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Organisational Work-Life Balance:

Influence of Managerial Perspectives of Gender and Justice

A Thesis submitted to the University of Dublin Trinity College for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Gender and Women's Studies

30 April 2009

by

Ms. J. Gwendolyn Daverth
Declaration

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Summary

Although the role of managers in work-life balance (WLB) has drawn increasing attention from scholars and practitioners, there remains a dearth of critical inquiry into the complexities underlying their decision-making processes. Given the considerable influence that managers have on their staff's ability to balance personal and working lives, this remains a significant gap in the field. Accordingly, the purpose of this thesis is to challenge existing methodological frameworks and theoretical oversights guiding WLB research.

To this end, it pursues a critical analysis of current models and identifies areas warranting further examination. Based on this examination, it concludes that inadequate attention has been paid to the influences of gender and fairness on managerial interpretations of WLB supports. As such, this study borrows from feminist theories of gender as well as organisational justice theory in positing that these models operate in tandem to influence how WLB supports are ultimately disseminated. In the process, it is argued that conventional WLB methodologies must incorporate this gender-justice model for future inquiries. Finally, this study tests the illuminative power of this 'gender-justice' model through qualitative case studies of senior and middle managers in the context of four Irish organisations.

Throughout the course of one-on-one interviews, managers outlined a diverse suite of considerations involved in their decision-making process which involved a matrix of organisational culture, justice and their assessment of the employee's commitment and loyalty. Yet it was also apparent that gendered worldviews so deeply permeated their WLB understandings that it was not possible to disaggregate them from their supposedly objective perceptions of justice. Rather, managers appeared to process decisions through an active interpretation of context in which largely invisible and unconscious gender assumptions overwhelmingly steered what managers believed to be a deliberative process.

In applying this gender-justice model, this study also underscored the importance of focusing on cultural perspectives in WLB research insofar as
managers who felt that organisational support was lacking were not only less likely to report a healthy personal WLB, but were also less likely to encourage one in their staff. Likewise, the framework proved useful in clarifying how these managers confronted WLB decisions by balancing their notions of fairness against their understanding of the organisation's WLB culture along with their assessment of the employee's commitment and loyalty. Acting on this evaluation, it became clear that they further relied on their views of gender to determine whether the employee was in sufficient need of the supports.
Acknowledgements

I wish to give special recognition and thanks to Professor Eileen Drew for her direction and support in helping me grow as a writer and researcher. I would also like to thank all the participants for their time and candidness – without them this project would not have been possible. Special recognition also goes to Dr. Maryann Valiulis and the Centre for Gender and Women’s Studies for their support and guidance. Finally, I would like to thank the Longroom Hub, Postgraduate Student Assistance Fund and the Trinity College’s Studentship programme for their financial assistance.

On a personal note, this thesis would have never been possible without my family and friends who supported, accepted and encouraged me with their conversations and loving faith. Their friendship, support and personal sense of adventure, although far too geographically distant, have helped me to find the courage to set out on my own adventure and the fortitude with which to finish.

Finally, most importantly, I want to thank my daughter, Matilda Rose, for her inspiration and fun distractions as well as my husband, Jason Daverth, whose support and countless tête-à-têtes were indispensable throughout. Their continual love and encouragement helped pull me out of the isolation of writing as well as give me the energy to continue.
Country Codes Used in this Report

EU(21) = EU15 + NMS6

EU(27) = EU15 + NMS12

EU(15) (former 15 'old' Member States pre-enlargement 2004)

AT Austria
BE Belgium
DK Denmark
FI Finland
FR France
DE Germany
EL Greece
IE Ireland
IT Italy
LU Luxembourg
NL Netherlands
PT Portugal
ES Spain
SE Sweden
UK United Kingdom

NMS6 (Six of the 12 new Member States which joined the EU since 2004)

CZ Czech Republic
CY Cyprus
HU Hungary
LV Latvia
PL Poland
SI Slovenia

NMS12 (Includes the six new Member States listed under NMS6)
SK Slovakia
RO Romania
BG Bulgaria
EE Estonia
LT Lithuania
MT Malta

