrell and Cooper, 2008); however, in this study stress was not mentioned by male respondents as a life-

changing event. The health issues mentioned were heart problems, tumours and cancer, and working long hours was used as a coping strategy to overcome the health problem or to compensate for a decrease in work performance. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) highlight how work can be an "ally" or "enemy" to family/life and vice versa in order to cope with difficulties from either domain in life. In the case of serious illness for some respondents in this sample, work acted as a friend who helped them to refocus and overcome health problems.

From a gender point of view, several female respondents reported work-related stress as a life-changing event which forced them to adjust their workload at work. No other health problems were mentioned. Davidson and Cooper (1992) and Lewis and Humbert (2010) state that women with children often experience role stress not only because of the workload and multiple demands from family and paid work but also from criticism around their motherhood role when they leave their children behind to work or criticism around their professional commitment when they leave their work behind to look after their children. Incidents of work and life interface stress seemed to be the case for both mothers and fathers. However, mothers tended to be more affected by stress as they had professional-mother and mother-professional role conflicts to deal with (Murphy and Doherty, 2011) whilst fathers in this study mostly experienced professional-father conflict only. This was due to the attempt to fulfil their role as "good mothers" whilst trying to be committed to work. Typically, passages from female professionals who had children referred to their inability to work longer hours or respond to unplanned work demands because of childcare and therefore they experience the feeling that they were not performing well. Equally, there were passages reporting feelings of guilt for leaving a sick child behind to attend work or not being there when children come back from school. Lewis and Humbert (2010) observed this as well and highlighted the pressures which affect women around gender assumptions, such as the ideology of "the good mother" (full-time at home, caring and nurturing for their children) which contrasts with the career woman. Professional women thus may experience distress and guilt from spending time and energy on their careers instead of their families.

Concerning inconsistences between perspectives and descriptions of events in the findings, although the majority of life-changing events were reported as stressful events, they were perceived by the respondents as making positive changes to their WLB. Taylor's cognitive adaption theory (1983) explains that after a traumatic life event, individuals act as active agents in restoring their psychological balance, self-esteem and sense of meaning.

> *"One of the most impressive qualities of the human psyche is its ability to withstand severe personal tragedy successfully. Despite serious setbacks such as personal illness or the death of a family member, the majority of people facing such blows achieve quality of life or level of happiness equivalent to or even exceeding their prior level of satisfaction"* (Taylor, 1983, p. 1).

This theory supports how respondents in this sample mostly saw the role of stressful life events in a positive way. Because a life-changing event can impact positively or negatively on how people manage their WLB, further contribution linking both areas of study might allow a deeper understanding of various aspects of WLB, such as the processes of work and life revision and re-prioritisation after different types of life-changing events, temporary or long-term WLB changes as consequence of a life-changing event. In this study death and divorce seemed to trigger the decrease of the time and energy spent at work. The findings suggested that changes promoted by death were temporary and changes promoted by divorce were sustained. For example, Ken and Peter (both age 50s) mentioned about making changes in terms of how many hours they worked straight after the death of close family members and friends and reflecting on the importance of time spent with loved ones. But then they also mentioned that after a while their routines and excessive working hours went back to the old ways.

On the other hand, Lewis and John (both age 50s) for example explained how they implemented boundaries to manage work-life spillover with their new partner as consequence of their divorces. Lewis mentioned that he does not work weekends anymore and keeps his personal diary occupied with his new wife and John mentioned that he writes a personal to-do list at the top of his work one to remind him of his commitments outside work on a daily basis. In both cases they were able to sustain the change because they created new

habits triggering the balance. In addition to further research on WLB and life-changing events, the neuroscience of habits (Schwartz and Gladding, 2011) and WLB might also provide deeper insights on how to eliminate unhelpful habits for WLB and introduce positive ones like Lewis and John did. Making WLB changes and sustaining them seemed to be an issue for most part of the respondents and it took life changing events to make these changes more permanent. Taking into consideration sustained behavioural changes as habits, Schwartz and Gladding (2011) explain from a neuroscience perspective the underlining reasons why we form habits which take control of our decision making without us even realising that is happening. They describe habits as sequenced behaviours actioned as one unit which makes humans imitate their past unconsciously and automatically without activating other parts of the brain. Schwartz and Gladding (2011) also distinguish mind from brain responses, explaining that mind is where choices and decisions are made about the information our brain send us which then is connected with our values and goals. They explain that the major issue about the habit centre part of the brain is that it can operate detached from other parts of the brain and the mind. The habit centre of the brain usually takes control of individuals' minds without them even noticing and is activated by sensory triggers Schwartz and Gladding (2011). So once a bad habit is wired it is very difficult to deactivate even though individuals are aware that such habitual behaviour is not good for them (Schwartz and Gladding, 2011). However, Schwartz and Gladding (2011) also describe that habits can be re-written through efforts, attention and controlled behaviours in which are aligned with individual values. This might justify why some life changing events in this study, like divorce and death of loved ones, were very powerful in prompting respondents to reflect upon their lives and priorities were responsible for immediate self-initiated behavioural changes. Equally, the neuroscience of habits poses a challenge for the identity role theory which suggests that individuals' allocate resources to different roles in life based on the values attributed to each role (Stryker and Serpe, 1999). However if individuals are mostly operating by their habit center (which can be detached from decision making and core values) decision making and values have little influence on changing WLB behaviours to improve an individual's wellbeing.

5.2 Second Area of Analysis: Work-Life Interface and Personal Reconciliation Strategies

5.2.0 Reconciliation strategies and choices theme

This theme covered personal reconciliation and coping strategies that respondents deployed in order to manage their WLB. Sub-themes were split between respondents who view the interface between work and rest of life in a more dynamic and flexible way and others who preferred to keep work and life separated to avoid work and family conflict, focusing on one at a time. It is important to highlight that these strategies were of a personal nature and were not connected with employers' provisions to support them. Strategies were in general communicated in a positive way when respondents had a certain level of control over their time and space and varied between these two extremes, integrated or separated approaches. Gambles et al. (2006) highlights that reconciliation strategies vary from person to person but also that the same person will also deploy different approaches to reconciling work and rest of life throughout their careers:

> *"There are a variety of different ways to harmonise the many parts of life, including more integrated or segregated strategies, depending on what works for people in diverse contexts and at different phases in their lives"* (Gambles et al., 2006, p. 35).

Four positive sub-themes were created here. The "Bargain" sub-theme meant an exchange of resources between domains. The "Separation" sub-theme meant keeping both domains separated by the application of physical boundaries between them. The "Personal commitments" sub-theme meant using personal commitments as triggers and reminders to leave one's work domain when allocated resources had finished, i.e. end of office hours. The "Flexible" sub-theme entailed keeping little boundaries between work and life outside work in order to easily bounce between domains in order to accommodate unforeseen and competing demands. Clark (2000) and Kossek et al. (2012) explain that the mixture of preferences in terms of integrating or segmenting work and life domains results how the spillover from each domain affects individuals and how they wish to control this.

In terms of more segregated strategies for reconciliation, spillover theory explains that emotions and behaviours in one sphere are carried over to the other spheres (Staines, 1980). People who tend to experience negative spillover or conflict between domains (Kossek *et al.*, 1999) preferred to keep work and life as separate domains. This was the case in this study as well; respondents who described themselves as worriers, like Thomas (age 50s) for example, explained that physical boundaries were critical to minimise this. He mentioned that he even needs to live in another city so the drive can help him to switch off. However, inter-role conflict and/or negative spillover were not necessarily the only reasons for this preference. There were cases where respondents deployed separation boundary strategies as a preference, for example Frank (30s) who consciously decided to live in a different city from their work place to emphasise a physical separation. Kossek et al. (1999) highlight that in order to prevent conflict in the first place it is beneficial to focus on one domain at a time. Clark (2000) also explains that boundaries are clearer and more easily maintained when roles are separated. On the other hand, more integrated domains can make role transitions less difficult, but they can also create confusion between competing demands.

In terms of more integrated work and rest of life reconciliation, Kossek and Lambert (2006) state that sometimes integrating is more beneficial than separating life and work; this is because even though individuals might be responding to a physical demand in one domain, they may not be emotionally present. In this study respondents who preferred to integrate different domains also often mentioned about being more satisfied as they felt they were able to better perform their roles overall. For example, if they failed to do so they would be worrying and not fully engaged with their work, for example. Amongst others, Robert (age 40s) and Allan (age 50s) explained that flexibility, autonomy and trust are very important to sustaining a more integrated approach towards work and life. They also recognised that both families and employers can benefit from this as they enter into a give-and-take mode. Ashforth et al. (2000) explain that the integrated domains strategy depends on high levels of flexibility and permeability. In other words, boundaries need to be flexible to allow *individuals* to *leave* one domain to attend a demand from another role, or permeable to

allow *demand*s from one role or domain to *enter* another. In this study, flexibility was more associated with individuals' ability to deliver their work wherever and whenever they were working. This was mentioned by Nick (age 40s), for example, who was also a leader. But equally, the mobile nature of work which involves business travel promotes the need for permeability as some respondents were often required to stay away from home in the evening, during what is typically viewed as family time but then they compensated by working from home after travel, as explained by Joseph (age 30s).

Nevertheless there is a question which remains to be answered concerning how different strategies impact on the performance of multiple roles, how focused individuals can be in one domain with the ongoing distraction from other domains, or how many demands from various domains individuals can squeeze in before they start becoming stressed and ill. The whole concept of improving WLB by using the integrated strategy to allow the focus of high value tasks rather than domains (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011) proved to be complicated for some respondents due to their personality, self-control and the difficulty experienced in switching off from on role to another almost instantly (Symon *et al.*, 2014). In terms of self-control, Clark (2000) reported that high flexibility and low permeability boundaries were associated with lowest work-life conflict. In other words, individuals are happy to have some level of integration as long as they have control over where, when and how demands are met. These reflections lead to the negative sub-themes and how individuals in general can struggle with either approach.

Negative sub-themes emerged from passages conveyed as coping strategies where respondents found it either hard to handle work-family conflict or felt that they did not have a choice. In this study, all four negative sub-themes, "Reprioritise and reduce", "Set limits", "Work-centred" and "Delegation", had an element of loss and feeling of unease. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) explain that individuals use cognitive and behavioural strategies to deal with situations where demands from various domains exceed their ability to meet them in terms of time, resources and energy, causing stress. In this study there was a clear change in role expectations, behaviours and performance (as

suggested by Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2007) in order to cope with work and life demands. This might be either a perception of sacrificing family for a career, like Brandon (age 50s) with his international assignment experience, or it could be sacrificing career in order to accommodate family, like Dom (age 50s), who accepted that his work could be more challenging but did not want to have the type of work where demands would cross over into his private life.

There are some similarities between this study and the work conducted by Somech and Drach-Zahavy. For example Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) suggested a typology for work-family and family-work coping strategies deployed at home, work or both. The typology presents four strategies, "1. good enough, 2. prioritising, 3. delegating, and 4. super". "Good enough" means lowering performance by changing expectations and behaviours in a given role. "Prioritising" means arranging the duties in order of priority and performing only the most important ones. "Delegating" means managing demands by delegating some tasks to others. "Super" means insisting on trying to meet all demands at desired standards alone instead of restructuring each role's duties. Considering the negative sub-themes in this study like "Reprioritise and reduce" and "Delegation" were very much aligned with Somech and Drach-Zahavy's typologies where "reduce" in this study meant "Good enough" on theirs. Putting "Work at the centre" as core and fitting other things around in this study also had similarities with the "Super typology" from Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) where some respondents in this sample tended to be "super at work" and then vary their strategies to manage other demands from the rest of life. Some examples were George (age 40s) who decided to have his children in boarding school to allow him and his wife to pursue their careers or Allan and Brandon (both age 50s) who embraced their international careers with an expatriate life style. The main difference that emerged from this study compared to Somech and Drach-Zahavy's was the "Setting limits". This sub-theme referred to expectations like the "Good enough" typology; however, it was not associated with lowering performance, it was more associated with managing the unreasonable expectations of clients.

From a gender observation point of view most female respondents found that integration, as opposed to segmentation, was a better strategy to reconcile work (Kossek *et al*., 1999). They shared passages showing the ongoing role border-crossing reality (Clark, 2000) of being a working mother (Friedman and Greenhaus 2000). However, there is also data from childless female respondents who preferred the segmentation/separation strategy to manage work and life outside work. This perhaps reflects the fact that, with children, the number of conflicting demands increase, requiring a more flexible and dynamic approach to fulfil all the roles. As per coping strategies, respondents who were mothers seemed to try to be "super" at work and "super" at home (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2007). This strategy might be the cause for the work-related stress shared by the mothers in this study. They also seemed to exclude leisure time or even their own health when managing work and life. Mary (age 40s), for example, struggled to fit new habits in her busy lifestyle to keep up with her exercise and diet in order to lose weight, which was a big issue in her life. Another example was Olivia (age 40s) who also had issues with weight but was able to introduce new exercise habits: however, this meant reducing her hours of sleep which she found exhausting. Mothers tend to focus their energies and time on their kids and work, compromising other areas in life like their own leisure and friends (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000).

As per inconsistencies, most respondents who deployed a separation strategy as an attempt to minimise negative work/family spillover tend to report worse WLB than those who actually integrate work and life, by working during weekends for example. This was related to their emotional presence which led to strain-based inter-role conflict whether or not they were actually doing work or not (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Examples were given from Darren (age 20s), Peter (age 50s) and Leo (age 40s) who talked about the need for physical boundaries, in these cases associated with turning off any technology, yet would see themselves as constantly worrying about work. Physical boundaries, including not being available on the phone or online, did not guarantee the separation. Although people might place physical boundaries to keep both domains separate, they still felt stressed about demands from work (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Kossek and Lambert, 2006). A separated domains

reconciliation strategy was only mentioned as effective with improving WLB when respondents demonstrated a level of self-control by stepping out from one domain to another, physically and emotionally. Useful examples were given by Frank and Oscar (both age 30s) who created the habit of turning off their laptops and mobiles after work on Fridays and switching them back on again only on Mondays. Clark (2000) mentioned that strategies of reconciliation are effective when border management strategies have a high level of flexibility but a low level of permeability. Reflecting on Frank and Oscar's interviews, they were happy to attend to work demands if they felt they were urgent. Equally they felt they wanted to judge the need for immediate response instead of being expected to be available. They both felt they were in control of their decisions without feeling obliged.

5.2.1 Physical exercise theme

The physical exercise theme was mostly communicated as being something positive, not only for joy and improved health and well-being but also as a strategy to improve work performance. On the other hand, lack of exercising and difficulty in making exercise a regular habit was mentioned as something negative. The role of regular physical exercise on WLB was not anticipated and covered in the literature review however, there is evidence to show that in fact physical exercise contributes towards improved well-being, happiness and enjoyment, and mental and physical health (Cartwright and Cooper, 2011) and work performance (Coulson et al., 2008). Passages from this study have shown that respondents tended to exercise regularly for all these reasons. However, respondents who were exercising as a recovery and performance strategy were more flexible in terms of the type of exercise they did. Respondents who exercised for enjoyment often mentioned that the commitment to the exercise was also an issue because of the mobility expected as part of their work. For example, George (age 40s) and Peter (age 50s), amongst others, explained that they were missing out on things they enjoy doing because of business travel and their inability to make regular commitments.

The work recovery and improved work performance aspects were mentioned as an intervention to avoid stress and improve clarity to deal with demanding

situations at work. Coulson et al. (2008) highlight the results of improved mood outside of a laboratory environment which were encouraging after sessions of cardiovascular exercise and weight training. Cartwright and Cooper (2011) point to strong evidence in terms of the benefits of regular physical exercise from the Department of Health (2001) in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Exercise Referral Systems. These benefits include reducing the risks of depression, stress and anxiety, enhancing moods and self-esteem, promoting better sleeping but also immediate positive effects on quality of thinking. Furthermore Coulson et al. (2008) highlight that exercise improved mood and performance at work. This explains why some respondents like John (age 50s) and Nick (age 40s) were able to see improvements straight after they exercised during breaks in their working day.

Another interesting link in the findings was related to workload and physical exercise: respondents like Joseph (age 30s), Scott (age 40s), Paul (age 30s), Nick (age 40s), Allen (age 40s), Robert (age 40s), John (age 50s) and Frank (age 30s) were committed to regular exercise and would do any physical activities available to them on a daily basis. These respondents did not complain about their workload and felt that their performance was improved with exercise. Consequently, when they started feeling stressed with work they created the habit of exercise as default and then they felt better about things. Cartwright and Cooper (2011) make an interesting connection between the benefits of exercise and activities which require intense thinking such as in this sample, for example with knowledge work.

> *"Further benefits of physical exercise include: 1. Blood flow to the brain, bringing additional sugars and oxygen that may be needed when thinking intensively; 2. When an individual thinks hard, the neurons of their brain function more intensively. As they do this, they can build up toxic waste products that can cause foggy thinking. By exercising, the speed of the flow of the blood through the brain increases, moving these waste products faster; 3. Exercise can cause release of chemicals called endorphins into the blood stream. These give a feeling of happiness and positively affect the overall sense of well-being"* (Cartwright and Cooper, 2011, p. 140).

Typically, the issue for respondents who were not able to embed exercise was around creating and maintaining the habit. A great example was given by Max

224

(age 40s) who described how hard it was for him to put his trainers on instead of sitting in front of the TV with a glass of wine and a packet of crisps. Max conditioned himself to de-stress by the comfort he felt with the TV, wine and crisps where exercise meant more work for him. He accepted that after exercise he does feel better but his challenge was about that initial nudging. Robert (age 40), who was the complete opposite felt very committed to his exercise, also shared that sometimes he felt it hard to exercise after a hard day at work but then as soon as he starts telling himself off about not exercising he puts his trainers on and his mind changes. Physical exercise was not covered in the literature review and therefore there was no research question aimed at this topic. Well-being and WLB in this study was initially more related to health in terms of preventing the loss of it. Most literature reviewed was influenced by Cary Cooper, one of the UK's leaders of thought in the field of well-being, work-life balance and stress (CIPD, 2016). That is why the research questions for this study were more associated with mental health and stress. For example, the wellbeing and WLB questions involved semi-structuring the discussion around workload and stress, which was aligned with the literature review and the methodology adopted in this study. Interview questions which ended up generating the **physical exercise** theme included: "Tell me how your workload affects you? How does it seem to affect your colleagues? Do you feel stressed about your work or life outside of work? If yes, tell me about your coping strategies to deal with the stress? If you could change anything to improve your well-being and health what that would be?".

As result of using semi-structured interviews and then letting the respondents lead the discussion, the findings were able to draw two main insights. First, for some respondents, regular exercise prevented workload-related stress from being a problem in the first place. Second, the benefits of physical exercise for performance at work (Coulson *et al*., 2008) were often observed in the interviews with the male respondents. Third, exercise in terms of WLB was not only used as a strategy to prevent loss of motivation, performance and health or to rehabilitate someone who was already managing any of these losses, but it was used to boost performance in all areas of life. Therefore there is a great potential for further studies to focus on how regular exercise can improve WLB

and performance as a whole. However, work-related stress was typically mentioned by females but not as much by males. Interestingly, a large proportion of female respondents did not exercise at all (7 out of 11). Whereas with male respondents, it was the opposite, only 5 out of 29 did not exercise at all. In the context of the research question addressing wellbeing and WLB, physical exercise for most female respondents was more a desirable thing to do than a necessity to cope with workload-related stress and boosting overall performance.

There is a strong connection between studies on work-life balance and wellbeing practices like physical exercise due to the negative impact on individuals' mental health caused by conflicting and intensified demands from all areas of life (Cartwright and Cooper, 2011; CIPD, 2016). This has also been a common theme in the evolution of WLB for women who historically have struggled with managing conflicting and high demands from work and home (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). However, physical exercise and WLB from the male perspective brings a different direction to the debate by shifting the focus from "coping" (surviving paid work) to "enhancing" (boosting performance).

In terms of the negative, there were two sub-themes: "Lack of exercise" and "Irregular commitments". This study has shown that self-discipline/motivation and incompatibility between regular exercise and the nature of respondents' jobs respectively were the main hindrances to carrying on with regular exercise. Cartwright and Cooper (2011) highlight that although there are several studies showing the benefits of exercise as an stressor-reduction intervention, the motivation to undertake regular exercises remains an issue which needs to be explored. This reflection brings two further insights to this theme, Firstly the association between health, performance benefits and exercise were the main drivers for respondents to keep up with regular exercise and therefore this motivation made them commit to any sort of physical activity on a regular basis. Respondents who associated exercise with joy and leisure were also the ones who complained about being unable to commit to regular exercise because they were less flexible with the type of exercise they were prepared to do. Respondents who saw the performance and health aspect of exercise first were

able to keep themselves active no matter what. Respondents who associated exercise with joy and leisure were less active and in many cases went through prolonged phases without exercising at all. Further studies investigating the motivations and hidden beliefs which trigger individuals to choose to exercise or not on a regular basis might contribute to the understanding of how to attain work-life balance and better performance.

In relation to the gender dimension, female respondents typically reported doing less regular exercise than male respondents. Although female respondents recognised the benefits of exercise, they struggled to do it regularly. This was most common amongst mothers and may be associated with the fact that female respondents with children had their time and energy consumed by the demands of work and family. Elaborating from the reflection of Gatrell and Cooper (2008) concerning working mothers and their constant feeling of underperformance at work and as a mother, any spare time or energy will be dedicated to compensating for these roles even at the detriment of their own health. Therefore exercise for mothers becomes a "luxury", as described by one of the mothers in this study (Rebecca, age 30s).

Ferrant and Keiko (2015) using data from the countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD) highlight the gender inequality based on the distribution of unpaid work, including childcare. They state that around the world women spend from two to ten times more time on unpaid work than men. They conclude also that inequality of unpaid work is associated with a country's wealth and persistent inequality in the labour market. Furthermore the gender leisure gap does not look good either. Men generally have more broadly defined leisure time than women. This gap varies from only a few minutes in Norway to the maximum of 80 additional minutes of leisure time for men in Italy, and for the UK just over thirty minutes (OECD, 2010). When it comes to care work, women spend more time caring with children than men as well. The gap based on a household with two children vary from Canada 9% being lowest gap to Mexico, 23% being the highest gap, UK is just behind Mexico with a gap of 22% (OECD, 2010). Consequently, when females have spare time from paid work they tend to use the extra time to carry

on with their unpaid work (Wheatley, 2012). Due to this unequal division of paid and unpaid work, it became insightful to realise that the "work-life *balance*" terminology was certainly appropriate for the female respondents and most of their passages reflected them balancing and surviving conflicting demands. However, for the male respondents "work-life *performance*" would be a better terminology to understand WLB from the male perspective. Their passages reflected more their desire to perform well in all aspects of their lives than struggling with ongoing conflicting demands.