For some of the analyses in the report, the 27 countries were grouped into the following five regional categories:
Scandinavia: Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Sweden (SE), Norway (NE)
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 - Overview

In recent decades, academic research on employment has increasingly focused on the relationship between work and personal life. Much of the early studies were based on an unsubstantiated assumption of the so-called 'nuclear family' where labour was divided between a male, public-sphere income earner (defined as a 'breadwinner') and an unpaid female worker in charge of private-sphere labour such as housekeeping and child-raising. As women have increasingly entered into paid public-sphere labour, some governments and organisations exhibited an interest in developing policies and initiatives to help them combine domestic and workplace responsibilities.

Yet over this same period, European states have witnessed a variety of demographic shifts in familial constructs which have challenged the intransitivity of nuclear families. As such, recent academic explorations have attempted to transcend long-held presumptions of familial structures and public-private labour trends towards a more inclusive view allowing all workers, regardless of family responsibilities, to achieve greater balance between their work and personal lives. From within the context of this transition emerged the field of work-life balance (WLB).

Originally, such inquiries were a response to the area of 'family-friendly' initiatives which had thus far focused on reconciling women's combined roles as domestic-caregivers and public-labour market participants. Yet WLB is an attempt to move the framework beyond the needs of female employees towards those of all workers regardless of parental status. WLB has been defined by the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies in Ireland as working arrangements and policies which assist workers in combining their family life, caring responsibilities and personal life outside the workplace while meeting the employer's needs (NFCWLB 2009).

Yet despite this rising interest, WLB frameworks have not yet fully accounted for the plurality of demographic shifts in familial or workforce structures that initially lead to the construction of 'family-friendly' policies. Indeed, despite being somewhat polemical, much of the extant WLB research and proposals remain centred around a gendered care-giving matrix to the exclusion of other
legitimate concerns. Consequently, WLB research has remained overly focused on basic availability / take-up surveys which offer few methodological mechanisms through which to challenge or further define the needs such policies purport to address.

In remaining confined within the self-fulfilling presumptions of the policies themselves, such approaches fail to account for the greater plurality of issues surrounding WLB needs in the modern workforce. Moreover, in the specific context of academic studies, there is a dearth of qualitative research examining the means through which such policies are ultimately disseminated to the workers. Presently, therefore, existing scholarly discourse on WLB has little understanding of these aspects; a gap which is particularly salient in the Ireland.

This thesis aims to address this gap by analysing organisational WLB models in Ireland. While the resulting data may hold intriguing implications for policy, the primary interest of this exploration is to posit a complementary expansion of conventional WLB research methods by examining the interplay between feminist theories of gender and organisational justice theories in a qualitative sample of Irish senior and middle managers. The resulting data provides evidence that this 'gender-justice' model may offer a more illuminative methodological approach through which to explain the complexities of conceptualising organisational WLB in future inquiries.

1.2 - Background

Throughout most of the industrial age, women’s labour market participation was predominantly complementary to their care-giving roles and therefore marked by part-time employment alongside periodic absences for childbearing (Myrdal and Klein 1956). Yet as the modern socio-economic environment is increasingly demanding female labour for familial solvency, European families have largely departed from the traditional ‘breadwinner’ model toward others such as dual-income, single-parent and one-person households (Drew et al. 2003; Hildebrandt and Littig 2006). Additionally, rising divorce rates and the prevalence of lone parent families has increased the imperative for women to
remain economically active in avoidance of long-term dependency on social welfare.

The last national census found that less than 8% of people in Ireland live in 'traditional breadwinner' families while almost 30% live in a 'modified traditional family' in which both partners work outside the home at least part-time. Moreover, 18% are single parents, 31% live in single households, almost 1% in cohabitating same-sex couples and 12% in heterosexual unmarried households (CSO 2005). Yet despite these shifts, there remains a pervasive assumption within Irish organisational cultures that workers are unencumbered by familial obligations and therefore free to engage in full-time employment. This iconic worker is 'the organisation man' a picture of a dedicated male patriarch; the traditional 'breadwinner' who is a distant father and husband while being a dedicated work-obsessed man (Whyte 1956; Kimmel 1993).

Largely as a consequence of this 'breadwinner' assumption, many policymakers and social scientists continue to view the tension between family and employment as primarily a women's issue (Lewis 1992; Hildebrandt and Littig 2006) despite the fact that the modern family can no longer be defined in homogeneous terms. For example, social scientist Esping-Andersen argues that:

... it is in large part the changing role of women that explains the new household structure, our altered demographic behaviour, the growth of the service economy and, as a consequence, the new dilemmas that the advanced societies faces.

Moreover, he notes that most European countries "have failed to adapt adequately to the novel challenges and the result is an increasingly serious disequilibrium" (Esping-Andersen 2004: v).

This effect can be seen throughout the EU(27) where states have pursued WLB initiatives, they have either directly or indirectly been aimed almost exclusively at enabling women to reconcile their conflict between care-giving and employment while ignoring the effects on others. This is largely a
consequence of the fact that many of these policies (e.g. maternity leave) had originally emerged under the guise of protecting pregnant and breastfeeding mothers from the 'harsh' working conditions prevalent throughout 19th-century industrialisation. Such policies later expanded to include initiatives such as parental leave, promotion of part-time working and, in some countries (most notably the Nordic states) subsidised childcare. Yet with state policies resulting in different and often unexpected outcomes, researchers began to focus on causation (Walby 1986; Esping-Andersen 1990; Leira 2002). Such inquiries have contributed various conceptual models through which academics and practitioners have come to recognise the limitations of constructing policy within hegemonic frameworks. The following sections explores some of these areas in greater detail.

1.3 - Defining Work-Life Balance

The purpose of this thesis is to challenge existing theoretical concepts and methodological frameworks guiding WLB research. To this end, it pursues a critical analysis of current models and identifies conceptions warranting further examination. In the process, it expands understandings of WLB by incorporating 'gender' and 'justice' theories into a unified approach. Finally, this study tests the illuminative power of this 'gender-justice' model through interview data collected on managerial perceptions of WLB in four Irish organisations.

In order to both contextualise and understand these concepts, this exploration proceeds by establishing how WLB policies are currently created and understood in the framework of the EU(27) in which Ireland is operative. In this context, EU(27) Directives and Recommendations set certain guarantees in terms of family-related leaves (e.g. maternity and parental) and standard maximum working hours. Under these parameters, policies have developed around three main areas: statutory working hours, state-level childcare schemes and mandated leave arrangements. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there exist significant variations in how these strands have translated into policy across the member states (Figure 1.1).
Despite demographic departure from the 'breadwinner' model, EU(27) states and organisations as well as social researchers have remained focused almost solely on the dynamics between women, family and work. As a result most policies merely maintain the status quo imbalances. Walby (1990) highlights this myopia as the dominant force in perpetuating workplace inequality while Young (1999) argues that such focus may be attributed to the emergence / reinforcement of a 'family-friendly backlash' from childless employees who feel penalised.

Such assertions illustrate the imperative to refocus such inquiries to help policymakers address the needs of a wider plurality of modern workers. Reflecting this, the dominant terminology has indeed departed from 'family-friendly' to the more inclusive framework of 'work-life' (Drew et al. 2003). Yet despite this terminological shift, most contemporary policies and research remain entrenched in the work-family rubric (Smithson and Stokoe 2005). In other words, unlike family-centric research, WLB should not solely focus on the relationship between parenthood and work, but rather on the ability of all employees, regardless of gender or parental status, to achieve a balance between their personal lives and paid work.
Since its inception, definitions of WLB have both broadened and been used in an increasing variety of contexts. The concept may ultimately vacillate between a body of research (Parasuraman and Greenhaus 2002), a type of policy (adapted in part from Deven and Moss 2008) or an overarching theoretical model (Kodz et al. 2002). Nevertheless, much of the field appears to have not fully internalised that WLB's emergence signals a general departure from family-centric views to a framework through which to facilitate a wider diversity of personal activities that may conflict with employment.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this exploration, the essence of WLB may be expressed in terms of: workplace supports, which can take the form of policies, programmes or initiatives, made available either through statute or private initiative, that seek to facilitate the balancing of work with an employee's personal life. While the focus has been expanded, the typological framework of Figure 1.1 remains whereby policies may include the design and implementation of EU(27) interventions (e.g. working time regulations and maternity leave guidelines), state-sanctioned measures (e.g. parental leave and childcare measures) or organisational initiatives (e.g. flexi-time or tele-working). In the latter area, programmes can span a continuum of formal and informal supports through which organisations can help an employee to achieve balance.