Concerning inconsistences between respondents' views and practice, in fact the gap between the "knowledge" of the benefits of regular exercise and the "practice" of exercise is noticeable. Motivation to undertake regular exercise seems to be more of a problem than time availability (Cooper, 1996). In total, 24 out of 29 male respondents described exercising daily (4 or more days a week) or at least weekly (3 or less days a week) (refer to Appendix 1 Respondents' Profiles). However, all 8 male respondents who used exercise in order to improve performance were more consistent in maintaining *daily* exercise than the ones who saw exercise as associated with leisure (for example Marcus, Peter and Lewis, age 50s; Max, age 40s and Gus age 30s). Equally, there was a gap between respondents who associated exercise with health in a conceptual way and the respondents who actually experienced physical and mental benefits of regular exercise. For example, experiencing clarity of thoughts at work straight after a session in the gym, like Frank (age 30) and John (age 50s). In this study, it became evident that there was a bridge between knowledge and practice of exercise. One possibility could be that individuals who exercise regularly are able to deliver better performance in all parts of life by meeting more demands, dealing with conflicts more efficiently and consequently feeling better about their contributions. Or it might that people who are able to fit in regular exercise within busy schedules are naturally better with time management and therefore are able to meet more work-life demands when compared to those who struggle with time management on a daily basis. Either way, further exploration might provide great insight not only for professionals in the field of health, but also for WLB as from this study it seems that there was an association between regular exercise and better WLB. This

was observed by contrasting respondents from similar backgrounds in terms of family set-ups, job roles, line management, requirement for travel but with different views on WLB and workload. Respondents who exercised regularly typically had a more positive view in terms of their WLB and performance.

5.2.2 Childcare theme

Childcare becomes a burning issue in terms of WLB, not only because of the increased demands outside work after childbirth but also for helping the perpetuation of gender inequality at work by keeping mothers at home whilst receiving limited government support (Haas *et al*., 2000). Although the issues around childcare and employment appeared to be rather complicated, in the context of this study childcare sub-themes were communicated in a positive way as well. This was because male respondents acknowledged that childcare arrangements were not their primary responsibilities so they did not need to worry about it. The existing literatures concerning childcare and fathers is two-fold. It is generally upheld amongst researchers that men's increased involvement in childcare is necessary for gender equality at work (Cooper and Lewis, 1995; Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009); but until childcare is no longer seen as the primary responsibility of women, this increased male involvement will never happen (Haas & Hwang 2008). Overall, there is a cultural shift in terms of childcare and fathers are starting understanding childcare as parenting responsibility opposed to mothering role (Miller, 2011). Bjornberg commented:

> *"It has become more accepted that men should be able to leave work to pick up children from day care and that they should stay home with a sick child"* (in Haas et al., 2000, p. 67).

However this shift is happening at a slow pace and fathers have been more involved but yet, still taking a back seat when compared to the mothers in this study. Miller (2011) raises ideas around mothering gate keeping and how this also might contribute, alongside traditional norms of masculinity, to a gendered parental approach. In this study, even for dual-earner households, male respondents referred to their female partners as the key person organising childcare. That is why in many cases they were less specific in describing the childcare arrangements adopted in the household, almost putting all sorts of arrangements at the same level. Most positive data from male respondents

concerning childcare were divided into two groups: 1. "My wife stays at home looking after our children"; or 2. "My wife organises the childcare and she asks me to help when she needs to". That is why positive sub-themes were named "Full-time mum" and "Family and friends support". Typically, male respondents needed to be prompted to describe what sort of childcare arrangements they had in place, which reflected their limited involvement with childcare when compared to their partners. Nevertheless, several respondents recognised that with the relatively poor government support in the UK, working parents needed to rely on a variety of arrangements like paid childcare, support from the extended family and a network of friends. Thus there was a strong gender division of family daily tasks in dual-career households in this study. This leaves the male model of the ideal worker (Gatta and Roos, 2004) and "mother track" of part-time and flexible work as unquestioned dominant discourses (Lewis and Humbert, 2010), even though the practical demands of the family set-up may have changed.

Concerning the negative aspects of childcare as communicated by the male respondents, schooling hours/holidays and poor legislative support for paternity leave were raised. Consequently, the negative sub-themes were named "Schooling hours" and "Inadequate rights". Reconciling schooling hours and breaks with full-time employment was one of the main reasons why a traditional breadwinner household was adopted by some of the respondents. It was communicated in a negative way as respondents recognised their female partners sacrificing their careers for their families. Some researchers have gone further, to argue that the long working-hours culture has compromised women's careers by making it less possible for men to be available to share childcare and domestic responsibilities as well (Hochschild, 1989; Levine and Pittinsky, 1997) whilst simultaneously making it less possible for women to apply for managerial jobs that tend to demand longer hours (Doherty, 2004; Hogarth *et al.*, 2003). The other negative sub-theme was related to paternity leave. Some respondents felt very strongly about the inadequate level of support in terms of pay and time received for paternity leave. Miller (2011, p. 94) also reported the same finding by writing about how one of her respondents was "*disgusted*" with the level of paternity pay. Some descriptions of the paternity provisions in this

study were described as "inadequate", "sexist" and "a drop in the ocean" (Frank, age 30s, Ben, age 30s, and Thomas, age 50s, respectively). Holter (2007) also highlights that men are more likely to take WLB measures when their sense of entitlement is clearly backed up by legal provision of paternity leave entitlements. Otherwise, the gendered perception of responsibility for childcare amongst workers seems to reduce men's sense of entitlement to WLB benefits (Holter, 2007).

In relation to female considerations regarding childcare, female workers who were mothers embraced the responsibility of childcare, taking charge of any decision concerning alternative arrangements. Some female respondents reported that when arrangements were not available they comprised their career by having career breaks or changing jobs as an attempt to adjust work demands around their children. Both mothers and fathers see mothers as better equipped and more competent when it comes to childcare tasks and arrangements (Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009). Furthermore gender role expectations in terms of childcare seemed to be perpetuated by genders, with mothers not giving their partners full responsibility for the children and doubting their ability to make arrangements (Hauari and Hollingworth, 2009) and with fathers not feeling confident to take charge (Levine and Pittinsky, 1997).

In terms of inconsistencies in the findings between perspectives and WLB events, childcare help from fathers' extended families was not often mentioned whilst help from the mother's side was typically the case. Although there are so many factors to take into consideration, like grandparents' availability for example, there is an opportunity for further research into the process of couples deciding on childcare arrangements and intergenerational continuity. This includes establishing meanings around trust, competence and confidence between the mothers and fathers as well as the impact of intergenerational gendered values on childcare from a female perspective.

5.2.3 Flexible working theme

Flexible working in the context of this study offered significant insights. Perhaps because the main sample concerned male professionals, flexible working seemed to mean autonomy to work when and where needed or wanted. Ideas

around flexible working were beyond childcare for the majority. The negative side of flexibility was often mentioned and referred to as the need for respondents to be flexible in order to work in the international professional services environment where travel was often required. Respondents without children had a different perception of flexible working and differed from parents. They did feel flexible working was associated with childcare which was then less available to them.

In general, passages from the flexibility theme were communicated in a positive way when related to respondents' abilities to integrate work and life outside work during or out of office hours in order to respond to competing demands. Kelliher and Anderson (2010) highlight that flexible working practices have been used in a general way in order to try to cover several working patterns, like non-standard hours, reduced hours, compressed hours and remote working. Non-standard hours and remote working were often mentioned by the respondents in this study as their preferred forms of flexibility to meet commitments outside work due to the nature of their professional jobs and their ability to work from anywhere and at any time to catch up. Respondents also related to the nature of their jobs in terms of the ability to work anytime and from anywhere and how it was beneficial in order to meet unforeseen demands from both private and work domains. Gambles et al. (2006) provide a different view and highlight the implications of flexibility in a global economy, particularly with employees, who use technology as their main working tool and work across time zones, feeling that they have to be available constantly. In these cases flexibility is more beneficial for the organisation than the employee.

In the context of the benefits of flexible working theme, these positive sub-themes were called in the findings "Unforeseen demands" and "Global professionals". The global professionals' sub-theme was associated with the nature of their jobs in terms of autonomy and mobility. For some respondents, trust and working away from the office already helped with a flexible working culture. In the context of WLB studies, flexibility has often been associated with reduced hours targeting mothers (Lewis and Cooper, 2005). However, in this study flexibility for male respondents was associated with the control of deciding

when, how and where to do their work. Although flexible working is also discussed later on under the WLB provisions theme, it is worth mentioning at this stage that flexible working was only communicated as a positive thing, when flexible working provisions were not limited to parents. Although there is a long way to go, Kumra and Manfredi (2012) explain how WLB provisions have already started evolving from an equal opportunity agenda, focusing on gender equality, to a diversity management agenda including all employees.

On the other hand, not all respondents experienced this flexibility despite their parenting status, which then leads to the two negative sub-themes in this study, "Limited managerial trust" and "Mobile work demands". Concerning managerial trust, in general respondents from the management consulting side of the business were required to travel more and visit clients, and therefore the flexible culture was stronger. However, for some junior engineers and a few members of support functions (IT, HR and Finance) who mostly worked from the office this was not always the case. In fact, there were passages when flexibility was not communicated as a positive thing. This happened when respondents were expected to be flexible by their managers with work commitments spilling over into family time with no flexibility in return. Trust in this study was referred as an enabler to manage flexible working arrangements. However, depending on each line manager and how much they trusted their employees, the availability of flexible working varied. Kumra and Manfredi (2012) highlight some issues related to management trust and concerns related to lack of control when handling work-life balance practices. Later on in this study the manager's role is addressed in more detail.

Concerning the negative side of the requirement for "Mobile working demands", respondents felt that flexibility most benefited the employer, as business travel, for example, requires a lot of personal arrangements to accommodate this work demand. The most common case amongst respondents in the findings was associated with the requirement to travel and in some cases international assignments were also mentioned. Stahl and Bjorkman (2006) examined the implications of business travel for WLB.

> *"To a certain extent, some of the negative factors associated with international business travel (particularly family separation and incessant work demands) reflect arguments and issues raised in the broader community debate surrounding the quality of work life and the balance between work and private life"* (Stahl & Bjorkman, 2006, p. 287).

This seemed to be the case in this study as well. Joseph (age 30s), for example, is one of a few male respondents who explained the meaning of fathering as doing his share in the household. He talked about how business travel compromises his ability to deliver his share of the caring responsibilities. He commented that he usually comes back home after a long trip and gives his wife a break from looking after their three children full-time on her own. Gambles et al. (2006) described how flexibility in the workplace has been more associated with the invasiveness of paid work than helping the family-work interface. Fleetwood (2007) also raises similar concerns and highlights how flexibility can be used to benefit employers instead of improving individuals' WLB:

> *"Whilst the practices associated with WLB are inextricably linked to practices associated with flexible working, we must avoid thinking naively that some undefined set of flexible working enables WLB … Whilst some kinds of flexible working practices may enable WLB, other kinds constrain it"* (Fleetwood, 2007, p. 3).

Indeed, the need to be flexible with business travel as a requirement of their work was one of the key reasons why flexible working for male respondents meant compensation from an organisational perspective. Most respondents who travelled with work referred to travel as part of their jobs but also as one of the key hindrances to their WLB-family interface. Saarenpaa (2015) makes an association between the business traveller and the scarcity perspective which suggests that resources are limited and therefore different domains in life compete for resources, causing role stress. In the case of business travel, Saarenpaa (2015) states that this competition becomes even more problematic because travel requires more resources and ends up taking away time and energy initially allocated to family. Therefore flexible working for respondents in this study was typically seen as a strategy to adjust their private life before or after a business trip. DeFrank et al. (2000) focused more on explaining the work-family reconciliation issues and different levels of stress around business

travel and defined three typical separate stages: pre-trip, on-trip and post-trip. DeFrank et al. (2000) argue that the pre- and post-trip stages are the most stressful as they require intense family reconciliation, pre-trip making arrangements to compensate for the absence, and post-trip making up for the absence. Welch and Worm (2006) and Stahl and Bjorkman (2006) raised concerns that the on-trip stage of travel might have a negative impact too, due to family separation, long working hours and heavier workload. Consequently, it was understandable why male respondents who travelled with business in this study were associating flexible working as compensation approach for the business travel instead of being a WLB benefit or an arrangement.

As per international assignments experiences in this study, a few examples were sadly described as a disastrous experience from a family perspective and bringing a real threat of divorce. Shortland and Cummins (2007) highlight the importance of WLB policies for international mobility. This caused real issues with their partners who felt lonely and also demanded more support from the respondents to integrate into the new culture and manage the family in a different environment. This additional pressure to deliver results whilst managing increased family demands in order to integrate into a new lifestyle is one of the main causes for failure rate of international assignments (Shaffer and Harrison, 2008; Shortland and Cummins, 2007). In particular, the negative effect on their partners was clearly stated by Allan and Lewis (both age 50s). Both respondents associated their marital issues to their international career and the main reason they decided to stop pursuing international assignments. Although both respondents gave up their international careers when they were in their forties, they said that traumas caused during their international assignments had never properly healed and were still the reasons for more recent arguments between themselves and their partners.

Taking into consideration gender differences, female respondents seemed to take-up other flexible working arrangements more often than male respondents, particularly the arrangement of working from home. Lewis and Cooper (2005) highlight that flexible working maybe be more easily claimed by mothers than fathers because of their ideas of entitlement associated with traditional flexible

working practices. However, most female respondents typically did not feel that they received more favourable treatments in comparison to their male peers. Rachel (age 50s) observed that often you see male employees being flexible with their employers in terms of work demands whilst often employers tend to be flexible with working mothers in terms of their family demands. Gatrell and Cooper (2008) highlight that this flexibility towards female workers to meet family demands does not mean something positive either, as many companies accommodate mothers by placing them on the "mummy track" with reduced hours or reduction in career status (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008).

Although female respondents seemed to travel less they seemed to be even more affected by business travel. Lauren (age 30s) explains how difficult it was for her to manage childcare and business travel, not only for the time she was away but the requirement for planning in terms of childcare. But she also said that when she comes back from being away that her daughter feels unsettled for a while until she is able to establish the routine again. Westman and Etzioni (2002) suggested that women feel more stressed than men on returning from business trips, because the backlog of work at home seems to be greater for women than for men. As females' schedules tend to be already very busy with work and family (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008), extra resources to manage business travel are not available to them and reconciliation to accommodate travel becomes difficult (Westman and Etzioni, 2002).

Considering the inconsistencies between perspectives and events around flexibility, there was a mismatch between how respondents with children and those without children perceived the entitlement and practice of flexible working. Fathers felt that flexible working was more associated with an approach to all which was only possible because of the nature of their jobs in terms of professional autonomy and mobility. Conversely, respondents without children, both male and female, felt that they were left out of flexible working opportunities because they did not have children. Equally, from a male point of view it was observed that respondents who travelled the most were also the more senior respondents with children in the sample. Respondents without children were more junior and required to travel less. Consequently, it was

unclear if flexible working was communicated as a childcare benefit or if in fact it was just an unspoken work arrangement to accommodate travel.

5.3 Third Area of Analysis: Work-Life Balance Experience with Employment

5.3.0 Work and life conflict theme

In this study, respondents reported situations of work-home and home-work conflicts. Passages in this study described situations where different domains in life demanded individuals' attention usually at the same time or with equal intensity. For example, Nick (age 40s) reported that his project peaks usually clashed with Easter and Christmas when his family diary was also very busy. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) explain that work-life conflict happens when demands are conflicting for these resources of time, energy and incompatible behaviour. Frone et al. (1997a) state that role conflicts are bidirectional, which means work-family or family-work, and Kossek et al. (2012) explain that role conflict can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, which means equal or different levels of interruptions between domains. The majority of the role conflict passages in the findings were work-to-home and asymmetrical, which means male respondents experienced more work-home conflict but did not feel that home life caused strain on work.

There were situations when conflict was acceptable and was seen as part of life; in some cases it was even welcomed and other times not. Therefore findings were then grouped into four sub-themes, "Acceptable work-life conflict", "Acceptable life-work conflict", "Destructive work-life conflict" and "Destructive life-work conflict". For example, Allan (age 50) welcomed work spilling over into life because it helped him to forget about his cancer and feel fit. In this case extra resources allocated to work meant the respondent had an opportunity to forget about his worries in one part of life by getting more involved in another. Lambert (1990) uses the compensation theory to explain why some individuals work longer hours when experiencing family problems. This concept of respondents being accepting or even welcoming the conflict can be associated with the conservation of resources (COR) theory by Grandey and Cronpanzano (1999).

"Conservation of resources theory (COR) proposes that individuals seek to acquire and maintain resources. Stress is a reaction to an environment in which there is a threat of a loss of resources, an actual loss of resources or lack of an expected gain" (Grandey & Cronpanzano, 1999, p. 352).

Relating the findings to this theory, respondents were often accepting of the conflict when they were also happy to allocate unplanned resources to work because they could draw the resource back another time. For example, some respondents when did this, "lieu time" was mentioned as a resource recovery strategy. Another example were those respondents who were using work to help them to cope with problems outside work like divorce or health issues.

On the other hand, there were work-life and life-work conflicts which were conveyed in a negative way. These negative passages emerged from various situations; for example, when respondents felt forced to use extra resources to benefit work to the detriment of family, or when they felt unable to attend a family emergency because they did not feel that work would accept the request or even when they felt that family were putting unreasonable pressure or stress on them whilst they were trying to work. For example, Brandon (age 50s) commented on his daughter being born at the same time as a kick-off meeting of a project he was leading. He did not feel he could leave the meeting and since then has regretted missing the birth of his only child. Equally, Brandon also talked about his expatriate experience and how he felt that sometimes his wife did not understand the pressure he was under to perform as an international assignee and she ended up putting more pressure on him. In both cases, for Brandon this conflict was experienced in a destructive and resentful way. Cooper et al. (2001) defines role conflict as incompatible demands on the person who performs a single or multiple roles in life. Consequently, due to these incompatible demands negative emotional reactions are triggered in association with the respondent's perceived inability to be effective within their roles (Cooper *et al*., 2001). Equally, less balanced role systems can lead to stress and negative behavioural spillover (Cooper *et al*., 2001; Frone *et al*., 1997a). For example, passages describing international assignments, high levels of business travel, difficult projects and changes at work were clear examples when respondents felt that they did not have any resources left to

deal with family demands due to their own high levels of exhaustion and role-strain. The more intense employees experienced work roles, the less the chance they had to fulfil family roles.

A gendered consideration was that female respondents seemed to be more affected by inter-role conflicts than male respondents in this study. Role conflict was more asymmetrical for men than women in this study. Male respondents reported having more work-to-home conflict when compared to female respondents who experienced more symmetrical and bidirectional role conflict, work-to-home and home-to-work conflicts. This can be explained by the fact that the professional female respondents in this sample had very challenging jobs, as did their partners in some cases, and yet were heading the household duties as well. Lewis et al. (2007) explain that although women's participation in paid work has grown rapidly they still maintain close ties to their family responsibilities, including care and domestic work. Lewis et al. (2007) conclude that equality debates have been mainly focused on professional women but less on how much men in general are prepared to reduce the load of domestic and care roles from their female partners. A good example was from Julia (age 40s) who explained the friction she had with her husband when she slowly went back to her career after having a break to look after their children. She said that her job role in terms of pressure and financial contribution progressed up to the same level as her husband's but her duties at home never decreased. In fact, she was managing two full-time jobs, at home and at work. She described having endless arguments with him to get him to take over some of her load but he was very resistant. And, the relationship ended in divorce after over 20 years of marriage.

In terms of inconsistences between what male respondents say and what they actually did about their WLB, individuals who experienced inter-role conflict also often described themselves finding it hard to deploy boundary management strategies in relation to technology as they often checked their emails outside work. Naturally, without boundaries, inter-role conflict tends to happen more often (Kossek *et al*., 1999) which has a negative spillover in terms of mood and behaviour (Staines, 1980). The reasons behind the urge to check emails might

be related to strong emotional connections with work (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985) or an implied expectation to be responsive in competitive markets and global economy (Gambles *et al*., 2006). All these explanations can be associated with this study as well. For example, Allan (age 50s) mentioned having arguments with his wife about the energy and time he spends on his career compared to his family. Peter (age 50s) and George (age 40s) commented on how hard is for them to enjoy time off and holidays because they miss being active with work and knowing what is going on in the office so they still check their emails regularly. Marcus (age 50s) and Leo (age 40s) believe that client responsiveness is part of their jobs and therefore being available 24/7 online with their mobiles and laptops is what is expected from them. Equally, all the above respondents also complained about their workload and inter-role conflict.

5.3.1 Workload intensification theme

Work intensification seemed to be an issue for some respondents when it comes to WLB. As identified in the findings chapter, not all respondents communicated workload or intensity in a negative way. However, workload intensification was a predominant theme talked about throughout the interviews by those who were concerned because of its negative impact on them, which is why it generated so much data to be analysed. Burchell (2006) highlights the issues associated with work intensification like stress, psychological wellbeing and family conflict. Workload intensification meant in this study that increasing amounts of time were spent working and worrying about work. Green (2001) defines work intensification as an increased effort in terms of the time individuals put in (extensive) as well as their physical and mental input (intensive).

Findings from this theme emerged mostly from passages with negative associations which were grouped into two sub-themes, workload intensification "Triggered by organisations" or "Triggered by the individual". There were also passages where workload was communicated in a positive way and it was related to job security; these passages were grouped into a positive sub-theme named "Being busy at work". Workload intensification was seen as a good thing

when respondents associated lots of work with job security. Only a few respondents mentioned about their constant worry about not having enough work to keep their teams occupied in order to avoid restructuring, so when they were busy the fear of job loss was no longer there. There was strong association between job security and poor WLB, leading individuals to find that it is the norm to put WLB in the back seat in order to protect their employment (Gambles *et al*., 2006).

Concerning workload intensification triggered by organisations, the study identified passages associated with the nature of respondents' jobs in the international market, the need to operate across time zones, expectations of working faster and longer in order to beat the competition and additional unplanned workload as a result of ongoing restructuring and changes in business direction. These findings are aligned with issues raised by Gambles et al. (2006) concerning the invasiveness of paid work. Gambles et al. (2006) explain how businesses are driving working intensification through lean cultures and business restructures. Fleetwood (2007) highlights that work flexibility seems to benefit more employers than employees due to the extra workload individuals are expected to carry over to their home lives. Furthermore, Stam and Coleman (2010) highlight how the UK has still got one of the highest averages of weekly working hours in Europe.

> *"Downsizing and efficiency trends are also associated with an increase in perceived or actual job insecurity. This increases feeling of pressure, which can lead to a tendency to overwork while employment is available and can sometimes lead to stress and burn-out"* (Gambles *et al*., 2006, p. 49).