Such WLB initiatives have been the focus of a range of EU(27) policies and recommendations surrounding the issues of childcare, working times and leave arrangements (EFILWC 2009) through which member states such as Ireland have been required to focus policies. As a result, individual organisations operating within member states may offer a significant diversity of programmes (Table 1.1 and Table 1.2) determined by a number of factors including (but not limited to) an employee's geographical location, nationality, gender, workplace and role within the organisation.
As seen in Table 1.1, organisational arrangements usually fall into one of four structures based around flexible working, care-giving, leave and personal support. Likewise, they can span a continuum of formal supports (e.g. on-site crèche) or informal supports (e.g. organising a parents’ support network). Moreover, these can also be available across the organisations (e.g. parental leave) or restricted to certain level employees (e.g. tele-working). Some common organisational WLB arrangements are defined below (Table 1.2):
Table 1.2 - Definition of Common Workplace WLB Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WLB Arrangement</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexi-time or Core-hours</td>
<td>Gives people choice about their actual working hours, usually outside of certain agreed core times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Working</td>
<td>Allows people to work standard weekly hours which are less than the full-time weekly hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-sharing</td>
<td>Involves two people carrying out the duties of a post that would normally be done by one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tele-working or Home-working</td>
<td>Involves working from home and using a telephone and/or computer to maintain communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term-time work</td>
<td>Employees remain on permanent contract but with unpaid leaves of absence during school holidays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staggered hours</td>
<td>Where employees within a workplace have different start, finish and break times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed working hours</td>
<td>Allows people to work their total number of agreed hours over fewer working days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift swapping</td>
<td>Employees can re-arrange shifts provided the organisation’s needs are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-roistering</td>
<td>Looks at the numbers of staff and skill mixes required during each working day and allows individuals to put forward preferred working times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual hours</td>
<td>Organises working time on the basis of yearly hours rather than weekly – usually used to fit in with peaks and troughs of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time off in lieu</td>
<td>Employees take time off to make up for extra hours worked.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The use of such organisational WLB programmes has been shown to have a substantial and widely-cited benefit to both organisations and participating individuals (Drew et al. 2003; Deven and Moss 2008). Regarding the latter, such benefits may include the reduction of conflict reported between an individual’s work and personal life (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1997; Lewis 2001) and an overall improvement in satisfaction and well-being (Thiede and Ganster 1995). From the organisational perspective, WLB programmes have had a demonstrable correlation with reduced absenteeism and turnover
(Baltes et al. 1999) in addition to higher organisational performance and productivity (Konrad and Mangel 2000).

Despite these advantages, organisations vary in their commitment level to such arrangements and, even in organisations where they are extensively available, there is often an under-utilisation among employees (Hochschild 1997; Lewis 2001). This under-utilisation is particularly prevalent among men at all levels within the organisations as well as women in supervisory or managerial positions (Solomon 1994; Haas and Hwang 1995; Kirby and Krone 2002). When seeking to understand this diminished take-up, it has been found that organisational environments can be fundamental in either advancing or restricting the effectiveness of WLB programmes (Starrels 1992; Sherer and Coakley 1999; Thompson et al. 1999; Campbell 2001; McDonald et al. 2007). Thompson et al. (1999:394) refer to this aspect of the broad organisational culture as 'work-life balance culture' and define the construct as "the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and lives."

This WLB cultural construct is underpinned by a number of conceptually distinct dimensions. For example, even where formal WLB arrangements are in place, managers may subvert them by refusing to allow employees to participate or by applying the policies unevenly (Thiede and Ganster 1995; Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2007). Evidence also suggests that employees may be reluctant to avail of WLB programmes, such as part-time, for fear of being perceived as less serious and therefore jeopardising their careers (Solomon 1994; Lewis 2001; Kirby and Krone 2002; Drew and Murtagh 2005).

Regarding this latter issue, employees within some organisational cultures, believe that the amount of time one spends at work is interpreted by their managers and co-workers as indicative of their contribution and career dedication. Consequently, such environmental norms may make employees reluctant to take time off or reduce their work hours to attend to personal
elements of their lives (Lobel and Kossek 1996; Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2007). This is a critical point in that formal programmes aimed at balancing work and personal lives may be undermined if the WLB culture is (or is perceived to be) unsupportive.

However, despite the fact that researchers are beginning to recognise the role of organisational culture in either encouraging or discouraging WLB programmes, few studies have explored these cultural dimensions directly, particularly in the context of the EU(27) (McDonald et al. 2007). Recent US studies into 'work-life balance culture' have argued that it is constructed of five elements: 'Managerial Support'; 'Organisational Time Expectations'; 'Career Consequences'; 'Gendered Perception of Policy use' and 'Peer Support' (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005; McDonald et al. 2007).

In light of these findings and the critical gaps in both the EU(27) specifically and the field in general, this thesis explores elements of organisational cultural with a specific focus on managerial influence. Senior managers are particularly relevant insofar as they are responsible for interpreting and applying statutory regulations and deciding what, if any, additional supports to offer, how they are understood throughout the organisation and what resources are allocated for their implementation. While middle managers are critical in determining how to ultimately implement such policies and, in the event that such policies are limited, choosing which employees gets access (Hegtvedt et al. 2002; Drew et al. 2003; McDonald et al. 2007).

In occupying this space between statute and take-up, managers therefore have considerable influence on their staff's WLB levels. Yet given the dearth of inquiries in this area, the field has not yet formed a complete understanding the operative mechanics behind this. Indeed, there is much work to be done in explaining why managers hold diverse views of the same WLB policies. While some may feel that certain policies adequately meet current or potential WLB needs, others may feel that such policies unfairly advantage or penalise groups for their life decisions or biological sex.
As a result, managers rely on their own perspectives to decide how and when to reconcile the WLB needs of their staff and researchers are only beginning to understand how managers rely on these perceptions to exert influence over the policies themselves. In this regard, a few researchers have begun to focus on what accounts for these differences, Young (1999) argued that, despite the apparent positive consequences of WLB supports, some workers (e.g. those less likely to avail) may feel required to do extra work in order to compensate for those on WLB arrangements. Such extra work and / or exclusion from benefits may create a sense of injustice which can lead to resentment.

Some studies have attempted to theorise how to predict this behaviour (Grover 1991; Galinsky et al. 1997). For example, Hedtvedt et al. (2002) examined factors that could impact personal views of WLB policies by examining the impact of three elements: gender-role beliefs, organisational supports and procedural justice. Yet despite the potential merit these factors may offer, they were examined only in contextual terms and applied in a limited quantitative study. As such, this thesis asserts that while their model remains both applicable and promising to an exploration of managers' attitudes toward WLB, it must be both reconstructed and methodologically refined in order to fully account for the complexities involved.

To this end, each of the three elements must be expanded. In terms of gender-role beliefs, this thesis is largely sympathetic to feminist research which has argued that the gendered-self cannot be disaggregated as a simple contextual element or mitigating factor but rather must be understood as inherent to who managers are and how they view the world (Howard and Hollander 1997; Kroska 1997). Similarly, organisational supports need to be re-constructed to incorporate the previously highlighted elements of WLB culture ('Managerial Support'; 'Organisational Time Expectations'; 'Career Consequences'; 'Gendered Perception of Policy use' and 'Peer Support') (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005; McDonald et al. 2007). Finally, by neglecting to sufficiently address these elements, this thesis argues that the model presented by Hedtvedt et al. fails to adequately account for the relationship between how managers' gender beliefs influence their perceptions
of how WLB supports should be fairly allocated. To this end, this study improves on prior research by combining theoretical notions of justice and gender into a gender-justice model through which to better understand this phenomenon.