A male respondent described that when working remotely he felt that he needed to be seen as active at work by sending emails regularly and making phone calls (Marcus, age 50s). Gambles et al. (2006) highlight that the use of technology at work comes with the assumption that people are expected to respond to any requests immediately; when you work across time zones, this can become even more challenging because the requests are made at any time. In fact the impact of the digital world and expectations of being on-line and

off-line was a WLB issue for some respondents, particularly for the ones who struggled to switch to different roles simultaneously (Symon *et al*., 2014).

Technology was the key idea which populated the sub-theme referring to workload intensification triggered by individuals. There were passages showing work intensification generated by the respondents themselves, with ongoing cross-role interruption behaviours via the use of digital technology. For example, some respondents acknowledged that in many cases, with the access via technology, they contributed to their workload intensification because of their perfectionist attitude in terms of quality of work or simply because they find it hard to emotionally switch off. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) found that some individuals who have high standards in terms of quality of work often draw resources from other areas of life in order to meet those standards at work. For these respondents technology made it easier for them to keep working during their private times in order to deliver with their pace of work which was often slower than their peers because of their attention to details and quality. Amongst others, Peter (age 50s) and Leo (age 40s) commented on double-checking their work several times compared to their peers. Grant et al. (2013) highlight the implication of technology for boundary management, as it makes it easier for people to cross over to work during family time, which can cause family conflict.

Respondents who were aware of their contribution to their workload intensification consciously tried to implement boundaries between work and life; however, they felt it very hard to keep up with these boundaries. Symon et al., (2014) with their "digital brain switch" project have already started to address the self-monitoring element of digital presence. George (age 40s) said that he feels lethargic when he is not working, therefore during his time off it is always easier to keep the boundaries at the beginning of his time off, i.e. not switching on his laptop or not returning work calls, but then after a few days he decides to be active online. Equally once he is in the work mode he finds it hard to be patient with their children and his pace accelerates. Kossek et al., (2012) summarise three aspects of boundary management which can help understand individuals' decisions to allow cross-role interruptions: 1. cross-role interruption

behaviours, which refer to the degree to which individuals allow interruptions from one role to another; 2. identity centrality of work and family roles, which mean the identity value that individuals place in their different roles and consequently the time and energy they are prepared to invest in each role; 3. perceived boundary control, which means their control over boundary crossings. Switching role behaviours and having self-control to avoid unwanted role cross boundaries (Symon et al., 2014) seem to be more relevant for some respondents in this study than others. On the other hand, the understanding of identity centrality whilst switching from one role to another remained rather inconsistent. This is because several respondents "think and feel" that family/children are at the core of their identity role. However they "behave" in a way where work takes over even during family time. Role identity, allocation of resources and effective boundary management were not aligned in most cases in this study. Example includes negative changes in mood after voluntary reading a work email during family time (Thomas, Peter, Brandon and John, age 50s; Robert, Leo and George, age 40s and Joseph and Gus, age 30s).

Kossek et al., (2012) also highlight that boundary control perceptions can be different from interruption behaviours and identities as they are only psychological interpretations of perceived control over one's boundary systems. This also might explain why respondents in this research referred to work intensification as something they contributed to by constantly checking their work emails outside work but, at the same time, they could not stop cross-role interruption behaviours or crossing the border to work altogether. The belief of the requirement for responsiveness as part of the job as stated by Marcus (age 50s) and Leo (age 40s), for example, trigger their allowance for work-life interruptions. However, these respondents also accepted that ultimately it was their decision to work during their time off.

In terms of female considerations, when talking about work intensification, more than half of the female respondents reported having work-related illnesses which mostly were described as work-related stress. Swan and Cooper (2005) explain that the total hours spent in combined family and work responsibilities makes working mothers more vulnerable to developing stress-related illnesses.

Consequently, when there is an increase in demands from work and/or family, mothers feel either inadequate for not able to fulfil each role or they 'burn-out' in trying to accommodate the extra demands (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). In this study female respondents, including childless workers, shared passages demonstrating an ongoing increase in work which led to situations of 'burn-out' and work-related stress. Organisational downsizing and re-structuring in order to drive efficiencies was mentioned as the main reason for some female burn-outs. This was also observed by Gambles et al. (2006), as discussed previously, when employees end up working harder in order to meet their organisation's expectations in terms of efficiency by performing multiple roles due to concerns about job security.

Taking into consideration the inconsistencies between male respondents' views and actual WLB experiences, the most interesting scenario was the awareness of how much individuals felt that they had control over their workload while finding it difficult to manage boundaries. Most respondents who contributed to this theme were also aware of how work intensification was detrimental to their heath and families. Cooper et al. (2001) commented on the negative impact of workload intensification on health and families in general. Respondents also recognised that part of the intensification could be avoided by effective boundary management strategies, which included not checking their mobile devices during their time off but also keeping themselves busy and engaged with activities outside paid work. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) explain the importance of implementing physical, behavioural and psychological boundaries in order to be effective with the boundary management aimed at attaining WLB. However, a few respondents struggled to operate within their own boundaries and often referred to issues related to self-discipline and/or temptations to look at their work mobiles on holiday or in the evening, for example (Kossek *et al*., 2012). This can be related to their perception of needing to fit in with the "ideal worker" ideology associated with their commitment in terms of long hours and constant dedication to the job as suggested by Gambles et al. (2006). This is particularly the case with professionals, where extra commitment towards paid work is the norm (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). This difficulty in deploying boundary management effectively can be a genuine response to the nature of

their global work and client responsiveness (Gambles *et al*., 2006), or it can be a personal choice associated with their wish to connect with work regularly in order to reinforce their masculine identity (Gaylin, 1992). Reflecting on the argument of Kossek et al. (2012) regarding aspects of boundary management, respondents who complained about workload *allowed* work to spill over into life; most of them felt very close to their work but also to their families in terms of identity. Perhaps that is why they accepted that they should control work spillage into life although they struggled to do so. Further research on understanding the boundary management process for male workers will provide a deeper understanding concerning the level of perceived control they have over their availability in order to take a more active role with children or domestic work.

5.3.2 Gendered treatment at work theme

For this study, intergenerational influence seemed to drive more gendered treatment than the actual organisational cultures and policies. This might be a reflection of how the study was designed in terms of focusing on individuals' perspectives and exploring the meaning behind their WLB decisions. There is some evidence in this study with the themes addressing the "managers' role" and "workload intensification", for example, showed how organisations can hinder the application of WLB. However, most findings brought the issue of WLB for men to the centre of the individuals' preferences and how their beliefs are connected to the way they manage work and life and allocate time and energy to work and life outside work. Most passages referring to their current employment did not show that male respondents felt they were treated less favourably when compared to their female peers, unless they were childless. In this case, the association was related to parents and non-parents, and not gender. Equally, the fathers in this sample were also the primary breadwinners and secondary caregivers, therefore their needs and requests to make themselves available to attend family commitments were lower than the mothers who were the main caregivers (in some cases the main breadwinners and main caregivers). The breadwinner set-up and gendered division of paid and care/domestic work was communicated in a positive way by the male respondents because it was their family choice. Consequently, although

gendered treatment has a negative meaning in general, for breadwinners it was mostly classed as positive because it allowed the male respondents to focus on work and be less affected by inter-role conflict. The reason for the gender division between breadwinning and caregiving roles varied. For example, levels of income needed (usually met by the male respondents income) and practicalities (cost and time) to manage paid work in dual career households (usually after 2 children or more) were identified. As a result a positive sub-theme named "Gendered at home" was created.

On that note a key insight from this theme was connected with how much organisations can hinder or drive WLB for individuals. It became apparent that organisations might block and hinder individuals who want a better WLB and are less at their disposal, but organisations are unable to drive individuals to want a better WLB in the first place. The main gender division of labour for this population happened in the household and not in the work environment (Ferrant and Keiko, 2015). This decision typically was presented as a personal matter which connected individuals to their beliefs, influences from parents, financial circumstances and their own family set-ups. Consequently, gendered treatment was typically observed in individuals' households and less evident in the current work environment. This brings the issue back to the family dynamics and individuals' gender identities. Therefore by the time male respondents got to their employment experiences, the gendered division of unpaid work was already embedded in the way they managed their WLB. Gambles et al. (2006) explain how gendered assumptions are ingrained in individuals from birth.

> *"Assumptions about what it means to be a male or female are internalised from a very early age. Notions of masculinity and femininity become ingrained in the identities of boys and girls from the moment they are born. The first question asked when a child is born is usually whether it is a boy or a girl and this affects the ways people are related to and treat the child. The assumptions made are then reinforced but sometimes challenged through experiences and interactions across the life course"* (Gambles *et al.*, 2006, p. 76*).

A great example was from Olivia (age 40s) who was in a dual career household set-up, both with professional jobs and similar incomes, and yet she understood that her husband's career was more important than hers. She then referred to

her male peers who can work long hours because they have their wives at home getting everything ready for the family and children. Then Olivia concluded by saying that her male peers forget that she is the wife. Olivia believed that the peer pressure she experienced was not because she was a female and they were males, it was just because they were not expected to worry about home so it was not in their minds. This situation then feeds into a vicious circle: the traditional breadwinner role influences organisational gendered assumptions on how work and life are managed in a household, which then blocks the few fathers who are changing their beliefs around fatherhood and want to feel comfortable enough to display more relational and engaged fathering behaviours. Burnett et al. (2012) review fatherhood in the gendered organisation and discuss how fathers who are already changing the norms of masculinity and seeking more involvement with their children are battling with deeply ingrained presumptions of masculinity and traditional attitudes related to commitment towards work but not care.

An interesting association with this study were the findings which emerged from some respondents associating flexible working with the nature of their work in terms of autonomy and mobility but not as a strategy to accommodate childcare or housework. There is indeed a gap to be bridged in terms of sharing parenting and domestic work from an individual perspective first and foremost. This is illustrated by the Swedish case where fathers became entitled to paternity leave from the 1970s but they did not take the leave initially. Klinth (2008) commented on the need to deploy a combination of legal provisions but also campaigns to drive the ideology of fair sharing of parenting and the benefits of fathering involvement on children's development for decades. Sweden then became the reference point in Europe in suggesting that fathers spend more time with their children compared to fathers in other EU countries (Haas *et al*., 2000).

Furthermore, gendered treatment at work was hardly reported by the male respondents, they experienced less family-work conflict than female respondents; thus they were not in the position of needing WLB provisions as much as females. Equally, it is fair to say that several passages demonstrated behaviours, particularly of fathers, that challenged the idea of male high

presenteeism at work in order to be available at home and more involved with their children. These behaviours were normally well respected and to a certain degree even expected from younger fathers. An older male respondent director, when talking about gendered treatment at work, said that often the "young fathers" leave unfinished meetings to catch the train in order to be home for bath-time and to put their kids in bed; people in the office accepted this (Nick, age 40s). The major gender difference is that making the bath- and bedtime was hardly comparable with having full responsibility as primary carer by their female partners.

Concerning the negative sub-theme, respondents were asked if they felt that men and women received different treatment at work regarding WLB. Most respondents said that it was not the case but some of them, particularly non-parents, said the issue was between parents and non-parents and not between men and women. Therefore passages about the legitimisation of WLB with childcare were clustered into the negative sub-theme "Parents vs non-parents". Kumra and Manfredi (2012) discuss the idea of bringing WLB practice to all by including WLB in the diversity management (DM) agenda. Indeed, WLB and equal opportunities go beyond gender, therefore further research could emphasise the link between WLB and DM, which would contribute to making WLB less gendered. Although there is recognition that WLB becomes more an issue when you have children because of family-work conflict, as soon as studies link WLB with flexible work and childcare, the link between WLB and mothers becomes instantly the focus of the debate (Lewis and Cooper, 2005). This is because of traditional views on gender roles which then make fathers invisible (Burnett *et al*., 2012).

As per the female considerations, even females felt that men and women were treated the same in their current professional environment. However, female respondents also linked childcare responsibilities with mothers and said that, even working full-time, they are the primary carers and are responsible for arranging childcare so they themselves can work. Similarly, as with the male respondents most females did not see any difference between genders at work but they recognise the imbalance at home. Burnett et al. (2010) refer to

professional parents as "professional mother and primary carer" and "professional father and primary earner". In this study, several female professionals were both, primary caregivers and primary earners. In other words, when male and female respondents were comparing themselves with their work peers, they hardly reported gendered experiences at work. However when male and female respondents were comparing themselves with their partners, gendered division of unpaid work was often the case, even for the female primary earners.

In terms of inconsistencies this theme in particular was inflated with contradictory findings. This might be a reflection of male respondents talking about gender-neutral treatment when comparing themselves with their female peers but then talking about a gendered division of roles when comparing themselves with their female partners and their set-ups at home. Some inconsistencies with the literature review were also observed. For example, there is extensive literature covering issues around invisible fatherhood and how fathers are discouraged by employers from taking a more active role as a carer so that their commitment to work is not diminished (Burnett *et al*. 2012; Gatrell and Cooper 2008; Miller, 2011). However, most fathers in this sample did not feel invisible and did not feel the pressure caused by the requirement of "high presenteeism" which has been suggested by Lewis and Cooper (2005). In fact, only Peter and Marcus (both age 50s) mentioned about showing presenteeism and long hours in the office. Fathers in this sample typically felt that it was acceptable for them to want to be more involved with their children (Dermott, 2008; Gatrell *et al*., 2011) and leave on time from work to put their children to bed, for example.

5.3.3 Work-life balance provisions theme

In the context of this study, this theme is limited to individuals' perceptions of personal preferences in terms of WLB provisions instead of critically analysing the effectiveness or fit for purpose nature of such practices at individual and organisational level. WLB provisions were communicated as positive when dual consideration of formality and informality were taken in to account, when WLB provisions supported personal boundary management strategies or when

provisions were communicated as a wish list. In this research, although in practice flexitime (flexibility with start and end of work) and homeworking were often mentioned as practices, reduced hours was the most popular "wish" across the male population, yet it was not pursued by any of the respondents. Lewis and Humbert (2010, p. 251) commented on reduction of hours being associated with loss of income for men:

> "Men and women accept different discourses and WLB practices, which is reflected, for example, in the acceptance among women of a loss of earning while men rarely even considered it".

This raises the complexities concerning WLB provisions from a gender dimension and shows that availability of provisions alone does not make any changes. Gambles et al. (2006) highlight the importance of avoiding a quick-fix approach to WLB practice issues and instead recommend deploying multi-dimensional strategies in order to shift the WLB debate from an ideological point of view to something real and robust to support life harmonisation in modern society. To list a few strategies, this includes cultural changes at the individual level in terms of their identities with gender, work and family set-ups (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008), deployment of a combination of practices between work-life integration and separation strategies (Kossek *et al.*, 2012), improved government support, changes in organisational culture (Lewis and Humbert, 2010), managerial support (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012), flexible work designs and performance management (Rapoport *et al.*, 2002) and less work invasiveness (Gambles *et al.*, 2006). This might explain why Smeaton et al. (2014) highlight the gap between the increase in WLB provision offerings and paradoxically the decrease of individuals' take-up.

The first positive sub-theme was the "Formal versus informal" approach which highlights the importance and complexities of both approaches in order to drive WLB. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2012) refer to formal family-friendly practice as the way companies provide assistance for childcare, leave and flexible working and family-friendly informal practice as WLB values, along with unspoken norms which shape the application of WLB. In this study, from an equal opportunity point of view, formality was important to ensure individuals were receiving the same treatment. From a diversity management point of view,

informality was important to make flexibility "flexible" in order to improve fitness for purpose for each individual (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). Dex (2004) summarised WLB policies as falling into five categories: 1. flexitime schedules; 2. flexiplace or telecommuting; 3. job sharing; 4. part-time flexiplace, when the worker would be allowed to work remotely, usually from home, for a few days a week as a fixed arrangement; and 5. sabbatical or career breaks. In this study flexitime and flexiplace were often mentioned. Lewis and Humbert (2010) emphasise the concept of work-life harmonisation which accepts both integration and separation as strategies and highlight that there are many different ways to harmonise WLB strategies depending on individuals' situations. In addition, WLB provisions have been seen by companies as an attractive employment strategy with business benefits: it is important to remember that provisions should be in place to support individuals to manage work-family and not to improve business. Otherwise their purpose misses the target and work-friendly policies are reshaped to employers' advantage (Fleetwood, 2007).

Flexitime is a very popular WLB provision as it allows individuals to respond to unforeseen issues outside work, as well as to coordinate schedules with the rest of the family (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). This arrangement was common within this sample and was often described as "core hours". It was not related to reduced hours but it referred to flexibility around the start and end of the working day, or full-time hours spread across the week. Homeworking was another popular arrangement for discussion amongst respondents in the context of WLB provision. They had mixed views in terms of this type of arrangement: some respondents felt that it was helpful to support work-life integration as suggested by Kossek et al. (2006); others mentioned increased working hours, less control over work-life boundaries and issues around loneliness and poor social interaction with peers as suggested by Grant et al. (2013). Consequently, homeworking passages were grouped into a positive sub-theme named "Homeworking benefits" and a negative sub-theme named "Homeworking implications". Studies on the benefits of working from home produce mixed reactions too. Grant et al. (2013) highlight that workers who can work from home tend to display better well-being and more work satisfaction.

On the other hand, Crosbie and Moore (2004) pointed out challenges in working from home, such as reduced social contact and personal time. In many cases, therefore, working from home might represent more of a hindrance to WLB than a benefit, leading to unclear boundaries between work and home, plus family complaints about long hours (Crosbie and Moore, 2004; Grant *et al*., 2013). Peter, Ken and John (all age 50s) commented during their interviews that they tend to work longer hours if they are working from home as they do not have the commuting time to and from work and typically added this extra time to work instead of doing something else.

The third and last positive sub-theme investigated the "Preferences" of individuals in terms of WLB provisions. In addition to flexitime and homeworking, having the option to buy more holidays was popular amongst some respondents who were parents in order to accommodate school breaks. TOIL policies were used as a boundary management strategy to ensure that any time taken away from the family was compensated for at a later stage. Employee assistance programmes were also mentioned as a valuable benefit. Lockwood (2003) refers to non-statutory benefits such as employee assistance programmes, onsite childcare and WLB training as total life planning benefits which tend to be very popular amongst employees. Career breaks were mentioned by three respondents who placed great value on and showed appreciation of this benefit (Peter, age 50s, Katy, age 20s, Clifton, age 40s). All three respondents mentioned about a career breaks being one of the best experiences of their lives; they also reported returning to work feeling rejuvenated, innovative and motivated. As mentioned above, reduced hours was the most popular provision in terms of a wish list; however, no respondent from the sample had ever made such a request for reduced hours and assumed it was not possible judging by the current workload.

In terms of negative sub-themes, two sub-themes emerged. The first one addressed absent WLB ethos: there were passages where respondents commented on negative previous experiences working for managers or organisations with a poor WLB ethos. The second sub-theme as mentioned above was "Homeworking implications" and conveyed concerns respondents

demonstrated in pursuing homeworking as a regular and fixed arrangement. Poor WLB organisational culture hindering provisions were also highlighted by Lewis and Humbert (2010). Several respondents agreed that provisions alone do not work. In fact some of them, like John (age 50s) and Robert (age 40s), believed that if an organisation displayed WLB principles, managers and employees would be flexible with each other despite formal policies. Work intensification sabotaging the possibility of taking time off was mentioned by Gus (age 30s) who said that he did not see the point of having so many provisions if his workload was not allowing him to even take his statutory holiday entitlement. He also highlighted the increase in stress during the time approaching the start of a holiday and the end of a holiday. The invasiveness of work was discussed by Gambles et al. (2006) as one of the key problems to address in relation to WLB. Concerning the organisational culture and work intensification side of WLB provisions, this might also explain the gap between the increase in offerings and, paradoxically, the decrease of take-ups of WLB (Smeaton *et al*., 2014) and how WLB policies, to be effective, need to be aligned with a genuine WLB culture (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). Furthermore, in small offices it was reported that all employees were already feeling overwhelmed with work, so it was difficult to expect work colleagues to cover for each other (Gambles *et al*., 2006).

The last negative subtheme about WLB provision was related to the negative aspects of working from home. As mentioned previously, male respondents in particular talked about the risk of losing connection with their peers or decreasing opportunities for collaborating on work. Mann and Holdsworth (2003) discussed how social isolation is a problematic aspect of homeworkers. There was also a concern related to distraction, poor focus and poor boundaries between work and family increasing the risk of work-family conflict (Grant *et al*., 2013). In addition, working longer hours from home when compared to the office was commented on by a few respondents as they used the gained time from the commitment time towards work. Russell et al. (2009) also raised the concern of potential work-life imbalance caused by working from home if employees remained online the whole time at home without switching off.

From a gender point of view, two main considerations were drawn. Firstly, female respondents did not mention finding difficulty in taking the time off from work, such as holidays, and in most cases they made sure lieu time was taken very shortly after the accrual so that reconciliation could be prompt. This might be a reflection of mothers' busy schedules (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008) outside work as well and the requirement to shift their schedules around reprioritising tasks within the week without reducing the number of commitments. Secondly, most female respondents placed a great value on working from home. Wheatley (2012) mentioned women using the extra time gained from working from home to do household chores. Mothers working from home might represent it as a chance to catch up and adjust both demands from life and work (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). Integration strategy was also mentioned by most of the female respondents as the preferred style to reconcile work and life, which links well with working from home and being able to meet demands of home while working.

In terms of inconsistencies between what people say and their actual WLB experiences, the most evident one was how reduced hours were very popular and conveyed as the ideal scenario for many male respondents, yet there was no evidence of respondents pursuing this arrangement at the time the field study was carried out. They assumed it was not possible due to nature of their jobs or the volume of work. Further research on reduced hours for men could provide further understanding of the reasons underpinning their approach towards full-time work; for example, notions of masculinity, job security, actual financial reasons and notions around the ideal worker, etc. Lewis and Humbert (2010) highlight the reduction of income that might be a problem for men if they were to reduce their working hours: however in this study, the financial implications of reduced hours were hardly mentioned. Most respondents who listed reduced hours as desirable also referred to how busy their jobs were and assumed that it was not possible to apply for reduced hours without even considering their options first. Their answers were more associated with concerns around performance. John (age 50s), for example, stated that he would be worried about not being able to follow the pace of the business and losing control of his performance if he reduced his hours. This concern might

lead to other insights in terms of masculinity and notions around power and status (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008; Friedman and Greenhaus 2000). John (age 50s) also reported not experiencing any gendered treatment at work, however his attitude about reducing his hours and losing control emphasises masculine behaviours at work. Consequently, although findings have demonstrated that most respondents did not feel that male and female professionals were treated differently at work, it is insightful to question how much respondents were aware of gendered behaviours at work and how much these behaviours were driving gendered treatment without them noticing.

5.3.4 Manager's role theme

In this research the influence of line managers also seemed to play an important role in the WLB application for some respondents. Burnett et al. (2012) highlight that managers can be unsupportive or sympathetic towards WLB; they can either enable or block access to policies and practices. This seemed to be the case for this study too. Passages described different types of management style which drove or hindered the application of WLB for respondents. Lewis et al. (2007) highlight that it is part of the management role to accomplish a "dual agenda" and to reasonably accommodate individual WLB requests as a strategic decision for any organisation. Nevertheless, it was also discovered that, concerning their current employers, respondents were less influenced by their line managers when their senior leaders promoted a WLB culture and WLB policies were in place. For example, respondents often mentioned about the "company" being flexible and family-friendly. When they were asked to described what they meant about the "company". Their answers referred to senior management and some respondents also mentioned about family-friendly policies but not necessarily their line management.

Conversely, there is existing evidence demonstrating the critical role of management in ensuring successful implementation of WLB (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012), as managers have the power to support take-up of WLB initiatives, or indeed discourage employees from this. Informal policies are based on management discretion (Hyman and Summers, 2004) but even with formal policies managers appear to have direct influence on take-up in their role

as gatekeepers on employee access to WLB options (Dex and Scheibl, 1999; Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). The passages emerged from different phases in individuals' lives. Most of the extreme and negative examples were from the past; for example, passages given by Adam (age 50s) and Brandon (age 50s) were from the early 1990s but passages from Max (age 40s) came from 2008 and referred to direct line managers. These passages were associated with managerial expectations around the traditional norms of the ideal worker as described by Lewis and Humbert (2010), which were related to long hours of working and prioritisation of work over any other aspect of life.

In this data findings were grouped into four types of managers. The first two were communicated positively in relation to enabling WLB; they were "Role models" and "Result-driven" managers. The last two were communicated negatively and were associated with hindering and blocking WLB; they were "Inconsiderate" and "Workaholic" managers. Hammer et al. (2009) described supportive managerial behaviours in four dimensions: emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling behaviours, and creative work-life management. Emotional support means managerial empathy towards subordinates' WLB. Instrumental support happens when managers act on subordinates' work-life needs on a regular basis. Modelling behaviours is when a manager leads by example in demonstrating how to balance their work-life behaviours. The last dimension is creative work-life management which means managerial initiative towards proactively creating new ways to ensure subordinates will be effective with their WLB. In this research the role model type of manager typically encompassed the positive behaviours towards WLB (Hammer *et al*., 2009). For example, one of the businesses was led by a widower father who was able to empathise with the challenges of working full-time while raising children but also led by example and hardly worked after office hours. However, the "Result-driven" manager did not fit with any of the behaviours above. This was because this type of manager was necessarily in favour of or against WLB initiatives. They were only concerned with the final delivery of the work and left it to employees to decide how they managed WLB. This type of manager used to give higher levels of autonomy to their employees when compared to the other managers. This extra autonomy was what had the

positive meaning in the passages. For example Clifton (age 40s) and Ben (age 30s) explained how much they appreciated the high level of autonomy they had over their time in relation to others. Equally, they understood from their line manager that it was their sole responsibility to address any personal issues to make sure work was never compromised otherwise their work autonomy would be no longer available to them.

On the other hand, the negative sub-themes emerged from experiences with managerial unsupportive behaviours towards WLB: this varied from managers being inconsiderate to managers accommodating but then not leading by example by working very long hours themselves. Clifton (age 40s), for example, mentioned that he was worried about the well-being of his manager as he regularly observes him working long hours. There are various factors which might justify these unsupportive behaviours, including perceived administration burden (Visser and Williams, 2007), perceived costs, lack of training including knowledge of statutory policies, lack of control, managers overlooking their own WLB needs (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012) and failure to buy into the concept (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012; Lockwood, 2003). Consequently WLB behaviours and competencies vary from one manager to another contributing to employees within the same organisation experiencing different levels of WLB entitlements.

From a gender point of view, the role of the manager seemed to affect male and female respondents but in different ways. For example, Rachel (age 50s) described that in the 1990s when she started working full-time it was assumed by her manager that she was prepared to prioritise work over childcare. Lauren (age 30s) stated that when she was pregnant with her daughter, she was the one who needed to print out her rights to discuss with her manager. She accepted that she was the only woman in the office and therefore her line manager and peers were not aware of any entitlements or how to deal with the situation. However, the most extreme examples of very unreasonable managerial behaviours towards WLB were given by male respondents. For example, Max (age 40s) was expected to travel over the weekend to entertain his boss back in 2008 whilst his wife was welcoming their adopted children into the house for the first time on a permanent basis; Adam (age 50s) was denied

time off to take his wife to hospital for chemotherapy; Brandon was demoted, losing his job to a single female professional who was happy to work 12 hours plus per day as expected by his line manager at the time. Burnett et al. (2012) highlight that the implementation of WLB policies can be influenced by managerial blockage, in particular for fathers who remain invisible as a beneficiary. As mentioned previously, this was not evident amongst most respondents in their current employment up until the point of the interviews. However, there was some evidence, particularly from experiences in the 1990s (Adam and Brandon, age 50s) and one from 2008 (Max, age 40s), where these respondents suffered from management blockage and gendered treatment. Although respondents did not report experiencing gendered expectation at work with their current employer, it became clear that for some respondents it was very much the case with previous employers.

Concerning the inconsistencies in the data between views and experiences around the role of the manager in the application of WLB, peer pressure seemed to be more problematic than managerial behaviours. Beauregard and Henry (2009) and Frone et al. (1997b) highlight that peer support also influences employees' work-life balance and can help or hinder one's competing demands between work and life outside work. Burnett et al. (2012) highlight the importance of peers in supporting WLB and stated in their study that many fathers who were working flexibly experienced prejudice from fellow workers and even felt like "second-class" workers. They conclude that peers' attitudes strongly influence the traditional breadwinner model. This might be a reflection of respondents working for the "business-driven manager" type and self-managed teams. In some cases, respondents were expected to deal with their peers directly to sort out cover for themselves and they felt uncomfortable with it. However, it was not possible to draw clearer insights in terms of how much peer pressure was triggered by gender expectations or if it was the increased workload caused by the re-distribution of the absentee's responsibilities.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed and analysed the findings of this research in comparison with existing literature on WLB with emphasis on the male

perspective. Similarities and differences between this study and previous ones were highlighted. Findings were also contrasted not only between data generated by the same respondents in terms of their WLB perspectives and actual events but also as a group and between different areas of analysis. Additionally, in alignment with the objectives of this study which is expanding the knowledge of WLB from the male perspective, this chapter analysed a variety of themes and provided direction for future research on WLB, particularly when a gap between the findings and literature arose.

The figure 5.0 (Summary of Key Analytical Constructs) provides a summary of the key analysis from the findings and literature review. Original contribution is presented in italic.

Figure 5.0 Summary of Analytical Constructs

First Area Individuals' Perspectives	Second Area Work-life Interface and Reconciliation	Third Area WLB Experience with Employment
1. Changes in masculinity (Huffman et al., 2014). Particularly around fatherhood, good father as being involved (Miller, 2011; Gatrell, 2012) and breadwinning no longer central to fatherhood (Dermott, 2008); 2. Role identity for men is family and children. Most satisfaction in life from meaningful relationships with loved ones (Vaillant, 2012); 3. Role identity theory suggests that individuals allocate resources to their most important roles (Stryker and Serge, 1982). *However work (not the central role) is prioritised conditionally which causes regret;* 4. Strong intergenerational masculinity still influencing gender division of unpaid work and male prioritisation of paid work (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006); 5. *Life changing events regulated WLB benefiting family over work with WLB habits by introducing WLB habits;* 6. *Potential to explore neuroscience of habits and WLB.*	1. *Personal characteristics influenced WLB interface and reconciliation as much as gender* (Koubova, 2013); 2. Technology & remote work, blurred boundaries (Grant *et al.*, 2014); 3. *Work-life balance for males is more about performance in their masculine roles and for females is more about balance.* Large part of female population reported suffering from work-related stress; 4. *Physical exercise was used to enhance performance in all areas of life and was associated with satisfactory WLB;* 5. Flexibility for male respondents meant compensation for work demands and for female meant necessity for childcare and domestic chores (Emphasises gender division of work); 6. Childcare still primary responsibility for women, even female breadwinners (Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Burnett *et al.*, 2010) (Emphasises gender).	1. Technology poses particular issues to WLB due to simultaneous roles switches and self-control to avoid checking mobile devices (Symon *et al.*, 2014). This links back to personal characteristics; 2. Homeworking was more popular amongst females to meet family demands Grant *et al.,* 2014); 3. *Some personality traits made worse work intensification;* 4. Gendered treatment more associated with family set-ups than workplace culture. WLB Organisations cannot drive meaningful WLB changes alone; 5. Children legitimised WLB more than gender in the workplace (Murphy and Doherty, 2011). Non-fathers felt left out, WLB for all (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012); 6. Peers influenced WLB negatively (Beauregard and Henry; 2009; Burnett *et al.*, 2012) more than management (Hammer *et al.*, 2009).

First Area of Analysis: Individuals' perspectives

This first area provided further insights into understanding beliefs and motivations behind how male respondents manage and influence their WLB. It was observed that the role identity (Stryker and Serpe, 1982) for the male respondents was described as family, particularly the role as a father. Although respondents were professionals who in most cases felt connected with their professions, paid work was more instrumental and less meaningful than family (Dermott, 2008). However, the allocation of resources in terms of time and energy did not reflect their family centrality role and paid work was often prioritised (Huffman et al., 2014). This mismatch impacted negatively on male's WLB (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011) which caused negative emotions like regret. Potential influences contributing to this mismatch were discussed and traditional gender roles, particularly passed through intergenerational influence were observed (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006). Habitual behaviours which were not aligned with priorities in life were also discussed as a possibility for further exploration (Schwartz and Gladding, 2011). Life changing events, like divorce and death, seemed to influence WLB in favour of family roles by promoting extra allocation of personal resources toward this domain.

The most relevant female consideration was that female respondents mostly reported experiences of guilt (judgment of right and wrong) instead of regret (loss of opportunity) (Tudor and Proeve, 2010). Equally their role identity and allocation of resources were more aligned than the male respondents. In terms of Conservation of Resources Theory (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999) female respondents experienced guilt when they were expected to use family resources to meet work demands but they did not experience guilt when they were expected to use work resources to meet a family demands. The main scrutiny which has been draw from this first area of analysis was the fact that role identity and allocation of resources were not aligned which is the appositive from what has been suggested by several WLB studies (Bagger *et al.*, 2014; Greenhaus and Allen, 2011; Kossek *et al.*, 2012) and the role identity theory (Stryker and Serpe, 1982).

Second Area of Analysis: Work-Life Interface and Reconciliation

Analysis from this area was mainly focused on contrasting findings from what respondents said in terms of their ideas and thoughts in the first area of analysis with their actual preferences and behaviours towards managing WLB. The first theme covered reconciliation and coping strategies which varied from integrated to separated boundary management strategies which were aligned to individuals' family set-ups and preferences (Gambles *et al*., 2006). However, the success of these boundaries was more related to personalities than the strategies themselves (Koubova, 2013). In addition, the act of technology on WLB was discussed, mostly in the context of remote work (Grant *et al*,, 2014) and issues like blurred boundaries (Grant *et al*.,2014), increased work invasiveness (Gambles *et al*., 2006) and speed of simultaneous switches between roles (Symon *et al*., 2014) were highlighted. Physical exercise was observed as a strategy to cope with stress and improve performance in general. Most respondents who exercised regularly reported having better WLB in general and feeling less stress about work. Lastly the childcare and flexible working themes illustrated males' limited involvement with childcare even for those in dual-career households. Gendered division of labour seemed to start at home and several gender gaps were raised, such as care, leisure and domestic work (Ferrant and Keiko, 2015). Female partners were the primary carers in the household and male respondents mostly referred to their contribution as filling the gaps (Miller, 2011). Furthermore, flexible working was more associated with the mobile nature of the role and organisational requirements than family-friendly arrangements (Gambles, 2006). WLB issues with business travel (Saarenpaa, 2015), international assignment (Makela and Suutari, 2015) and operating across different time zones (Gambles, 2006) were raised as WLB hinders in the context of international professional services. Consequently, flexible work arrangements when benefiting the employees were more associated with a compensation strategy for such environment.

From a gender perspective female respondents who had children mostly allocated any extra resources to family and household chores, they also found it hard to find the time to exercise and were the primary carers even though in

some they were also the main breadwinners (Lewis, *et al*., 2007; Murphy and Doherty, 2011). This area of analysis emphasised the domestic and childcare gender gap (Murphy and Doherty, 2011). This combined with the use of exercise by males to enhance performance in all areas of life, brought further insights on how WLB for women is about *balancing* and for men is about *performing*, which links back to traditional gender roles (Burnett *et al*., 2010; Lewis and Humber, 2010).

Third Area of Analysis: WLB Experiences with Employment

This area of analysis mostly covered the influence of employers on respondents' WLB experiences. In general, male respondents reported experiencing work-to-home conflict as opposed to home-to-work conflict (Greenhaus and Beautell, 1985). Several respondents highlighted their own contribution to work intensification which was usually associated with their personal characteristics like drive for quality (Somech and Drach-Zahavy ,2007) or self-control to keep on and off-line and in the digital world (Symon et al., 2014). In terms of WLB policies, preferences were varied and homeworking was often mentioned in association with the impact of technology on WLB. Opinions about homeworking were mixed in terms of how much this arrangement can benefit or hinder WLB (Grant *et al*., 2013).

As per gender, organisational gendered treatments were mostly observed from experiences with previous employers. However, the difference in treatment was more addressed between employees with children and without children (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012) indicating that children legitimise WLB policies (Murphy and Doherty, 2011). WLB organisational culture was often highlighted as the enabler of any policies and management role was discussed (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). More extreme negative experiences with line managers around the WLB topic was from decades ago and peer pressure seemed to influence more some respondents WLB experiences with employment than actual line managers (Beauregard and Henry; 2009; Burnett *et al*., 2012). From a gender point of view most female respondents did not report any gender treatment at work either. However, they reported a gendered division of unpaid work which was uneven and the source of most inter-role conflict for them and

stress (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008). Female respondents, much more often than males, also referred to homeworking as an opportunity to get on with family demands as well as work. Consequently work-to-home and home-to work conflict were observed with female respondents. While most male respondents reported role identity dissatisfaction and confusion in connection with employment, female respondents mostly reported roles exhaustion due to accepted labour inequality at home ("*I am the wife*!" by Olivia, age 40s). This area highlights that gender inequality started at home and that WLB organisational culture cannot drive meaningful WLB changes alone.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.0 Chapter Introduction

This chapter revises the research question and highlights the specific contributions to knowledge which have been drawn from the findings, analysis and literature. In addition, based on the knowledge developed during the study, it provides recommendations for practitioners, individuals and organisations on how to enable employees to have a better work-life balance. Reflections on opportunities for further explorations are discussed particularly when there is a gap between the literature review and the findings. Equally, this chapter outlines the limitations which should be taken into consideration when approaching the contributions to knowledge. Furthermore, a short research journal is shared, raising some challenges and developments the researcher experienced throughout the study whilst managing full-time employment and motherhood and some form of WLB.

6.1 Contributions to Knowledge

This study raised a query about why WLB from the male perspective has been under-researched when compared to the robust literature on WLB for women. This query evolved into the research question:

How do *male professionals think, behave and feel about WLB?*

In order to answer this question the following aim was outlined:

"To contribute new knowledge to the WLB debate, specifically on male professionals' perspectives, and to develop a practical contribution by identifying approaches supporting individuals in achieving WLB".

The contribution to knowledge is the expansion of the understanding of how men perceive and experience work-life balance by investigating three areas of exploration. The first area focuses on understanding respondents' meanings and thoughts on work and the rest of life. The second area aims to capture their actual experiences and behaviours towards WLB. The third area explores their WLB experiences in connection with their employment. By having these three areas of analysis and by separating sub-themes into positive and negative

meanings, this study provided 14 themes and 56 sub-themes which have contributed to the understanding of how male professionals think, behave and feel towards their WLB and any mismatches between them.

Overall, in answer to the research question and aim, this research has suggested the following:

The following table 6.0 (The Research Question Key Contributions) provides an illustration of the most predominant findings. The constructs from all three areas of analysis have now merged into one line of inquiry towards answering the research question (RQ). It starts by summarising the context of this research and why a male perspective was taken as opposed to a gender-neutral approach. Then it follows with a summary of the key gaps in the existing WLB literature which the RQ has tried to tackle. It also brings together the elements of the RQ (think, behave and feel) in the context of existing literature, findings from this study and final interpretations aimed at answering the RQ. Lastly, it recalls the context of this inquiry so transferability and recommendations can be considered.

Table 6.0 The Research Question and Key Contributions

Context
WLB strongly influenced by traditional gender norms in relation to the division of paid and unpaid work (Burnett *et al*., 2012; Ferrant and Keiko, 2015); Poor WLB and implications for gender equality (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012) and WLB dissatisfaction of contemporary fathers (Dermott, 2008; Gatrell *et al*., 2012); Requirement for a more equitable sharing of parenting and domestic chores between men and women (Gamble *et al*., 2006; Lewis and Humbert, 2010); Rooted hegemonic masculinity at work and at home hindering WLB policy and practice (Burnett *et al*., 2012).

Gaps
Robust literature on WLB for women but not for men (Gaborit, 2007; Gatrell *et al*., 2011); WLB employment offerings increasing but take-ups decreasing, particularly for men (Smeaton, 2012); Gap between strong willingness from men to get more involved at home and what actually happens (Dermott, 2008; Miller, 2011); Further understanding from the male perspective is needed to promote the WLB shared ideology between genders (Burnett *et al*., 2012; Haas and Hwang, 2008).

Research question (RQ)
How do male professionals think, behave and feel about WLB?

RQ	Key Existing Literature	Research Findings	Answer to RQ
Think	Paid work is still role centrality for men (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). However, breadwinning is no longer central to fatherhood (Dermott, 2008) and contemporary fathers expect to be more involved (Gatrell *et al*., 2012).	Family was role centrality for most male with emphasis on fatherhood. Work was not a priority in life and rarely associated with identity.	Inadequate performance at home particularly in respect of fathering.
Behave	There is an alignment between allocation of personal resources (time and energy) and most important roles in life (Greenhaus and Allen, 2012; Stryker and Serpe; 1982). There is a gap between willingness of fathers to be more involved and what happens in practice (Miller, 2011). Dermott (2008) refers to this as the paradox between culture and conduct. Anticipate regret can regulate WLB decisions (Bagger *et al*., 2012).	Male behaviour is to prioritise work although it is no longer their role centrality. There is little alignment between allocation of resources and role centrality. Allocation of resources happens conditionally, without thinking. Male respondents did not anticipate WLB regret. Some acknowledged work prioritisation influence from their fathers but as a negative.	Work prioritisation happens like a habit which causes misalignment between think and behave. This is causing negative feelings for men like WLB dissatisfaction and regret.
Feel	Slow pace of transition between traditional and contemporary fatherhood (Huffman*, et al.* 2014; Miller, 2011). Intergenerational masculinity transmitted from fathers to sons (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006). Most men feel happy with the involvement with their children when compared to their own fathers (Dermott, 2006).	Several male respondents saw their fathers as a negative role model for fathering. Several respondents wanted to be better dads and some tried to compensate their father's shortfalls with their own children. Think and feel very much shifted to contemporary masculinity	Men experience regret and dissatisfaction with their WLB. There are WLB implications for men in the wider context of their wellbeing.

Transferability
This research has taken a person-centred approach. Consequently, findings will be more associated with individuals' accountability for their WLB. Respondents were recruited from different offices in the UK from the same Professional Service Firm which was a listed company with a male dominated culture. Respondents were heterosexual professionals from the engineering and management consulting fields. The research was conducted by a practitioner-researcher therefore it is critical to consider reflexivity in this inquiry as an integral part of the theorising of WLB.

In alignment with the existing literature, most male professionals tend to *think* that family, which includes their partners, and/or fatherhood are the most important roles in life, placing these roles in the centre of their lives. This finding follows the same line of inquiry of the longest study on men (The Harvard Study) which has shown that meaningful relationships are the most important factor for fulfilled lives (Vaillant, 2012). Although most male respondents were breadwinners, financial providing was not central to fatherhood in many cases (Dermott, 2008). Although the role identity theory explains how individuals tend to allocate recourses to the most important roles in life (Stryker & Serpe, 1982), this was not the case in this study. Male *behaviour* is to prioritise work over family by drawing resources from family to allocate extra time and energy to work. This allocation of extra resources from family to work triggers males' dissatisfaction of their most important roles in life and has negative effects on male's WLB (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011) and wellbeing (Bagger *et al.*, 2012). This finding is aligned with the paradox between culture and conduct raised by Dermott (2008) which captures the transition between traditional and contemporary fatherhood. The key contribution to knowledge emerged from the understanding that they tend to prioritise work over family conditionally. Although this study has observed that notions of masculinity are under re-construction (Huffman, *et al.*, 2014), this conditional behaviour towards paid work was very much aligned with intergenerational masculinity transmitted from fathers to sons (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006). In most cases professional male respondents were copying their fathers by treating paid work as their priority in life. However, they also acknowledged that the meaning and the order of their work and family roles were very different when compared to their fathers. Consequently, further intergenerational transmission of masculinity studies might help to explain this mismatch and the slow pace of men embracing their new roles in contemporary society.

This study highlights that this misalignment between how males *think* and *behave* prompts negative *feelings* like regret. Male respondents typically experience regret because they miss out on precious time doing what matters the most to them. However, in their conditional mode, they never anticipate the regret in order to adjust their WLB decisions to their priorities in life (Bagger *et*

al., 2012). Equally, some life changing events, like divorce or death, seem to fundamentally prompt WLB adjustments and develop new WLB habits in favouring family and friends over paid work. The positive impact of some life changing events on WLB is another contribution to knowledge in this study. In addition, there is potential for further studies linking the neuroscience of habits (Schwartz and Gladding, 2011) and WLB in order to explore insights on how to develop and maintain effective WLB habits and sustainable changes.

From the female respondents' perspective in this study, their family role identity and allocation of resources were more aligned. In addition, however, guilt was often communicated by females instead of using regret. The guilt emotion might bring a judgmental element of right and wrong to WLB decisions instead of only the loss of opportunity, aspect associated with regret (Tudor and Proeve, 2010). Reflecting on the Conservation of Resources Theory (Grandey and Cropanzano, 1999) female respondents did not experience guilt for re-allocating resources initially allocated to work to meet family needs but they did experience negative emotions when the opposite happened. Equally, most male respondents, who were also the main breadwinners in this sample, barely experienced extra demands from family to divert resources initially allocated to work.