1.4 - Outline of Thesis Chapters

In pursuing a clearer understanding of the effect managers have on their staff’s WLB, this thesis expands WLB discourse by examining the interplay between feminist theories of gender and organisational justice theories. In combining these theories into a gender-justice model, this thesis measures how such a framework can further illuminate the complexities involved in WLB initiatives through qualitative case studies of Irish senior and middle managers in the context of their respective organisational cultures. In so doing, this thesis posits gender-justice as a more inclusive theory through which to understand how managers use these concepts to decide when and how to meet their staff’s WLB needs by addressing the following broad question:

Thesis Question: In what way does an organisation’s culture and managerial perspectives of gender and fairness influence the allocation of work-life balance supports?

Implicit in this question are the following considerations which are be explored in Chapters 5 – 8 respectively:

(1) What effect does an organisation’s work-life balance culture have on the way managers understand and allocate WLB supports?

(2) In what ways and to what extent do managers understand the concept of work-life balance in their own lives?

(3) In what ways and to what extent do respective perspectives of gender and justice influence how managers exercise their discretion in facilitating WLB in their staff?

(4) In what ways are gender and justice linked in determining a manager’s interpretation and allocation of work-life balance supports?
In order to answer these research questions, this thesis must establish a number of elements. First, contextualise how WLB policies are constructed within Irish organisations by reviewing relevant theoretical explorations and empirical studies as they pertain to EU(27) and state regulations (chapter 2). In Chapter 3, extend this exploration to the organisational level and establish the contemporary theoretical parameters of the existing discourse by contextualising the role of organisational culture and managers in WLB facilitation.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approach underlying this inquiry and explores the ethical issues, research strategies and data analysis as well as the development of relevant research tools. Based on this methodology, Chapters 5 – 8 present analyses of the primary data collected though one-on-one interviews and survey results. Each chapter is designed to sequentially answer the research questions based on the following progression (Figure 1.2):

Figure 1.2 - Analysis Framework

In moving from broad to narrow, Chapter 5 examines organisational WLB culture with a particular emphasis on expanding the field's limited knowledge
of how cultural elements inform managerial WLB decisions. Following this, Chapter 6 focuses on managers within this organisational context insofar as they understand and define WLB in their own lives. Subsequently, Chapter 7 engages in a more focused examination of the influence that managerial perspectives of gender and justice have on their allocation of WLB supports while Chapter 8 pursues a more detailed examination of the specific interplay between these two perspectives in determining who may avail. Finally, the thesis concludes with a discussion of the critical findings as well as some weaknesses and opportunities for future research.
Chapter 2 - EU(27) and Member States: Work-Life Balance Policy and Literature

In order to more fully contextualise this study, this chapter reviews relevant theoretical explorations and empirical studies as they pertain to the EU(27) and state regulations within which organisational WLB is operative.

The chapter is divided into four main components. Section 2.1 outlines the major demographic characteristics of the labour market in the EU(27) and Ireland with a particular emphasis on dimensions of gender inequality underpinning policy-makers' motivations to focus on WLB. Section 2.2 examines influences to WLB including theoretical and existing empirical research examining the imbalance between work and personal life. Section 2.3 explores models of policy creation at the EU(27) and state level insofar as they form the backdrop against which Irish organisations are operative. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of current policy and leave arrangements in the EU(27) and Ireland.

2.1 - The Labour Market: Employment Rates and Work-Life Balance

A key motivation behind WLB initiatives is to help mitigate the rising pressures facing workers in the wake of changing Western societal norms such as: the delay in entering marriage and parenthood; the increasing popularity of cohabitation which, in some EU(27) countries, now surpasses marriage; an overall fertility decrease coupled with a rise in births outside marriage; and the general destabilisation of relationships and marriages (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). For example, as fertility levels continue to decrease, the percentage of the population aged 55-64 is forecast to rise at a rate of 14 per cent per year between 2002-2010 (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). This changing backdrop has forced workers to face increasing intensity and workplace pressures as organisations downsize and demand higher productivity levels to compete in the increasingly competitive global market (EFILWC 2003).