Another female consideration which was drawn from this study as new contribution to knowledge is how some male respondents, as opposed to females, have consciously used regular physical exercise to enhance their performance and feel better about their work-life balance. Although females recognised the importance of exercise to their health, they also struggled to find the time and treated exercise as leisure which did not fit in with their busy family and working lives. As such, this study has confirmed the caregiving and leisure gaps in the household (Ferrant and Keiko, 2015) and the division of unpaid work remaining gendered, even for dual career households (Lewis and Humbert, 2010; Burnett *et al*., 2010). This emphasises another contribution to knowledge which is how WLB from the female perspective is about *balancing* and surviving high demands from home (caregiving and domestic chores) and paid work (Gatrell and Cooper, 2008), whilst WLB from the male perspective is

about *performing* well in their masculine roles at work and as a father. However, as discussed above, the understanding of being the 'ideal father' has changed and it is becoming more a relational than a provider role (Dermott, 2008 and Miller, 2011) and such expectations are clashing with the resources (time and energy) required to be the 'ideal worker' too (Burnett *et al*., 2012).

From an international professional environment perspective, as highlighted previously, gendered and traditional masculine values towards paid work seemed to arise more often from male respondents' intergenerational experiences than their work environments. Differentiated treatments at work were more associated with childcare legitimation (Murphy and Doherty, 2011) than gender (Burnett, *et al*., 2012). Most non-fathers admitted to feeling left out and claimed that WLB provisions should be available for all (Kumra and Manfredi, 2012). However, fathers' entitlement and use of WLB benefits were more associated with arrangements to compensate for the WLB negative aspects of the nature of international and mobile work. These aspects include operating in different time zones, business travel and in some cases international assignments (Gambles *et al*., 2006; Makela and Suutari, 2015) and it was not associated with the need to meet caregiving and domestic responsibilities.

Furthermore, in terms of experiences and preferences for managing the WLB interface and reconciliation, personal characteristics seem to impact on WLB negatively (including work intensification) as much as gender roles. This not only poses a new contribution to knowledge but also highlights the possibility of further studies to examine how different personality types can effectively manage WLB. Equally, work intensification in the international professional environment was also observed with the technology as the main platform for work (Gambles *et al*., 2006). Mixed views on the benefits and implications of technology in the professional environment also seemed to be influenced by personal characteristics. The first view emerged from more adaptable professionals who appreciated autonomy and ability to decide on the place and time to work for most of the time and how technology allowed this simultaneous performance of work and family roles. The second view mostly emerged from

worriers who struggled to switch between roles or had limited self-control to stop themselves from checking work mobile devices during their family time (Symon et al., 2014).

6.2 Recommendations for Individuals, HRM Practitioners and Management

As result of the findings and conclusions of this study, recommendations can be made for individuals who are interested in improving their WLB, HRM practitioners and management. It is important to highlight that the design of this study was not aimed at demonstrating the benefits of WLB for organisations. There are other studies which can make recommendations to HR practitioners and management on how to get the buy-in from stakeholders to drive the application of WLB in the organisation. The recommendations from this study are aimed at organisations which are concerned with being effective when developing WLB culture and practice. Furthermore, full appreciation of the context of this research is needed when analysing transferability. This includes the profile of the sample and the role of reflexivity in this practitioner-researcher inquiry.

First and foremost, the findings from the study indicate that the application of WLB is strongly influenced by gender experiences at the individual's level. Consequently, offering gender-neutral beliefs will be mostly limited to individuals who have gender- neutral policies and family set-ups. Although sense of entitlement was important for some male respondents, this was not the deciding factor for taking up WLB policies and practice. Therefore, unless a more active role driving WLB is adopted by organisations and management, a WLB practice will be restricted to individuals who already believe and benefit from WLB but it will not drive a WLB culture. Furthermore, this study highlights some specific areas for consideration when designing a WLB initiative and developing a WLB culture. Some considerations are gender-neutral, and others attempt to tackle the gendered application of WLB.

Alignment between allocation of resources and life priorities

This investigation showed that although there is an understanding in the WLB literature that individuals tend to allocate resources based on their role identity, from the male perspective it was not always the case. This mismatch between priorities in life and allocation of resources had a negative impact on WLB from the male perspective and compromised their wellbeing by triggering feelings of regret and dissatisfaction. An ongoing reflection, assessment and adjustment of life priorities and allocation of resources can help individuals to regulate their WLB and pursue more fulfilling experiences throughout the life course.

WLB boundary management strategies training

This study has shown that understanding and deploying effective boundary management strategies can make a real difference in the application of WLB. In fact, WLB policies can benefit from being shaped by individuals' boundary strategies and not the other way around. Equally, individuals can benefit from understanding a variety of boundary management techniques whilst learning and empathising with each other in terms of what works and what does not work for them. Furthermore, intelligence gathered from this type of initiative can inform further WLB policymaking within organisations.

Senior management support visibility

This study suggests that it is crucial to have senior management leading WLB from the top. There was evidence that when senior managers are role models, line managers typically cannot block WLB even when they do not believe or want WLB for themselves. However, it is important to make this senior management support visible. Passages demonstrating senior managers being open about WLB, leaving the office on time or questioning employees who were working beyond office hours had a positive impact on some male respondents from this study.

Deployment of a variety of WLB policies and practices

Evidence showed that there are several factors influencing how male respondents experience WLB, which included not only their gender beliefs but also their personalities. This complexity has shown several ways to attain WLB, including separate and integrated boundary management strategies, formal and informal approaches, and individual-led or entitlement-led practices. Consequently, the proposition should reflect this complexity by offering a variety of formal policies, welcome individuals' specific requirements and practice supporting in general integrated but also separated boundary management strategies. In addition, WLB should recognise the challenges of managing full-time employment and childcare without dismissing the benefits and importance of WLB for all.

Paternity leave enhancement

The issue regarding statutory paternity leave rights was raised in this study as well as poor interaction between fathers and babies. Organisations might help to enhance the early attachment between fathers and babies by increasing the length and pay of paternity leave entitlements which should be additional to the shared parental leave. This is because some families will not be able to benefit from shared parental leave (including most of the families from this sample, where men were the main breadwinners) and therefore financially it is not feasible. Furthermore, early experiences with their babies might contribute to setting up the foundations for better male participation in childcare.

Line management involvement and training on the application of WLB

This research is suggesting that line managers alone have limited influence to block WLB if the culture driven by senior managers is in place. However, there are various behaviours and skills which can help to drive the WLB culture where line managers play an active role. As part of a WLB cultural proposition, line managers should be skilled in a variety of WLB competencies. To list a few, they should be trained on understanding and applying WLB legal frameworks and formal policies, handling bespoke requests, managing performance

remotely, coaching boundary management strategies and benefits of WLB, producing creative WLB solutions and promoting well-being.

WLB as part of the diversity agenda

This study has shown that non-parents felt that childcare legitimised WLB. Although childcare will always have a close connection to the need of WLB and is the main driver for WLB statutory provisions, the WLB proposition in an organisation can be more effective in driving a WLB culture for all. This can also support breadwinners without primary childcare responsibilities to be more available at home in order to take on their fair share of unpaid work.

Contemporary fatherhood considerations embedded in the equality strategy

One of the key insights from this study was a reflection on the Swedish case and how it was possible to shift the breadwinner mentally by promoting an ideology of a shared parenting between men and women. This has been achieved by decades of work since the 1970s; however, the turning point happened when campaigns started targeting fathers personally by communicating the benefits to children when exposed to close fathering presence. Organisations could benefit from controlling working hours between men and women and use contemporary fatherhood campaigns to support the reduction of average working hours of their male population and at the same time encourage women to let go the primary childcare responsibility.

Analysis of WLB formal policies statistics

There is a gap which has been highlighted in this study between the number of offerings of WLB formal policies and the actual take-ups. This research is suggesting that this might be the case because ultimately individuals' beliefs and family set-ups will establish their application of WLB and not their sense of entitlement. Consequently, continued investigation of inconsistencies between organisational WLB strategy and practice can inform further policy making and ongoing adjustments.

Work invasiveness awareness and control

There was evidence showing that some requirements from paid work can be very intrusive on individuals' private lives. In the context of international professional firms, different time zone, project deadlines, client-focused culture and requirements for mobility all aggravated work invasiveness. Business travel was often referred to as the main barrier to WLB. Depending on the nature of the business, removing WLB-aggravating factors is just not possible. However, organisations must account for those and try to compensate employees to re-allocate resources initially drawn from their private lives. For example, there should be in place formal work mobility policies highlighting interventions like accrual of time off in lieu, travel risk assessments, support for international assignments and travellers' community space for group support and intelligence gathering in terms of WLB issues related to professional mobility. Equally, whenever possible, organisations should take an active role in trying to minimise work interruption to private life; for example, monitoring volume of emails over the weekend, launching campaigns to reduce the number of emails, or encouraging employees to travel during working hours.

Close ties to work-related stress issues

This research also suggests that work-related illnesses were a real issue amongst the female respondents because of their demanding professional and family responsibilities. It is also suggested that work invasiveness does not help individuals who struggle to deploy effective boundary management strategies between work and the rest of life. Consequently, there might be issues which are not visible to management until it becomes too late whilst individuals are still working. Work-stress awareness campaigns, adding the subject to performance reviews and addressing this topic in employee surveys, for example, might help to keep the problem visible so appropriate actions can be taken.

Physical exercise awareness campaigns

It was evident in this study that there was an association between regular physical exercise and immediate positive impact on workload management and

performance improvement for male respondents. In this context, physical exercise not only can benefit individuals but may also have a direct impact on an organisation's performance. Initiatives keeping the workforce active and physically fit might promote quick and visible results to support the WLB culture whilst promoting a direct impact on an organisation's performance.

6.3 Suggestions for Further Research

In light of the design of this research which aimed at expanding knowledge in terms of a variety of possibilities to be considered in relation to WLB from the male perspective, the research question was general and not specific to a particular element of WLB. Consequently, the findings have contributed to highlight some areas in which additional exploration within a more specific design can lead to further knowledge of WLB from the male perspective and to the application of WLB in general.

The influence of intergenerational experiences on WLB

Further research on the influence of intergenerational experiences can facilitate the understanding of a variety and complexity of fathering behaviours, masculinities and fatherhood without automatically falling back to gendered assumptions of masculinity and gendered organisation evidence. In fact, this study showed that intergenerational influences impacted more on individuals' WLB than actual employment experiences. However, intergenerational continuity was not always the case. The influence of fathers on sons worked in some cases as negative role models, driving respondents to transform the relationship with their own children. Deep understanding of experiences where intergenerational experiences were transformed can contribute to further understanding of WLB from the male perspective.

The influence of personal characteristics on WLB

This study explored how personal characteristics might influence the selection and deployment of effective boundary management strategies. Further studies examining the application of WLB for different personality traits for example might provide insightful contribution for individuals and practitioner who are

interested in practical tactics and strategies to enhance WLB which can be tailored to each personality type and suitable preferences.

Neuroscience of habits and changing WLB habits

The research adopted a critical realist approach to interview which is concerned with exploring the gaps between individuals' perspectives and actual events, WLB habits were found often in contradiction in individuals' thoughts and views on what they felt that they needed and what they believed to be good for them. Equally, the research also highlighted helpful habits like regular exercise, for example, which enhanced individuals' WLB experiences. The neuroscience of habits (Schwartz and Gladding, 2011) can provide practical contributions to individuals and practitioners who are concerned with making positives changes towards the application of WLB.

The emotional implications of contemporary fatherhood (effects on health of feeling regrets)

This research outlined the evidence of several male respondents experiencing feelings of regret in the context of fathering. Although there is evidence exploring the dilemmas of working fathers and issues related to "daddy stress" by Levine and Pittinsky (1997) or the invisibility of the paternal role by Burnett et al. (2012), further studies on contemporary fathers' mental health is required. The shift on role expectations, notions of masculinities and family pressures for more relational fathering have an impact on fathers' mental health and functionality. Further exploration can support practitioners to further understand fathering-related stress and depression.

Physical exercise as performance booster and WLB enabler

This study linked physical exercise to enhanced WLB. The robust evidence of the benefits of physical exercise on mental and physical health can provide further insight on the application of WLB. Physical exercise was not part of the literature review; however, it was mentioned by several male respondents as a substantial performance booster and WLB enabler. There is an opportunity to

back up even further the debate in encouraging individuals to be more active by associating work-life performance and WLB with physical exercise.

More specific and focused studies on WLB male experiences

As the evidence on WLB from the male perspective has been under-represented when compared to the solid body of research on women, this study aimed to provide general contributions and potential areas for further exploration. For example, in this study it became apparent that whilst WLB for most female respondents was a matter of *balancing* priorities in life for the male respondents was about *performing* well in life. However, as the research on the WLB male perspective grows, there is a requirement for more specific investigations to further explore the "whats" and "hows" of WLB in practice for men. Consequently, by understanding the phenomenon more specifically, the contribution can help to validate and cover further gaps in the knowledge. For example, studies specifically investigating male employees who have shared maternity leave with their partners can provide details of men in action experiencing contemporary fatherhood. By understanding males who actually have taken this provision, for example, evidence can also provide answers to questions of what is stopping men taking up more WLB provisions. Equally, it helps to understand the lived benefits and implications of this phenomenon. Furthermore since most recent legislative updates in terms of shared paternal leave, further research exploring how much this new piece of legislation is in fact promoting changes and levels of take-ups can support further development in this field.

6.4 Research Limitations

As highlighted in the methodology chapter, there are some limitations to this study in terms of the nature of the context of this inquiry. Overall, whilst the choice of a broad research question made sense at the outset subsequent developments in the discourse have filled some of the original gaps. The early methodological choices associated with interviews as the sole methodological approach served as a constraint during the latter stages of the study when it came to providing in- depth theorizing of WLB for men. This created difficulty in

distinguishing how much of the knowledge constructed during the interview was derived from the interviewee and how much from the interviewer (Kvale, 1996; Ritchie *et al*., 2014). However, due to the generic nature of the research question and the critical realist philosophical position, interviews were still deemed the most appropriate approach to developing an understanding of the gender reality of the WLB from the male perspective. Thus, the findings for this study provide a valuable starting point for more specific investigations into deeper layers of gender reality, social structures and the way in which these impact on WLB from the male perspective.

Equally, transferability cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the research settings and context. This includes some key aspects of this inquiry. First, the profile of the sample being defined as heterosexual professionals who were mostly breadwinners and worked in a male dominated culture. It is critical to recognise that this research has taken a gender view on the WLB debate and therefore will provide only limited insights aimed at more gender neutral WLB practices and schools of thought. Furthermore, although sexuality was not a sample criteria, all respondents including the female respondents were heterosexuals which also limits the contribution to heterosexual family set-ups. All respondents were professionals from the same organisation who worked in an international market. Therefore, there is a risk that individual contributions were influenced by a wider international corporate culture. This means that they are of less relevance for environments with a non-professional audience like manual workers. The researcher-practitioner feature of this research enhanced the research in many ways. However, it is acknowledged that there are potential risks of bias arising from differences in power relationships. Awareness and appreciation of this risk helped to address and minimise the dangers posed. Several boundary management theories were used to inform the person-centred approach that examined how individuals embraced the responsibility for managing their own WLB. These theories did not intend to dismiss the impact of organisations on individuals WLB. However, they offer a different perspective on WLB which is also needed to provide a more holistic understanding of the topic.

6.5 The Research Journey

This study has been an interesting journey for the researcher, promoting great development as a researcher but also great challenges as a working mum and practitioner. One of the reasons for taking a person-centred approach in this study and not an organisational one, was to enable the researcher to totally detach herself from the HR practitioner role, connect herself with an 'investigator identity' and embrace her academic development. As a practitioner who learnt English at the age of 24, academic writing proved to be extremely challenging. This was not only concerning language and coherence but most importantly from a style perspective. As a practitioner, the thought-processes and writing styles tend to be more prescriptive and judgment is expected as part of the role. As a researcher, it was the opposite in many respects. Reflexivity played a key role in raising awareness of presumptions and re-setting the researcher's mindset from problem solving to one fuelled by curiosity.

Another interesting event which impacted on this research journey was the birth of the researcher's first child between the data gathering phases. Cassell (2005) emphasises the importance of recognising the identity work as a researcher and to observe how this identity is constructed and re-constructed during the research particularly during any interaction with respondents. The first 20 interviews allowed the researcher to strongly position herself as the investigator and the respondents as the experts. There were some cases where respondents identified the researcher as a representative of the organisation who was consulting with staff in order to improve WLB practice. Equally, as the research took a person-centred approach, it was natural to reposition the interviewees as the experts and the interviewer as the investigator. However, during the second stage of data gathering, after the birth of the first child, the researcher observed a shift in her identity. This happened mostly with respondents who were female and mothers. Often the interviewees presented themselves as mentors and offered WLB advice to the interviewer. In some cases, the interviewer reacted by adopting a new identity as the inexperienced mother and learner. This was noted in memos where the researcher documented occurrences of prolonged discussions around motherhood reconciliation, guilt and arguments with partners, in terms of negotiating and

sharing childcare and domestics work. Those dilemmas were experienced by the researcher when the second phase of interviews took place. These dilemmas triggered an involuntary and strong empathy with the mothers in the sample. The researcher needed then to refer back to the first stage of the interviews to verify if such topics were also discussed in great depth. After comparing the scripts from the first and the second stage of the interviews, the researcher realised that the topics and occurrences were similar. What really changed was how connected and aware the researcher felt with the accounts which had originated during the second round of interviews, although in many cases they were very similar when compared to the first round. For example, after conducting this audit the researcher realised that most mothers from the first stage of the interviews also extensively talked about feeling guilt when leaving their children to go to work and feeling exhausted by managing paid and their mostly unpaid work at home. These topics and its reoccurrence were not specific to the second phase of the interviews only.

Furthermore, the researcher recognised that this mixture of roles often caused confusion during the data abstraction stage of the analysis where the researcher often found it difficult to emotionally detach from the working mum and practitioner roles whilst handling and analysing the findings. As a consequence, extra work was also required to secure the quality of the study in terms of going back several times to the data extracts (scripts and audios), re-reading reflexive memos, and auditing trails of extracts under themes and sub-themes explanations. Consequently, the analysis stage was intense and the enthusiasm of the researcher faded temporarily.

The research took over the researcher's life, particularly for the last 12 months before completion. This made WLB not only an academic topic but also a personal and family issue. Consequently, emotions surfaced during the project about WLB: the connection between the researcher and the topic increased curiosity about the findings but equally ran the risks of introducing bias and assumptions demanding much reflective consideration. On a more positive note, the researcher's development and interest as a researcher have been phenomenal. The satisfaction from evolving from 60 hours of messy data into

14 themes and 56 sub-themes answering the research question was indescribable. During the process, particularly when finishing the coding stage, the insecurities of not meeting the aim of the research were high. Although the critical realism philosophical approach was deemed the best aligned to this study, it also demanded intensive activities during the analysis. This was to understand the gender reality of how WLB related to the sample but also to seek ongoing critical scrutiny between answers to identify gaps between thoughts and actions from the same respondent or across the sample. The sense of confusion which emerged from the inconsistencies in the data was overwhelming. However, soon this feeling was replaced by reassurance and explanations and insights started coming together, further clusters started emerging naturally and began to answer the research question and associations between themes started making sense.

There are several lessons, including life lessons, to be taken away from this research project. This includes, from a practical perspective, elements of time management, record-keeping and backup but also, most importantly, resilience, self-compassion and confidence which comprised turning points in the researcher's life and career. Another lesson which has helped to deal with the researcher's multiple roles and emotional attachment to the research topic was to consciously adopt a curious style every time when a potential for biased input was identified. This technique was learnt from neuroscience and mindfulness research and proved to be very helpful during the process of empathic neutrality whilst handling the data.

Bibliography

Aboim, S. (2010). *Plural Masculinities- The Remaking of the Self in Private Life*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: a theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139-158.

Adler, N. J. (1984). Women in international management. Where are they? *California Management Review*, 27(4), 78–89.

Allard, K., Haas, L. and Hwang, C.P. (2011). Family-supportive organizational culture and fathers' experiences of work–family conflict in Sweden. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 18 (2) 141-57.

Altman, Y. and Shortland, S. (2008). Women and international assignments: Taking stock – a 25-year review. *Human Resource Management*, 47(2) (Summer), 199–216. Wiley Periodicals.

Alvesson, M., and Billing, Y. D. (2009). *Understanding gender and organizations*. London: Sage.

Anderson, E. and Spruill J. (1993). *The Dual-Career Commuter Life: A Lifestyle on the Move*. Haworth Press.

Anderson, N., Herriot, P., and Hodgkinson, G. P. (2001). The practitioner-researcher divide in industrial, work and organizational (IWO) psychology: Where are we now, and where do we go from here? *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74(4), 391–411.

Archer, M. S. (1998). *Critical realism: Essential Readings. Critical Realism – Interventions.* London: Routledge

Arnalds, Á. A., Eydal, G. B. and Gíslason, I. V. (2013). Equal rights to paid parental leave and caring fathers – the case of Iceland. *Icelandic Review of Politics and Administration*, 9(2), 323–344.

Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., and Fugate, M. (2000). All in a day's work: Boundaries and micro role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(3), 472–491.

Bagger, J.; Reb, J.M and Li, A. (2014). Anticipated regret in time-based work-family conflict. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 29 (3), 304-320.

Bamberger, P. A., Biron, M. and Meshoulam, I. (2014). *Human resource strategy: Formulation, implementation, and impact*. Routledge.

Barnes H., Smeaton D. and Taylor R. (2009). *An ageing workforce: The employer's perspective. Institute for Employment Studies*. Report 468. Brighton, UK: IES.

Barry, C. A. (1998). Choosing qualitative data analysis software: Atlas/ti and NUD.IST compared. *Sociological Research Online*, 3(3). Available at http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/3/4.html [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Beauregard T. A. and Henry L. C. (2009). Making the link between work-life balance practices and organizational performance. *Human Resource Management Review*, 19, 9-22.

Bergman, A. and Gardiner, G. (2007). Employee availability for work and family. Three Swedish case studies. *Employee Relations*, 29(4), 400–414.

Bhaskar, R. (1978). *A Realist Theory of Science*, Hassocks: Harvester Press.

Bhaskar, R. (1998). *The Possibilities of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*. London. Routledge.

Birks, M. and Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage

Bjornholt, M. (2010). Like father like son? The transmission of values, family practices, and work-family adaptations to sons of work-sharing men. *Fathering:*

A Journal of Theory, Research and Practice about Men as Fathers, 8(3), 276-299.

Blaikie, N. (2007). *Approaches to Social Inquiry: Advancing Knowledge*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Polity.

Boxall, P. and Steeneveld, M. (1999). Human Resource Strategy and Competitive Advantage: A Longitudinal Study of Engineering Consultancies. Journal of Management Studies. 36 (4), 443-463.

Brandon, P. D. and Temple, J. B. (2007). Family provisions at the workplace and their relationship to absenteeism, retention, and productivity of workers: Timely evidence from prior data. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 42(4), 447-460.

Brannen, J. and Lewis, S. (2000). *Workplace Programmes and Policies in the United Kingdom*. In Haas et al., *Organizational Change and Gender equity. International Perspectives on Fathers and Mothers at the Workplace* (99–116). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Brannen, J. and Nilsen, A. (2006). From fatherhood to fathering: Transmission and changes among fathers in four-generation families. *Sociology*, 40, 335–352.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In Cooper (ed.) *The handbook of research methods in psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Brough, P., Holt, J., Bauld, R., Biggs, A. and Ryan, C. (2008). The ability of work-life balance policies to influence key social/organisational issues. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 46(3), 261–273.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burchell, J. (2006). *Quality of Part-time Work in Europe: Part Better or Part Worse than Ful-time?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burke, R. (2002). Organizational values, job experiences and satisfaction among managerial and professional women and men: Advantage men? *Women in Management Review*, 17(5), 228–236. MCB University Press

Burnett, S. B., Gatrell, C.J., Cooper, C.L. and Sparrow, P.R. (2010). Well-balanced families? A gendered analysis of work-life balance policies and work family practices. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 25(7), 534–549.

Burnett, S. B., Gatrell, C. J., Cooper, C. L. and Sparrow, P. (2012). Fathers at work: A ghost in the organisational machine. Gender, Work and Organisation. Blackwell. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 20(6), 632–646.

Campbell, L. D. and Carroll, M. P. (2007). The incomplete revolution: Theorizing gender when studying men who provide care to aging parents. *Men and Masculinities*, 9, 491–508.

Campbell, T. (1996). Technology, multimedia, and qualitative research in education. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education*, 30(9), 122–133.

Cartwright, S and Cooper, C (2011), *Innovations in Stress and Health*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Cassell, C. (2005). Creating the interviewer: Identity work in the management research process. *Qualitative Research*. 5(2), 167-179.

Cassell, C. and Symon, G. (1994). *Qualitative Methods in Organisational Research: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

Casper, W. J., De Hauw, S., & Wayne, J. H. (2013). Concepts and Measures in the Work-family Interface: Implications for Work-family Integration. In Major and Burke (ed.) *Handbook of Work-life Integration of Professionals: Challenges and opportunities (*35-57). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Casper, W. J., Eby, L. T., Bordeaux, C., Lockwood, A., & Lambert, D. (2007). A review of research methods in IO/OB work-family research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 28–43.

Charles, N. and James, E. (2003). Gender and work orientations in conditions of job insecurity. *British Journal of Sociology*, 54(2), 239–257.

CIPD (2013). *Zero-hours contracts: Myth and reality*. London. Available at http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/zero-hours-contracts_2013-myth-reality.pdf [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

CIPD (2014). *HR: Getting smart about agile working*. London. Available at http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/hr-getting-smart-agile-working_2014.pdf [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

CIPD (2016).*Growing the health and well-being agenda: From first steps to full potential*. Policy Report. Available at http://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/health-well-being-agenda_2016-first-steps-full-potential.pdf [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Clark, S. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations*, 53(6), 747–770.

Chell, E. (1998). Critical incident technique. In G. Symon & C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative methods and analysis in organizational research* (pp. 51-72). London, Sage.

Cole, N. and McNulty, Y. (2011). Why do female expatriates "fit in" better than males? An analysis of self-transcendence and socio-cultural adjustment. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 18(2), 144–164.

Collier, R. (2009). Fathers' rights, gender and welfare: Some questions for family law. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 31(4), 357–371.

Collinson, D. and Hearn, J. (1996) Men at 'work'; multiple masculinities/multiple workplaces. In Mac an Ghaill M. (ed.) *Understanding Masculinities*. Social Relations and Cultural Arenas, 61–76. Open University Press: Buckingham.

Connell, R. (2014). The study of masculinities. *Qualitative Research Journal,* 14(1), 5-15.

Cooper, C. (1996). Working hours and health. *Work and Stress*, 10(1), 1–4.

Cooper, C.,Dewe, P.,O'Driscoll, M. (2001). *Organisational Stress: A Review and Critique of Theory, Research and Applications*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Cooper, C. and Lewis, S. (1995). *Beyond Family-friendly Organisations*. London: Demos.

Coulson, J. C., Makenna, J. and Field, M. (2008). Exercising at work and self-reported work performance. *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*, 1(3), 176–199.

Crawford, J. B. and Mills, A. J. (2011). The Formative Context of Organisational Hieratchies and Discourse: Implications for Organizational Change and Gender Relations. *Gender, Work and Organization*. 18(1), 89-110.

Crompton, R. and Lyonette, C. (2006). Work life "balance" in Europe. *Acta Sociologica*, 49(4), 379–393.

Crompton, R., Lewis, S. and Lyonette, C. (2007). Women*, Men, Work and Family in Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crosbie, T. and More, J. (2004). Work–life balance and working from home*. Social Policy & Society*, 3(3), 223–233. Cambridge University Press.

Davidson, M. J. and Cooper, C. L. (1992). *Shattering the Glass Ceiling: The Woman Manager*. London: Paul Chapman.

DeFrank, R. S., Konopaske, R. and Ivancevich, J. M. (2000). Executive travel stress: Perils of the roadwarrior. *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(2), 58–71.

Dench, S., Aston, J., Evans, C., Meager, N., Williams, M. and Willison, R. (2002). Key indicators of women's position in Britain. *Women and Equality Unit*. London: DTI.

Dermott, E. (2006). What's parenthood got to do with it? Men's hours of paid work. *British Journal of Sociology*, 57(4), 619–634.

Dermott, E. (2007). Work-life balance: Father employment and flexibility in the United Kingdom. International Conference *Men and Work Life Balance*. ENTP Project. Brussels.

Dermott, E. (2008). *Intimate Fatherhood: A Sociological Analysis*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Dex, S. (2004). Flexible working arrangements in the UK. Paper presented at the *Work Life Balance Across the Life Course* Conference, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University.

Dex, S. and Scheibl, F. (1999). Business performance and family-friendly policies. *Journal of General Management*, 24(4), 22–37.

Doherty, L. (2004). Work-life balance initiatives: Implications for women. *Employee Relations*, 26(4), 433–452.

Doherty, L. and Manfredi, S. (2006). Action research to develop work-life balance in a UK university. *Women in Management Review*, 21(3), 241–259.

Duxbury, L., Higgins, C., Smart, R., and Stevenson, M. (2014). Mobile technology and boundary permeability. *British Journal of Management*, 25(3), 570–588.

Eurostat (2011). *Employment rate for those aged 20 to 64 in the EU27 decreased to 68.6% in 2010*. Labour Force Survey. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/5039906/3-29062011-AP-EN.PDF/c6f27bdf-0f98-42c6-b235-13116817dc53 [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Falk, E. B., O'Donnell, M. B., Cascio, C.N., Tinney, F. et al. (2015). Self-affirmation alters the brain's response to health messages and subsequent behavior change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science,* 112(7),1977-82.

Felstead, A., Jewson, N., Phizacklea, A. and Walters, S. (2000). *A Statistical Portrait of Working at Home in the UK: Evidence from the Labour Force Survey*.

ESRC Future of Work, Working Paper No. 4. Available at http://www.clms.le.ac.uk/WWW/Readings/Working_Paper_4.pdf [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Ferrant, G. and Keiko N. (2015). Measuring the drivers of gender inequality and their impact on development: the role of discriminatory social institutions, *Gender and Development, 23(20),319-332.*

Fischmayr, I. and Kollinger, I. (2010). Work-life balance – a neglected issue among Austrian female expatriates. *International Journal of Human Resources Management*, 21(2), 455–486.

Fisher, G. C., Bulger C. A., Smith C. S. (2009). Beyond Work and Family: A Measure of Work/Non-work Interference and Enhancement. American Psychological Association. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 14(4), 441–456.

Fleetwood, S. (2007). Why work-life balance now? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(3), 351–360.

Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 4th edn. London: Sage.

Frazer, E. and Lacey, N. (1993). *The politics of community: A feminist critique of the liberal. Communitarian debate*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Friedman, S. and Greenhaus, J. (2000). *Work and Family – Allies or Enemies? What Happens When Business Professionals Confront Life Choices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frone, M.R. (2003). Work-family balance. In Quick and Tetrick (ed.), *Handbook of occupational health psychology.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 143-162.

Frone, M. R., Russell, M., and Cooper, M. L. (1997a). Relation of work-family conflict to health outcomes: A four-year longitudinal study of employed parents. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 70, 325–335.

Frone, M. R., Yardley, J. K., and Markel, K. S. (1997b). Developing and testing an integrative model of the work family interface. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 145–167.

Gaborit, P. (2007). Men and father role in the reconciliation of work and private life: Project findings. International Conference *Men and Work Life Balance*. ENTP Project. Brussels.

Gambles, R., Lewis, S.. Rapoport, R. (2006). *The Myth of Work-life Balance: The Challenge of our Time for Men, Women and Societies*. Chichester: John Wiley.

Garcia, A. (2007). Typologies of family violence. International Conference *Men and Work Life Balance*. ENTP Project. Brussels.

Gatrell, C. and Cooper, C. (2008). Work-life balance: Working for whom? *European Journal of International Management*, 2(1), 71–86.

Gatrell, C., Burnett, S., Cooper, C. L., Sparrow, P. and Swan, J. A. (2011). *Fathers at Work: Integrating Family Life and Work*. Lancaster University and Working Families research project. Published by Working Families.

Gatrell, C.J., Burnett, S.B., Cooper, C.L. and Sparrow, P. (2012). Work-life balance and parenthood: A comparative review of definitions equity and enrichment. *International Journal of Management*, 15(3), 265–358.

Gatta, M. and Roos, P. (2004). Balancing without a net in academia: Integrating family and work lives. *Equal Opportunities International*, 23(3/4/5), 124–142.

Gaylin, W. (1992). *The Male Ego*. New York, NY: Viking.

Gherardi, S. (1995) *Gender, Symbolism, and Organizational Culture*. London: Sage.

Gherardi, S., & Poggio, B. (2001). Creating and recreating gender order in organizations. *Journal of World Business*, 36 (3), 245-259.

Grandey, A. A. and Cropanzano, R. (1999). The conservation of resources model applied to work-family conflict and strain. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 350–370.

Grant, C. A., Wallace, L. M. and Spurgeon, P. C. (2013). An exploration of the psychological factors affecting remote e-workers' job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance. *Employee Relations*, 35(5), 527–546.

Green, F. (2001). It's been a hard day's night: The concentration and intensification of work in the late twentieth century. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 30(1), 53–80.

Greenhaus, J.H. and Allen, T.D. (2011). Work-family Balance: A Review and Extension of the Literature. In Campbell and Tetrick, (ed.) *Handbook of Occupational Health Psychology*, 2nd ed., American Psychological Association, Washington, 165-183.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76-88.

Greenhaus, H. and Powell, N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work-family enrichment. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(1), 72–92.

Gregory, A. and Milner, S. (2009). Editorial: Work–life balance: A matter of choice? *Gender, Work & Organization*, 16(1), 1–13.

Haas, L. and Hwang, C. P. (2007). Gender and organisational culture: Correlates of companies responsiveness to father in Sweden. *Gender & Society*, 21, 52–79.

Haas, L. and Hwang, C. P. (2008). The impact of taking parental leave on father's participation in childcare and relationships with children: Lessons from Sweden. *Community, Work and Family*, 11(1), 85–104.

Haas, L., Hwang, P. and Russell, G. (2000). *Organizational Change and Gender Equity: International Perspectives on Fathers and Mothers at the Workplace*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hammer, L. B., Kossek, E., Yragui, N. L., Bodner, T. E. and Hanson, G. C. (2009). Development and validation of a multidimensional measure of family supportive supervisor behaviors (FSSB). *Journal of Management*, 35(4), 837-856.

Hammersley, M. (1992). *What is Wrong with Ethnography?* London: Routledge.

Hardill, I. (2003). A table of two nations? Juggling work and home in the new economy. ESRC Seminar Series – *Work life balance in the new economy*. Seminar 3: Social and spatial divisions. 30 May 2003, LSE, London.

Harrington, B., Van Deusen, F. and Humberd, B. (2011). The new dad: caring, committed and conflicted. *The fatherhood study, phase II*. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College Center for Work and Family.

Harris, H. (2004). Global careers: Work-life issues and the adjustment of women international managers. *Journal of Management Development*, 23(9), 818–832.

Haslberger, A. (2010). Gender differences in expatriate adjustment. European *Journal of International Management*, 4(1/2), 163–183.

Hauari, H. and Hollingworth, K. (2009). *Understanding fathering: Masculinity, diversity and change.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Available at http://www.jrf.org.

Hegewisch, A. (2009). *Flexible working policies: A comparative review*. Research report 16. London: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Hochschild, A. (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hogarth, C., Hasluck C. and Pierre, G. (2000). *Work-life balance: Summary report*. Warwick: Institute for Employment Research.

Hogarth, T., Daniel, W. W., Dickerson, A. P., Campbell, D., Wintherbotham, M. and Vivian, D. (2003). *The business context to long hours*. Employment

Relations Research Series 23, Vol. 1. London: Department of Trade and Industry.

Holmes, K., Ivins, C., Yaxley, D. Hansom, J. and Smeaton, D (2007). *The future of work: individuals and workplace transformation*. Working Paper Series no. 54. Manchester: EOC

Holter, O. G. (2007). Men's work and family responsibilities in Europe. *Men and Masculinities*, 9, 425–457.

Hooker, H., Neathey, F., Casebourne, J. and Munro, M. (2007). *The third work-life balance employee survey: Executive summary*. Employment Relations Research Series 58. London: DTI.

Hughes, J. (2013). Persistent problems with operationalizing dual-career couples: A proposal to use the term dual-income couples. *Marriages and Family Review*. 49, 694-716.

Huffman, A. H., Olson, K. J., O'Gara Jr, T. C. and King, E. B. (2014). Gender role beliefs and fathers' work-family conflict. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 29 (7), 774 – 793.

Hyman, J. and Summers, J (2004). Lacking balance?: Work- life employment practices in the modern economy. *Personnel R*eview, Vol. 33(4), 418 - 429

Kelle, U. (1995). *Introduction:* An Overview of Computer-aided Methods in Qualitative Research. In Kelle (ed.) *Computer-aided Qualitative Data Analysis: Theory, Methods and Practice* (1–17). London: Sage.

Kelliher, C. and Anderson, Deirdre (2010). Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations*, 63(1), 83–106.

Kierner, A. (2015). Dual-income and Dual-career Couples in International Context. In Makela and Suutari (ed.) *Work and Family Interface in the International Career Context* (96-116). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Klinth, R. (2008). The best of both worlds? Fatherhood and gender equality in Swedish paternity leave campaigns, 1976–2006. *Men's Studies Press*, 6(1) (Winter), 20–38.

Kodz, J., Davis, S., Lain, D., Strebler, M., Rick J., Bates, P., Cummings J., Meager N., Anxo D., Gineste, S., Trinczek, R. and Pamer, S. (2003). *Working long hours: A review of the evidence*. Employment Relations Research Series 16, Vol. 1, Main report. London: DTI.

Kossek, E. and Lambert, S. (2006). *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural, and Individual Perspectives.* University of Chicago Press, 80, No 1, 197–200.

Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A. and Eaton, S. C. (2006). Telecommuting, control, and boundary management: Correlates of policy use and practice, job control, and work-family effectiveness. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 68(2), 347–367.

Kossek, E.E., Lewis, S. and Hammer, L.B. (2010). Work–life initiatives and organizational change: overcoming mixed messages to move from the margin to the mainstream. *Human Relations*, 63, pp. 3–19.

Kossek, E. E., Noe, R. A. and DeMarr, B. J. (1999). Work-family role synthesis: Individual and organizational determinants. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 10(1), 102–129.

Kossek, E., Pichler, S., Bodner, T. and Hammer, L. B. (2011). Workplace social support and work-family conflict: A meta-analysis clarifying the influence of general and work-family specific supervisor and organizational support. *Personnel Psychology*, 64(2), 289–313.

Kossek, E. E., Ruderman, M. N., Braddy, P. W. and Hannun, K. M. (2012). Work-nonwork boundary management profiles: A person-centered approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 81(1), 112–128.

Koubova, V. (2013). Life-work balance: Emotional intelligence as a crucial component of achieving both personal life and work performance. *Management research review*, 36(7), 700–719.

Kumra, S., Simpson, R. and Burke, R. J. (2014). *The Oxford Handbook of Gender in Organisations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kumra, S. and Manfredi, S. (2012). *Managing Equality and Diversity: Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lamb, M. (2010). How Do Fathers Influence Children's Development? Let Me Count the Ways. In Lamb (ed..) *The role of the father in child development* (1–26). New Jersey: Wiley

Lamb, M. and Oppenheim, D. (1989). Fatherhood and Father-child Relationship. In Cath, Gurtwitt and Ginsberg (ed.), *Fathers and their families* (11–26). Hillsdale NJ and London: Analytic Press.

Lamb, M. and Tamis-Lemonda, C. (2004). The Role of the Father: An Introductio*n*. In Lamb (ed.) *The Role of the Father in Child Development*. New York, NY: John Wiley.

Lamb, M. D., Pleck, J. H., Charnov, E. L. and Levine, J. A. (1985). Effects of Increased Paternal Involvement on Fathers and Mothers. In Lewis and O'Brien (ed.) *Reassessing fatherhood: New observations on fathers and the modern family* (109–125). London: Sage.

Lambert, S. J. (1990). Process linking work and family: A critical review and research agenda. *Human Relations*, 43, 239–257.

Levine, J. S. and Pittinsky, T. L. (1997). *Working Fathers: New Strategies for Balancing Work and Family.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Lewis, S. and Cooper, C. (2005). *Work-life Integration. Case Studies of Organisational Changes*. Chichester: Wiley.

Lewis, S. and Humbert, L. (2010). Disclosure or reality? "Work-life balance", flexible working policies and the gendered organisation. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 29(3), 239–254.

Lewis, S., Gambles, R. and Rapoport, R. (2007). The constraints of a work-life balance approach: An international perspective. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(3), 360–374.

Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, G. E. (1985). *Naturalist Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lloyd, T. (2007). Working with men project. International Conference *Men and Work Life Balance*. ENTP Project. Brussels.

Lockwood, N. R. (2003). *Work-life balance: Challenges and solutions*. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resources Management.

Lovvorn, A. S. and Chen, J. (2011). Developing a global mindset: The relationship between an international assignment and cultural intelligence. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(9). Special issue, May.

Madill, A., Jordan, A. and Shirley, C. (2000). Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: Realist, contextualist and radical constructionist epistemologies. *British Journal of Psychology*, 91, 1–20.

Makela, L. and Suutari, V. (2015). *Work and Family Interface in the International Career Context*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Makela, L., Suutari, V. and Mayerhofer, H. (2011). Lives of female expatriates: Work-life balance concerns. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 26(4), 256–274.

Mann, S. and Holdsworth, L. (2003). The psychological impact of teleworking stress, emotions and health. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 18(3), 196–211.

Mayerhofer, H. et al. (2004). Flexpatriate assignments: A neglected issue in global staffing. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(8), 1371–1389.

Mellner, C., Aronsson, G. and Kecklund, G. (2014). Boundary Management Preferences, Boundary Control, and Work-Life Balance among Full-Time Employed Professionals in Knowledge-Intensive, Flexible Work. *Nordic Journal of working studies*, 4(4), 7-23.

Miller, T. (2011). *Making Sense of Fatherhood: Gender, Caring and Work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mills, A. and Tancred, P. (1992). *Gendering organizational analysis*. Sage Publications.

Mills, A. J. (2002). Studying the Gendering of Organizational Culture Over Time: Concerns, Issues and Strategies. *Gender, Work and Organization*. 9 (3), 286-307.

Murphy, F. and Doherty, L. (2011). The experience of work life balance for Irish senior managers. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 30(4), 252 – 277.

Nadeem, S. and Metcalf, H. (2007). *Work-life policies in Great Britain: What works, where and how?* Employee Relations Research Series 77. London: DTI.

Nam, T. (2013). Technology use and work-life balance. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 9(4), 1–24.

Nelson, A., Nemec, K., Solvik, P. and Ramsden, C. (2004). *The evaluation of the work-life balance challenge fund*. Employment Relations Research Series 32. London: Tavistock Institute, DTI.

OECD (2010). *Gender Brief*. Report prepared by the OECD Social Policy Division. Available at http://www.oecd.org/els/family/44720649.pdf [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

ONS (Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey) (2015). UK Labour Market. Available at http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsand workinghours/adhocs/005248peopleinemploymentwithaflexibleworkingpatternby gender [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

ONS (Office for National Statistics, Uk Labour Market, March) (2016). UK Labour Market. Available at http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employment andemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/march2016 [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Ozbilgin, Mustafa F., Beauregard, T. A., Tatli, Ahu and Bell, Myrtle P. (2011). Work-life, diversity and intersectionality: a critical review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13 (2). pp. 177-198.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pickard, L. (2004). *Caring for older people and employment: A review of the literature prepared by the Audit Commission*. London: Audit Commission.

Pini, B. and McDonald, P. (2008). Men, masculinities and flexible work in local government. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 23(8), 598–612.

PwC (2011). PwC Survey: *Millennials at work. Reshaping the workplace*. Available at https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/consulting/documents/millennials-at-work.pdf [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Ragin, C. C. (2012). *How many qualitative interviews is enough?* In Baker and Edwards (ed.), *Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and*

cases in qualitative research. Review paper. Southampton: National Centre for Research Methods.

Ranson, G. (2001). Men at work – change or no change? – in the era of the "new father". *Men and Masculinity*, 4(1), 3–26.

Rapoport, R., Bailyn, L., Fletcher, J.K. and Pruitt. P. H (2002). Beyond *Work-Family Balance: Advancing Gender Equity and Workplace Performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Rees, C. and Gatenby, M. (2014). Critical Realism and Ethnography, in Edwards, O'Mahoney. and Vincent (ed.) *Studying Organizations Using Critical Realism: A Practical Guide*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reiter, N. (2007). Work life balance: What DO you mean? The ethical ideology underpinning appropriate application. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 43(2), 273–294.