Over the past decade, rapid economic changes have also transformed the size and composition of the workforce with the most notable change being the
increase in female employment outside the home. As of 2005, women represented over 40 per cent of the global labour force with 70 per cent of women in developed countries involved in some sort of paid employment (ILO 2005). The employment rate for persons aged 15 to 64 years in the EU(27) was 58% for women and 73% for men in 2007 though was still lower for women than men in all member states. Specifically, the female employment rate varied from a low of 36% in Malta to a high of 73% in Denmark (Eurostat 2009) (Eurostat 2009).

In the EU(27) in 2006, almost one-third of women (31%) worked part-time, compared with 8% of men. The proportion of women working part-time ranged from 3% in Bulgaria to 75% in the Netherlands. Additionally, 15% of female employees in the EU(27) were employed on a temporary basis with Romania (1.8%), Estonia (2.2%) and Lithuania (2.8%) having the lowest shares of temporary female employees while Spain (37%), Poland (26%) and Finland (22%) had the highest (Eurostat 2007).

Table 2.1 - Percentage of population age 15-64 in labour Market in Ireland and the EU(27): 1997 - 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ireland Men</th>
<th>Ireland Women</th>
<th>EU(27) Men</th>
<th>EU(27) Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (CSO 2007; Eurostat 2007)

Like many other industrialised countries, Ireland has experienced a sharp rise in female labour participation coinciding with recent socio-economic changes such marriage and maternity trends (table 2.1). The marriage rate in Ireland has dropped from 7 per 1000 in 1970 to 5.1 per 1000 in 2003 (Eurostat 2007). Likewise, the total Irish fertility rate has been steadily declining from 3.76 children per women in 1960 to 1.99 in 2004 (Eurostat 2007). Coupled with these smaller families, trends also indicate a delay in starting families with women’s average age at their first birth (Table 2.2) rising from 27.9 in 1955 to 31.4 in 2006 (CSO 2007).
Table 2.2 – Average Age at First Birth Within Marriage (1955 – 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age at First Birth (within marriage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (CSO 2007)

In the EU(15), there had already been an overall decline in marriage and fertility inversely proportional to divorce and marital separations although divorce rates in Ireland remain one of the lowest at 0.7 per 1000 compared to the EU(15) rate of 2.1 per 1000. Coupled with the structural shift in Irish families where 18% of households consist of lone-parents and 30% live in a ‘modified traditional family’ – where both parents are engaged in paid work outside the household. These changes increase the likelihood that families will have greater difficulty balancing domestic responsibilities with their labour market participation (CSO 2007).

These changes have also coincided with the relative increase of women in the labour market. By 2002, women comprised over 80% of the total increase in full-time employment and the rate continues to rise with married women’s participation increasing from 7 per cent in 1971 to 48% in 2004 (CSO 2003; 2005). This represents the acceleration of a trend that began in the early 1980s when women’s total employment was only 29% and grew to 33% by 1988 (RUSSELL et al. 2009). One of the implications of this trend is that there has also been a significant rise in the proportion of Irish families where both parents are engaged in private-sphere work.

Rapid economic transitions during this period contributed to significant changes in the size and composition of the Irish workforce (RUSSELL et al. 2009). The economic increases of the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ that began in the 1990’s witnessed a 30% increase in female employment from 39% in 1997 to 51% in 2007 (Table 2.3) while unemployment plummeted from almost 16 per cent to just over 4 per cent (CSO 2005).

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In late 2008, deteriorating conditions in the global economy resulted in high levels of labour market instability and job loss. In Ireland, the unemployment rate had increased to 11% by March 2009 which was a significant decline compared with the previous seasonally adjusted rate from the Quarterly National Household Survey of 7.7% in the fourth quarter of 2008 (CSO 2009). These changes have made worker productivity levels of paramount importance to organisational survival and has subsequently increased the risk that employees will be under greater pressure and workplace intensity. This has further complicated workers' abilities to reconcile their work and personal lives and has therefore brought the issue of WLB to the forefront of both organisational and government policy explorations. While the responses to this rising imperative are explored later in this chapter, the following section focuses on how such economic changes have translated into increase work-life imbalances for employees in both an EU(27) and