Richards, L. and Richards, T. (1994). From Filing Cabinet to Computer. In Bryman and Burgess (ed.) *Analysing Qualitative Data* (146–172). London: Routledge.

Riessman, C.K. (1993), *Narrative analysis*, Newbury Park, CA, Sage.

Ritchie, J. and Lewis. J. (2003) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Sage Publications: London

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls McNaughton, C. and Ormston, R. (2014). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researches*, 2nd edn. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Roberts, K. (2007). Work-life balance: The sources of the contemporary problem and probable outcomes. A review and interpretation of the evidence. *Employee Relations*, 29(4), 334–351.

Roberts, K. A. and Wilson, R. W. (2002). ICT and the research process: Issues around the compatibility of technology with qualitative data analysis [52

paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(2), Art. 23. Available at http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0202234 [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Robertson Cooper and the Bank Worker Charity Research Project (2016). *Making Flexible Working Work; Moving from Work-Life Balance to Integration*. Available on request at http://www.robertsoncooper.com/work-life-integration [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Roper, M. (2003). *Masculinity and the British Organisation Man Since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Russell, H., O'Connell, P. J. and McGinnity, F. (2009). The impact of flexible working arrangements on work–life conflict and work pressure in Ireland. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 16(1), 73–97.

Saarenpaa, K. (2015). International Business Travel and Work-Family Balance: Research Review and Future Directions. In Makela and Suutari (ed.) *Work and Family Interface in the International Career Context* (159-180). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research Methods for Business Students*, 6th edn. Harlow: Pearson.

Schwartz, S. (2006). A theory of cultural value orientations: Explication and applications. *Comparative Sociology*, 5(2–3), 137–182.

Schwartz, J. and Gladding, R. (2011). *You Are Not Your Brain: The 4-Step Solution for Changing Bad Habits, Ending Unhealthy Thinking, and Taking Control of Your Life.* New York: Avery.

Scott, D. (2005). Critical realism and research methods in education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 39(4), 633–646.

Shaffer, M. and Harrison, D. (2008). Expatriates' psychological withdrawal from international assignments: Work, nonwork, and family influences. *Personnel Psychology*, 51, 87–118.

Shortland, S. and Cummings, S. (2007). Work-life balance: Expatriates reflect the international dimension. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 26(6), 28–42.

Silverman, D. (2004). *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, 2nd edn. London: Sage.

Simonetti, J. L.; Nykodym, R.; Nielson, W. R. and Goralske, J. M. (1993). Counselling employee guilt: A corporate necessity. *Employee Counselling Today*, 5(3), 17-23.

Sinkovics, R. R. and Alfoldi, E. A. (2012). Facilitating the Interaction Between Theory and Data in Qualitative Research Using CAQDAS. In Symon and Cassell (ed.) *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*, (109-131). London: Sage Publications.

Smeaton, D., Young, V. and Spencer, S. (2007). *The future of work, employers and workplace transformation*. Manchester: EOC.

Smeaton, D., Ray. K. and Knight, G. (2014). *Costs and benefits to business of adopting work life balance working practices: A literature review*. Employment Relations Research Series. London: Department for Business Innovation and Skills.

Smith, C. and Elger, T. (2013). Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects. In Edwards, O'Mahoney and Vincent (ed.) *Critical realism in action: A practical guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, J. A. and Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In JA Smith (Ed) *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Methods,* 2nd edn. London: Sage.

Smith, K. (2010). Work-life balance: Perspective of marketing professionals in Generation Y. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 31(4), 434–447.

Somech, A. and Drach-Zahavy, A. (2007). Strategies for coping with work-family conflict: The distinctive relationships of gender-role ideologies. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 2, 1–19.

Somech, A. and Drach-Zahavy, A. (2012). Coping with work-family conflict: The reciprocal and additive constructions of personal coping strategies and organisational family-friendly support, work and stress. *International Journal of Work, Health and Organisation*, 26(1), 68–90.

Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Dillon, L. (2003). *Quality in qualitativ e evaluation: A framework for assessing research evidence.* London: Nati onalCentre for Social Research, Government Chief Social Researcher's Office, UK.

Squirchuk, R. and Bourke, J. (2000) From Equal Opportunity to Family-Friendly Policies and Beyond. In Hass, Hwang and Russell (ed.) *Organisational Change and Gender Equity: International Perspectives on Fathers and Mothers at the Work-place*. California: Sage Publications.

Stam, P. and Coleman, J. (2010). *The relationship between hours worked in the UK and the economy. Economic & Labour Market Review,* 4(9). Available at http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/188/art%253A10.1057%252Felmr.2010.129.pdf? [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Stahl, G. K. and Bjorkman, I. (2006). *Handbook of Research in International Human Resources Management*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Staines, G. L. (1980). Spillover versus compensation: A review of the literature on the relationship between work and non-work. *Human Relations*, 33, 111–129.

Steedman, P. (2000). On the Relations between Seeing, Interpreting and Knowing. In Steier (ed.) *Research and reflexivity* (53–62). London: Sage.

Stevens J., Brown, J. and Lee, C. (2004). *Second work-life balance study: Results from the Employee Survey*. Employment Relations Research Series 22. London: DTI.

Straub, C (2007). A comparative analysis of the use of work-life balance practices in Europe. *Women in Management Review*, 22(4), 289–304. Institute for Labour Studies.

Straub, C. (2012). Antecedents and organizational consequences of family supportive supervisor behavior: A multilevel conceptual framework for research. *Human Resource Management Review*, 22(1), 15-26.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd edn. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Stryker, S. and Serpe, R. T. (1982). Commitment, Identity Salience, and Role Behavior: A Theory and Research Example. In Ickes and Knowles (ed.) *Personality, Roles, and Social Behavior* (199-218). New York: Springer Verlag.

Swan, J. and Cooper, C. L. (2005). *Time, health and the family: What working families want*. London: Working Families Publication.

Symon, G. and Cassell, C. (2012). Assessing Qualitative Research. In Symon and Cassell (ed.) *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges (*204-223.)*.* London: Sage Publications.

Symon, G., Chamakiotis, P., Whiting, R. and Roby, H. (2014). *Identity Work across Boundaries in a Digital World*. In: British Academy of Management Conference, Identity track, 9-11 September, Belfast, UK.

Taylor, S. E. (1983). Adjustment to threatening events: A theory of cognitive adaptation. *American Psychologist*, 38, 1171–1173.

The institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) (2015). Skills & Demands from Industry, Survey. Available at

http://www.theiet.org/factfiles/education/skills2015-page.cfm (Accessed: 27th March 2017).

Tietze, S. (2012). Researching your own organization. In G. Symon and C. Cassell (eds) *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. London: Sage Publications.

Tipping, S., Chanfreau, J., Perry, J. and Tait, C. (2012). *The fourth work-life balance employee survey*. Employment Relations Research Series 122. London: DTI.

Tomlinson, J. (2006). Women's work-life balance trajectories in the UK: reformulating choice and constraint in transitions through part-time work across the life-course. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 34 (3): 365-382

Tomlinson, J. and Durbin, S. (2010). Female part-time managers: Work-life balance, aspirations and career mobility. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 29(3), 255–270.

Traynor, J. B. (1999). A new frontier in work-life benefits. *Employee Benefits Journal*, 24(4), 29-32.

TUC (2013). *Home-working on the increase despite the recession*. Available at https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/04-homeworkers/home-working-increase-despite-recession-says-tuc?_2013-05-23= [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

TUC (2015). *15 per cent increase in people working more than 48 hours a week risks a return to 'Burnout Britain', warns TUC*. Issued on the 9th September Available at https://www.tuc.org.uk/international-issues/europe/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/15-cent-increase-people-working-more_[Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Tudor, S. and Proeve, M. (2010). *Remorse: Psychological and Jurisprudential Perspectives* .Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing.

Vaillant, G. (2012). *Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press.

Visser, F. and Williams, L. (2007). *Unison members and work-life balance. Forthcoming*. London: The Work Foundation.

Wayne, J.H. (2009). Reducing Conceptual Confusion: Clarifying the Positive Side of Work and Family. In Crane and Hill (ed.) *Handbook of Families and Work: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, (105-140). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Welch, D. E. and Worm, V. (2006). International business travellers: A challenge for IHRM. In Stahl and Björkman (ed.) *Handbook of research in international human resource management* (283–301). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: Using NVivo in the qualitative data analysis process [12 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(2), Art. 26. Available at http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0202260 [Accessed: 1st August, 2016].

Westman, M. and Etzioni, D. (2002). The impact of short overseas business trips on the job stress and burnout. *Applied Psychology*, 51(4), 582–592.

Wheatley, D. (2012). Good to be home? Time use and satisfaction levels among home-based teleworkers. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 27(3), 224–241.

White, M., Hill, S., McGovern, P., Mills, C. and Smeaton, D. (2003). High performance: management practices, working hours and work-life balance. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(2), 175–195.

Williams, A. (2009). Masculinities and fathering. *Community Work and Family*, 12(1), 57–73.

Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill International.

Wilson, K. R. and Prior, M. R. (2010). Father involvement: The importance of paternal solo care. *Early Child Development and Care*, 180(10), 1391–1405.

Wilson, G.M., Polzer-Debrwyne, A., Chen, S. and Fernandes, S. (2007). Shift work interventions for reduced work-family conflict. *Employee Relations*, 29(2), 162–177.

Woodland, S., Simmonds, N., Thirnby, M., Fitzgerald, R and McGee, A. (2003). *The second work-life balance Study: Results from the employer survey*- Main report. Employment Relations Research Series 22. London: DTI.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Respondents' Profiles

Activities outside work	Age	Country of birth	Dependents	Gender	Marital Status	Work Mobility
Weekly	20's	UK	Yes	M	Married	Low
Weekly	20's	UK	No	M	Married	No
Daily	20's	Germany	No	F	Partnership	Moderate
No	20's	UK	No	F	Single	No
Weekly	30's	NZ	No	M	Married	Moderate
Weekly	30's	UK	Yes	M	Married	High
No	30's	UK	Yes	F	Divorced	Moderate
Daily	30's	Spain	No	M	Single	No
Daily	30's	UK	Yes	M	Remarried	No
No	30's	India	No	F	Married	No
No	30's	India	No	M	Single	High
Daily	30's	Russia	No	M	Single	Low
No	30's	UK	Yes	F	Married	Low
Daily	30's	UK	Yes	M	Married	High
No	40's	UK	Yes	F	Partnership	No
Weekly	40's	UK	Yes	M	Married	Moderate
Weekly	40's	UK	Yes	M	Partnership	No
No	40's	UK	No	F	Married	Moderate
Weekly	40's	UK	Yes	M	Married	Low
Daily	40's	UK	No	F	Divorced	Low
Weekly	40's	UK	Yes	M	Partnership	High
Daily	40's	UK	Yes	M	Divorced	High
Weekly	40's	UK	Yes	M	Married	High
Weekly	40's	UK	No	M	Single	Moderate
Weekly	40's	UK	No	F	Remarried	Low
Daily	40's	India	Yes	M	Married	Low
No	40's	UK	Yes	M	Married	High
Weekly	40's	UK	Yes	F	Married	Low
Weekly	50's	UK	Yes	M	Married	Moderate
Weekly	50's	UK	Yes	M	Married	High
No	50's	UK	No	M	Widower	High
Weekly	50's	UK	Yes	M	Married	Low
Weekly	50's	UK	No	M	Married	High
Weekly	50's	UK	No	M	Partnership	High
Daily	50's	UK	No	M	Married	High
No	50's	UK	Yes	M	Divorced	High
Daily	50's	UK	No	M	Remarried	High
No	50's	UK	No	M	Married	High
Weekly	50's	UK	No	M	Remarried	High
No	50's	UK	No	F	Remarried	Low

Appendix 2 Interview Schedule

Main Areas	Questions
Individuals' meaning of Work-life & Family-life	What does your work mean to you?
	When you think about your work, what makes you happy/fulfilled?
	When you think about your work, what makes you feel concerned/ unfulfilled?
	Do your profession and its requirements impact on your WLB? How?
	What does it mean to be a father/mother to you? (when applicable)
	Tell me about how you manage your carer role with your working life?
	How does your approach to managing paid work and life outside work compare to the approaches your parents had, and how that impacted on their care of you?
	Can you tell me about your experience with WLB throughout your life?
	Have any life changing events affected your WLB throughout your life? How?
	What is the most important role in your life? Do you feel that you are fulfilling this role? How?
Balancing Work and Life Outside work: WLB reconciliation experiences	Tell me when you find it hardest to reconcile work and life outside work? Give examples?
	What sorts of approaches do you use to reconcile paid work and life outside work? Can you give examples?
	Tell me what you think about work flexibility aimed at meeting commitments outside of employment?
	Tell me how much work interferes with your life outside work? Give examples?
	Tell me how much life outside work interferes with your work? Give examples?
	Have you ever taken any leave in the past to care for someone? Can you describe the positive and negative aspects you experienced during this period?
	How does your workload affect you? How does it seem to affect your colleagues?

	Do you feel stressed about your work or life outside of work? If yes, give examples of your coping strategies to deal with the stress?
	If you could change anything to improve your wellbeing and health, what that would be?
WLB experiences with the case organisation	Do you feel you can openly talk about WLB issues with your line manager?
	Can you give me an example of when you were able to adjust work arrangements to meet demanding priorities outside paid work?
	Do you feel you can discuss WLB issues openly with your colleagues? Can you remember any occasion where you were supported or not supported by your peers when you needed to change your work arrangements to meet other demands outside work?
	Do you think that there are different expectations at work towards WLB take-ups from men and women?
	Tell me how the organisation can help you to manage your WLB?
	If you could change anything about your WLB, what would that be and why?

Appendix 3 Seven Stages of an Interview Research by Kvale (1996)

1. Thematizing- this means the use of existing literature to formulate the research question and explain to respondents the concept of the topic before the interview starts. This ensures knowledge formation is focused on answering the research question.	Interview questions were based on the wider literature of WLB. Every respondent received a letter prior to the interview explaining the purpose of the study. Before the interview started the interviewer explained the set of questions to be investigated and why they were important for the research.
2. Designing- this refers to planning and preparing methodological templates to ensure required knowledge is obtained in order to answer the research question whilst taking into account ethical implications	This included preparation of 1 letter, 2 templates and audio recording device. Letter: Every respondent received an *information sheet* explaining things like purpose and benefits of the research and sample selection. Template 1: use of an *interview schedule* to focus discussion on answering the research question. This form was used also to take notes of the researcher's own voice and perspectives of the interaction. These notes were used before and during the analysis to frame reflexivity while familiarising with the audio recordings and transcripts. Template 2: a consent form was designed to ensure participants understood the purpose of the study and to ensure they were free to withdraw from the research at any time before analysis took place. This form was also ensuring they were happy to be audio recorded and to use their anonymised quotations extracted from their interviews. Audio recording storage was password protected.
3. Interviewing- moment knowledge is created through interaction	During this stage two main factors were taken into account. Firstly, to ensure that as a practitioner- researcher (the interviewer) referred back to each individual as the expert of their own experiences and views, the researcher explained the definition of roles with each participant before interaction taking place. To enable the explanation of the roles two actions were taken. 1- At the beginning of each interview, the interviewer presented herself and researcher and detached the interview situation from the case organisation where the

	candidates came from. 2-.The researcher took notes during the interviews which helped to focus on what was been said instead of trying to analyse the information received at the time of the interview.

Secondly, reflexive activities were adopted (which are explained in to more detail below.

Empathic neutrality (interviewer showed openness, sensitivity awareness of judgement, and responsiveness by being fully present and engaging whilst listening to the answers. Researcher also reframed her thought process to address judgmental enquiries by saying to herself "interesting, why" every time a thought or an interview note were inflated with judgmental words);

Familiarisation and preparation of data (all interviews were listened to first before transcriptions took place. This helped to tune with respondents own voice but also to identify side-track passages);

Analytical memos and audit trail (Analytical memos were written for all themes with a list of tracked passages supporting the explanations for each theme. This was possible with the support of Nvivo 10). |
| 4. Transcribing- transform data from oral dialogue to written texts | This process has also been referred in this research as preparation of data and it involved 2 stages.

First- Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that transcriptions should allow the data to be selective for two main raisons, firstly allow researcher to use data relevant to the research question and secondly reduces time as transcription are very time consuming . The selection of the data not only tried to focus on the research question but also downsized the data to relevant themes supporting the research question. For example there were a few passages about weight loss from the female population which were not used. This was because weight loss was not mentioned by the male population which were driving the main thematic structure

Second- eliminating potential statements with bias. This involved comparing the notes taken during the interviews with the actual audio recordings. By comparing both it was easier to establish if some follow-up questions were aimed at clarification or in fact were leading questions. |
| 5. Analysing- decide what method is | Analysis was conducted with the framework approach as outlined by Richie and Lewis (2003) and with the support of Nvivo 10. This included several steps to ensure data was carefully managed and analysed in a methodical and logical |

appropriate to analyse the data	way in order to improve its scientific rigour and keep the abstraction stage linked to the raw data. Additional to the transcripts and interview notes, a descriptive summary sheet was also written for each respondent. It helped to analyse separate extracts isolated but also in the context of each interview.
6. Verifying- this stage covers the reliability and validity of the research	Reliability- addressed in the context of validity. Validity in this qualitative research was implemented as quality control. Validity was ensured by adopting the Seven Stages of a research interview (Kvale 1996), reflexivity activities as mentioned above and the use of the Framework Analysis and Nvivo 10. Both tools secured close connection with the original data extracts during the abstraction stage of the analysis.
7. Reporting- ensure communication of results is aligned with scientific criteria; ensure that results comply with ethical aspects and are of relevance to the reader	Realistic tail narrative adopted, 3rd person (Flick,2009) Quotation used to illustrate analysis rather than to demonstrate. Limitations of the research considered when discussing transferability.

Appendix 4 Interview Transcript
(I: Interviewer, R: Respondent)

I: What does your work mean to you?

R:I don't know, ummm, I suppose, It's Work, It's, It provides you with money, it's interesting, you know, hopefully it's interesting, Keeps me out of mischief, you'd get very bored very quickly you know if you didn't go to work, you have got to fill your time somewhere, I don't really think about it quite like that...

I: That's fair enough

R: You just go to work...

I:That's fair enough... When you think about work, what makes you happy?

R: Um, I like solving technical challenges, um, I like to encourage, or I like to help, I think I like to help um, younger staff, you know to progress, I think that, you know when you get more experience then as you see, if you see younger members of staff more and more inexperienced members of staff, you know improving their knowledge and experience and I find that interesting. You know sometimes, it's a bit of a sort of challenge, you get deadlines, and there is always a sort of a fun if I have got a tight deadline and I, you know you sort of get a bit of a sort of excitement about that, but I guess that is probably the main thing.

I: And what makes you concerned when you think about Work?

R: Well you represent an organisation and so if you give bad advice or you provide bad service to your client, you know the effect can be, you know it wouldn't be one person, but you know the potential is for you to lose a good client for instance which affects the whole company, it wouldn't just be a one off thing, but you know you have a level of responsibility to maintain you know good client relationships and not to you know cause problems to the company I think.

I: Can you describe what your typical day looks like?

Phil Burdon:- Typical Day? Well you know you have seen much of it today actually, you know, come and sit in the office, phone calls, emails, questions, depends where you are on a particular project. Sometimes, you know I've got reports to read and review, sometimes we've got a lot of, some days you wonder you came to the start of the day and you wonder what the hell you did because you started with some questions and queries and answered a few emails and you, you know it's mostly office based here, um, if you are travelling then you know it's tomorrow, I will get up, get on the train, work on the train...

I: Can you work from home, Phil?

R: Yes...

I: Have you got resources to work from home Phil?

R: Yes, I can, with the current situation with this project it's all unclassified so I can work from home if I need to.

I: So when you say unclassified, there is no confidentiality...

R: There is no confidential, well no.

I: Confidential work that needs to be in a restricted environment?

R: No.

I: So you can access information anywhere?

R: Yes, well I have got a company laptop as well so it is all on the company laptop you know, so I just use the company laptop if I need to.

I: Does your profession and its requirements impact on your work-life balance?

R: Not me no. But then I am, you know, I guess I would have thought I am quite, I don't know that I think I am unusual, but I am not Married, I don't have any kids, I haven't got, you know I don't, it's only me that I have to worry about...

I: It's just me time.

R: It's just me, yeah, I don't have the... I had imagined that if I had you know partners or kids or something then it would because you have got competing priorities, um, you know if, generally if there is a requirement, that I've got to go to London tomorrow then I don't have to think about it too much, its only me I have to think about, it's not like, you know, If I don't get back till half past nine at night then so what because I don't have to go pick the kids up or you know I'll not miss anything else...

I: That's fair enough,

R: So I think it's probably...

I: Do you think that despite of course the fact that you said that you don't have as many competing priorities and therefore it is easier to manage your work, How does your approach to managing paid work and life outside of work compare to the approaches your parents took in the care of you?

R: Hmm, that is a good question.

I: Do you see any difference at all? Or do you think that it is more related to childcare or...?

R: Well I see, well my dad always worked quite hard but you know he was, we knew when he was busy because he was working at home on Sunday but then my mum always worked part-time around the school, you know, it was a very traditional...

I: Bread Winner...

R: Yeah, you know, Dad had the full-time job, my mum worked all the time from when, as long as I can remember, but it was always part-time work around the school hours so she was the main, very traditional, you know...

I: Did your dad help with domestic work or care responsibilities?

R: Yeah, care responsibilities, not so much domestic, he wasn't much of an ironer, or a cook or something like that, it was a very traditional sort of, but since my mum has passed away he has turned into to a good cook.

I: Oh Right,

R: Well he likes to eat, he is one of these people, he likes nice food and so you know, he's quite prepared to get a recipe book out and you know try something new and so...

I: Oh Right, and when did that happen if you don't mind me asking?

R: Five years ago yesterday...

I: Has that changed your intake on life at all?

R: Not really, It kind of encouraged me to go travelling and it was like, well why not, you know my original plan was to, on my 40th birthday to go travelling for my 40th birthday, I don't know why I decided to go travelling, it just seemed like a good Idea, you know, why not try it at least once, and the reason I didn't go then was because my mum was ill and so it wasn't the right time but once she was gone, and then my um, it became clear that my dad was coping and looking after himself, then it was like why would I, why should I, you know, I've got my sister, I mean my dad is 75 so he's not, I mean he is still in pretty good health and my sister lives around here as well so it's not, it wouldn't be just me but um...

I: So it gives you like a sense of the time like isn't it, in life and um...

R: Yes, its like why not, go for it and see what it is like, might hate it but you've got to try it... at least once.

I: And did you like it?

R: Loved it.

I: Are you planning to travel again?

R: Yes definitely, when I don't know. It depends on if I get this Swiss job, because um...

I: That is quite interesting, if you do get the Swiss job, would that probably that trigger you to make some changes that is perhaps possible?

R: Yes.

I: And would you feel grieved at all about that?

R: No because it's just a different opportunity. You know if there is, potentially likely I might have to move to Switzerland for three years, but then I will be living in mainland Europe so a lot of these places, maybe I am not going to go off to south America but you have got all those countries you know two to three hours on a train you can go like umpteen countries so you know just change the approach, you know travel somewhere different.

R: So

I: You have the long weekends as well...

R: Yeah, the opportunity to go to the, once you take the getting to the airport from here, because Plymouth is a bit of a long way from anywhere and then the 2 hour, you know you could spend a day travelling to get to Amsterdam, whereas you could probably go on the train from Zurich in three hours, three, four hours so it suddenly becomes a much more practical.

I: So location is something quite important?

R: Yeah...

I: Quite important?

R: Yeah, I think that that is part of the attraction of moving to Switzerland, might be that it is an opportunity to meet new people, to do something new to work in a new company, new culture. It's bound to be interesting. It'll be and bad but it'll be different.

I: Yeah, of course, and how do you feel about the football?

R: I went without if for a year so... I'll just start following a Swiss team. It, you know it's, I hope that nothing will you know, I will still be an Exeter fan, but I will just start following a Swiss team. You know because it's what I like to do.

I: It's the game isn't it?

R: It's the game and going to the game and the whole, you know...

I: So you will find a way to adapt?

R: Yes, definitely without a doubt. It's also a good way of making friends with people you have something in common with so you know...

I: Has your lifestyle changed throughout your career and your work life balance changed as well or has it been pretty much the same?

R: No it's probably... I guess when I have been working for [company]it's not really changed a lot...

I: And how about who you worked with in the past?

R: And then it was more, it was different because at some point we had people working for me you know, staff, industrial staff and we worked, you know we did overtime and stuff like Saturdays and Sundays, um...

I: So you did shift work?

R: Yeah, but also you know that I always thought that the guys on the shop floor needed the money and you know, so it always seemed a bit unfair to deprive them of the money because I couldn't get out of bed, you know I wouldn't work a Saturday or a Sunday you know, it seemed a bit unfair to somebody who didn't you know could live without the money.

I: So what, I don't know if you agree with me, but my understanding of what you are saying is that when you have management responsibilities it goes back to competing priorities isn't it, if you are managing other people is when you need to take onboard their own priorities,

R: Yes,

I: And then that is when you need to start compromising,

R: Yes definitely, yeah, but then at that point I wasn't living in Exeter so I wasn't going to as many games and so it was a different balance and so it was you know um, it was a different balance if you like.

I: So you worked more but you had less things going on in your personal life?

R: Yeah, that is probably true. I had less things to do outside of work so, yeah.

I: That is fair enough, so you were comfortable with it?

R: Yeah. I came and went at the time and of course work is something that comes and it goes with deadlines and you know that is anybody's, that's for anybody's job and my sister worked for Sainsbury's and you know Christmas is Chaos because it is a peek time you know, all businesses are like that in some way.

I: That is fair enough. Tell me when you find hard to reconcile your work and life outside of work?

R: Oh, I don't usually find it too hard... I don't, because again it comes back to the fact that it is just me. You know I can imagine it would be really hard if I had, because my conflicting priorities aren't that conflicting, you know, but there I joke about that I want to go and watch football it isn't the end of the world if I don't go to a game and nobody is going to be you know,

I: Upset or...

R: No it has no effect on you know, so I don't see my friends for any, for a day, well you know it's not the end of the world. You know, they are not going to, It is not like missing the kids school play or you know something like that where you are actually seriously affecting somebody else's... you know it, it hasn't been , the only time it has got in the way, I think once, the very once when I had to go to a meeting in Scotland and I was going to drive some friends to football and so I couldn't but that, they made other arrangements, they didn't miss out, they made other arrangements but it's not, I don't usually have a struggle with it.

I: We all play different roles in life, have you got an important role? Something that is important to you that you see...

R: I suppose you know my sister and I have always got on really well so it's good to be uncle and brother.

I: That is fair enough. What sort of approaches do you use to reconcile work and life outside of work? So you mentioned a sabbatical was one of the things you like, so take leaves in blocks so you can go travelling, is there anything else like working from home, flexible time?

R: I mean the company's, the company treats us like adults so if we act like adults so you know, sometimes I can't remember, it worries me I you know like need an afternoon off for something, well you know I spent, you know I travelled to Zurich on bank holiday Monday so I'm off you know. You know so if you act

like a professional then the company or at least Mike and I think the whole company treats you professionally so if you need a, you know, I have no doubt in my mind if I hired a plumber I can work from home you know I can um, it's relatively straight forward for me.

I: So the flexibility, the option of having flexibility, not that you need that much, but the option is good.

R: I'm not sure what would happen if I said to [senior manager] I might go, I want to take another year's Sabbatical, that might be, I don't know, one seem, one year's sabbatical seems um, the company might be being friendly, um you know helpful, but, I suppose it's no, two years, you know, I don't know when, but I definitely want to do it again. To a certain extent I'm reasonably, I'm financially secure so if I had to, and I really wanted to do it and I realised it I could really easily resign and just do it and... you know. So I am reasonably comfortable that wouldn't be you know, and I could come back and get another job or whatever...

I: Yeah, so you don't feel like the financial pressure of...

R: No you know, I get reasonably well paid for what I do and I am relatively, you know I have got no dependence and I am relatively, you know my outgoings are relatively modest so you know, I am not one for designer clothes and spending all my money so...

I: Tell me how you organise your work and life balance at the same time, do you think at all or you just do it?

R: Just do it, I just look at the fixtures list and I look at you know, that's kind of like you know, we can go to work and then Saturday, look at the fixtures list for the weekend and that's kind of...

I: So you plan the work during the weeks work?

R: Generally yeah. You know it's quite nice sometimes when I went to see arcade fire up at the O2 service, it's nice to sometimes match the two together, I find in London if I have to stay, I always look and see if there is a match on in London...

I: Oh right.

R: Because you know if I've got to be sat in London on my, in a hotel, I might. You know... so try and take that opportunity if I can.

I: So overall you try and keep work for the week and weekends for...

R: It's kind of the way my interests out of work...

I: But you try to combine...

R: It's not planned so much, it's just the way it is you know. It's because my interest is primarily going to watch football on the weekend that, you know and we don't generally, I have worked weekends but you know it's not something that generally happens, it would have to be very rare, but if we had a particularly tight deadline you know, you just would, but it's not something that happens. It's a very rare occurrence.

I: Have you taken leave to care for somebody in the past? When your mum was ill for example?

R: Um, no I had some time off the company gave me after she died, to you know help out with my dad and that but that was really just time to you know when she passed away to go to the funeral so...

I: Do you feel that the time you had off for the sabbatical affected your career at all?

R: No. I don't think it did.

I: How much do you think work interferes with your life outside of work?

R: It doesn't generally. It's not a big issue at the moment.

I: And how about the other way around? Life interferes with work?

R: Hmm, I don't think so, I mean the biggest change would be if I get the Swiss Job, I mean that would be it. But it is not, Yes that is Work interfering with my life, but it's not quite the same because it is...

I: You welcome the changes...

R: Yes it is just a new challenge isn't it, it's something different. It, I wouldn't you know, names were put forward for the proposal, you know there was a discussion, well are you prepared and you do realise if your name goes in... well, yeah, because it is easy for me you know, it would be different, completely different decision you know for people if you have got families and kids and partners and husbands, whatever, wives with careers and kids in school and stuff like that. For me it is like, well shall I go or shan't I, well my dad is reasonably well, my sister is nearby if there is any problem, why would I not go. You know.

I: That is fair enough. What do you think about flexible working to meet commitments outside of employment, so the possibility of for example leaving earlier or starting earlier or the possibility of combining...

R: I think it is a good idea, I think it has to be sensible within the needs of the business, you know you can't, people have got busy lives and you know if you can come to a sensible agreement with people who need some level of flexibility that they can do what they are expected to do and it makes their life easier then, it should make them more effective at work and if they are not worried about oh God I have got to run out to collect the kids from school or you know I've got to you know, if you can make that flexibility and technology, modern technology should help to make that, you know that provided they can take that and people can deliver what they are expected of the actually it should be better if you can make them work with flexibility sensible, then you should, it should be a good thing for the business as well as for the people because if the people feel comfortable then there will be in theory they should, you know work better.

I: Do you feel that problem because you don't have kids and you are seeing that you are expected to do more than the others who have got family and kids?

R: Um, no I don't think so. No, I don't mean, um, no not really.

I: Talking about that, how about the expectations? You don't feel that because this is the way that your co-workers and your manager manages the expectations, they treat everybody the same or differently? Do you think that there is an expectation that is different for men and women in terms of pay, pay cuts, any kind of work life balance, can be sabbaticals, can be flexible working, or...

R: I don't think the company sees it that way, I think there is a general, well you know you should think of the business world in general, there is still a slight difference.

I: Mhmm, but is not affecting here?

R: I don't think so no, you know.

I: Do you think the company promote equality, that everybody is treated the same?

R: I think so, I mean I don't, I haven't seen anything, I think so, I think we have a fair, considering the business you know. We are in a generally male dominated business, that we have got more our representation particularly in our

engineering area rather than with other female employees is pretty high, i mean they have been pretty flexible, I mean women have had babies and come back and they have been given some flexibility, I don't know if that suits them I don't know you know.

I: Have you heard about the new family friendly act that means maternity leave can now be shared between Fathers and Mothers?

R: I have heard about it yeah.

I: Yeah, so the first 20 weeks needs to be the mother but then the remaining 26 weeks can be the father.

R: I knew that there was more family friendly legislation, what it was, I had no Idea.

I: Do you see any problems or would you... do you think that...?

R: No I don't see why not, no again it's like one of these things, you have to plan for one. Even if, you know people say there is no planning sometimes with babies but there is still sometime if you think about it, you know it's not like you have got nine months at least to think about certain things haven't you? It's not something that is going to turn up and say next week I am not going to do this or the week before that, right I'll, you know. There has got to be a reasonable level of expectation with giving the company a chance to make some plans, like I want to go on a sabbatical but I want to go next week. It's an unreasonable request, you know.

I: You do need to plan.

R: You have got, yeah, we have all got a plan about it so...

I: That is fair enough. Do you think your work load affects you, thinking about health and wellbeing?

R: Well sometimes...

I: How?

R: I mean not recently, but you know as you go through periods of time, sometimes you get stressed about stuff and so you know, waking up in the middle of the night occasionally and the first thing you think about is work then that is not a good sign, but you know it happens sometimes. It's not you know, it's a, err you know, there is an element of stress sometimes in all forms of life and providing it isn't endless then...

I: Do you feel stressed now at work?

R: No, I'm not too... It depends it comes and goes; it can be I am not permanently stressed like some people feel you know.

I: When you do feel stressed, what kind of coping strategies do you do, what do you do to bring yourself out of the situation or do you just say that it is a phase and just deal with it?

R: Generally it is not long periods of time so it's just a phase, I like exercise, it's good, it helps, you know, it's a good thing for stress to go to the gym and you know push some weights and I think that physical exercise helps with work too. Going to a football match and shouting and screaming at the top of your mouth does, that also helps, you know. If I am unhappy, you do get stressed occasionally but it's just...

I: So do you think that your hobbies help your health as well?

R: I think so yeah, well that and men coaching me to drink too much beer but...

I: Travelling , the football and drinking

R: The drinking, well the two go together don't they? Football goes together with the drinking beer and do does travelling.

I: So the football, yeah, so perhaps they can be a hazard to your health as well.

R: They can sometimes but I have made lots of new friends through it as well so that is always good.

I: That is interesting. Are you aware of any work life balance provisions that are available to you at work, like, apart from the informal sabbatical or...

R: No, generally its only informal stuff I know...

I: So it's flexibility, leave early,

R: Yeah, leave early, work from home that sort of stuff

I: So work from home, leave early...

R: It's relatively informal

I: Yeah, and are you happy with what is available to you including informally

R: Yes.

I: If you could choose anything what would that be in terms of preference? Would you go back to the company and say that I prefer that to meet my work and my life demands?

R: Well I like the flexibility in the start early and finish early, that is quite handy sometimes but I am not really...

I: No Buy holidays?

R: Buy holidays would be good because holidays is actually where you get to the point where you more easily find the holidays more useful than the money you might get from a pay rise. I could always use up all my holidays, that is never a problem.

I: Do you think that the organisation promotes work life balance culture? Promoting something more active, not just being friendly and receptive.

R: No, I don't suppose, no I don't think that they promote it, I'm not sure they are that pro-active...

I: They are just supportive

R: Yeah, I think that, well my opinion is, well my sort of observation is that they seem supportive from my limited experience, but it is not, well they would know whether you thought of... whether the people would know whether their work life balance would, you know if somebody is working for you, you would, people know generally if their work life balance wasn't um sensible, I don't know. I mean Mike gets to travel too much you know and he is away a lot, I mean I know why, Well I mean I know why but it can be, I am sure it is too much and he knows it as well. You have to look at some peoples you know lives, and sometimes the work is fine it is problems on their private lives or vice versa, work can be a normality sometimes.

I: Talking about [line manager], how would you describe the management attitude to work life balance? Do you think they lead by example? Is it important for them to lead by example for you?

R: Not for me, no I guess it depends on, I guess perhaps it might depend upon where you sit in the organisation to a certain extent, I mean for me it's like I have worked for him for a long time, I know him, I mean to be able to talk to him and you know if I want to some time off and that you know, it is not a problem, I guess I don't know whether it will be, I...

I: To him for example, even if he is very supportive but then he works very long hours...

R: I nag him to take holidays.

I: Do you feel like he is putting extra pressure on you guys? Do you follow his example?

R: Not on me no.

I: And how about on your peers?

R: I don't think so but I can't... I'm not sure um, I tend to be nagging him to take some time off, you know well it is like, you know, take some time off you know, we can cope without you and you know, some of it is not his choice, some of it is out of his control but you know have some time off, you know the world won't come to an end if you take a week or you know, it's got to be because otherwise you are not effective, people need to take their holidays or time off or whatever . It's good for the business

I: How could the organisation help you to make your work life better?

I: Um mine is pretty good so I don't know that is not an issue for me.

I: If you could change anything about your work life balance would you change anything and what would that be? Would you stop working full-time?

R: Eventually maybe. I mean there is no point in working for the sake of working.

I: So why do you work then? Is it more for the money or...

R: The money, well I don't know, money, interests, you know, Um you know it is not, I don't know, Why do you go to work? Well some of it is money, you know you have got to pay bills and you have got to, you know it is not just that and the work is interesting and it's technically challenging, some people are nice, some are a pain in the arse but it doesn't mean that it is not interesting you know.

I: And it needs to be interesting for you?

R: It does, otherwise, well yeah, because it does have to be interesting otherwise...

I: It is just for the money

R: Yeah… yeah, the money is good but still not, you know if it is boring then or if the people are really annoying then you know,

I: All the people.

R: Well, you know everybody is , you get two people and some people you like and some people you don't like but you know if you can work with them and its professional that's fine but some people you don't want to socialise with outside and some of them you do, that's like real life isn't it.

I: Has your involvement in this research influenced you to think about your work life balance?

R: I guess a little bit, I mean it must have done, I mean you said do you want to talk about it and I have said yes, I mean my pat answer is on work and football but it is kind of if you think about it actually the balance is like that, you know that suits me, um so I must have thought about it a bit. Not a lot to be honest, because If I thought the balance was wrong, I would like to think that I would have tried to do something about it before, you know, I have reached the point of thinking you know, this is driving me nuts, you know I am just going to have to do something different so...

I: Thank you.

Appendix 5 Interview Summary Sheet

[Respondent] is 44, divorced with 3 dependent children. He divorced 3 years ago when children were 14, 11 and 8. It was unclear if some of his answers were only to get a reaction or if he did mean what he said. For example, when asked what being a father meant to him, he said that it was a pain and a misery in a serious way. Then at other passages he seemed to have another view by using expressions like I was blessed enough to have kids. Nevertheless, his interview showed clearly a couple of things. First, he is very career focused and has a lot of enjoyment from work so he often prioritises work over everything else. Second, he also used statements saying that he had little emotional attachment with his parents. His views of parenthood is that children are their own people who need material providing and will get on with their own lives and learn by their mistakes. He described his children as challenging and said that he uses work to forget about his problems in home life. He mentioned that a few times when he missed Xmas and Easter with his children because of work, but then he said that he was happy to do so. He does believe that WLB has a lot to do with individual's personality and how smart people work. Critical scrutiny was interesting with [respondent] as he would say how flexible he is about people working from home and working flexible hours but at the same time he would question the commitment of young people when compared to the older generation and long working hours culture.

He uses exercises to distress and he said that he does not understand people who suffer from work-related stress. He said that he can only understand stress if *"individuals experience being in the wild with a lion trying to eat them"*. He said that he does not believe that work can trigger stress. He said things like *"stress is an excuse for lazy people"*. [Respondent] travels a lot with work and has adapted his life style to his business travel. For example, in terms of exercise he does more running and swimming as he can do it from anywhere. He also mentioned that he trained himself to sleep in airplanes by triggering the sleep with the action of taking his glasses off. He shared a few passages describing the set-up between him and his ex-wife in terms of sharing the childcare and house work. He said that that they did not agree much about the priorities when they were together. Then he smiled and said that the only thing they agreed

was that they both needed a *"housewife to care, cook and clean"*. In terms of childcare arrangements, after the divorce, he said that he has his children 8 days per month and said that he can work around that easily mostly because it is on Fridays and over the weekend. During the weeks he usually travels and manages clients from the Middle East which is convenient he said, it is because they don't work on Fridays. He also mentioned about the differences between offices and their attitude towards paid work, he gave the example of Germany and Finland being very difference. He described people having a life outside work as the *"Finnish Way"*.

Overall the interview had some impact statements, consequently as mentioned previously critical scrutiny was not always possible. It was difficult to establish if the respondents was trying to get a reaction, if it was just dry humour or if he meant his words. Another example of impact statement without any joking expressions *"I want to find a woman to clean, cook, look after me and give herself without expecting anything in return".* [Respondent] was probed by the interviewer who referred back to his statement as a wish list but then he replied saying that he was serious.

Appendix 6 Participation Information Sheet

Study title: Work-Life Balance from the male perspective.

Who is conducting this research?

This research has been conducted by Priscila Pereira, PhD student at Brookes University and Head of HR and Development for [Company].

Why have I been chosen?

The researcher is interested in hearing the views on Work-Life Balance from successful professionals within the management and engineering consulting fields. Like you, other [Company] employees have been invited to volunteer to take part in this research with their own views and experiences on Work-Life Balance.

After the 1st April 2011, the researcher will select the volunteers to allow variety of profiles in relation to age, gender and care responsibilities therefore not everyone who volunteers will be invited to join the study. To help the recruitment selection for this research, you are asked to complete the attached participant's profile form and submit it with your email.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Even after you volunteered to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Should you wish to withdraw your participation you need to write your request directly to Priscila Pereira.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview which will be arranged directly with you by Priscila Pereira at a time that is convenient for you and at your place of work. The duration of the interview should be between 60 to 90 minutes.

What is the purpose of the study?

The research will be aimed at knowledge creation but most importantly practical contribution on how to identify and manage Work-Life Balance (WLB) provisions amongst engineering and management consultants.

This will be achieved by creating a framework of knowledge taking into account all dimensions of managing WLB practices, minimising short and long-term implications and providing special attention to WLB gender inequity from the male perspective.

The project will collect information through semi-structured interviews across offices from all five [Company] legal companies based in 8 locations across the UK and the fieldwork will last for 6 months.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Priscila Pereira is conducting the research as a part-time PhD student at Oxford Brookes University, Business School. [Company] UK has been selected as the business case for this research and is sponsoring the research.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Research on WLB has mostly focused on mothers and/or the implications of WLB in practice. This research aims to explore the male perspective and practical ways of improving individuals' WLB while being successful professionals within the consultant engineering and management consulting fields. Your contribution will help me to identify strategies, preferences and approaches towards WLB in a professional environment.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Your participation is entirely voluntary and anything you say to us will be strictly confidential. All information collected during the interviews will be kept confidential (subject to legal limitations).

The data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research will also be kept securely in electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project.

Participant names and positions will be replaced by codes for the purposed of data analysis and any subsequent publications.

Will my personal data be protected?

Both, interview transcriptions and personal data provided via the participant profile form will be securely stored for up to 10 years after the completion of the project.

The data will be owned by [Company] and saved on company's laptop that is allocated to the researcher during the project. Then once the project is concluded the data will be transferred to a restricted sever drive allocated to Priscila Pereira. Both electronic storages comply with the Data Protection Act and [Company] UK Data Protection Policy.

All interviews will be audio recorded, saved on the laptop straight after the event and then deleted from the voice recorder. Backups will be saved on memory sticks with passwords restricting access.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A summary of findings will be available to each participant. The results may provide practical recommendations to relevant stakeholders on how companies in the fields of engineering and management consulting can improve their formal and informal WLB provisions while promoting gender equity in the workplace.

How can I request a copy of the results of the research study?

Email Priscila Pereira, priscila.pereira@[Company].com, to request your copy.

Who should I speak to after this interview, if I am concern with my own Work-Life Balance?

You should contact your Employee Assistant Programme, it is an employee benefit provided by an independent company to assist employees confidentially. This assistance varies from counselling services to legal advice. Further details of this service are available with your HR representative.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you can contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Contact for Further Information

Researcher

Priscila Costa Pereira Chartered MCIPD

PhD Research Student- Oxford Brookes University
Department of Hospitality Leisure & Tourism Management

Business School

Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane

Oxford OX3 0BP

Phone:.+44 (0) 1865 483858

Fax:.+44 (0) 1865 483878

Email: ppereira@brookes.ac.uk

Supervision Team

Judie Gannon	Simonetta Manfredi
Senior Lecturer	Co-Director Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice
Dept of HLTM Business School	
Oxford Brookes University	Brookes University
Phone: +44 (0)1865 483837	Phone: +44 (0)1865 485796
Email: jmgannon@brookes.ac.uk	Email: smanfredi@brookes.ac.uk

Appendix 7 Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Full title of project: **Work-Life Balance from the male perspective.**

Name, position and contact address of researcher:

Priscila Costa Pereira
PhD Research Student
Oxford Brookes University
Department of Hospitality Leisure & Tourism Management
Business School
Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane
Oxford OX3 0BP
Phone:.+44 (0) 1865 483858
Fax:.+44 (0) 1865 483878
Email: ppereira@brookes.ac.uk

Please Initial Box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

☐

3.   I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

4.   I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

☐

5.   I agree to the use of anonymised

quotations in publications.

☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature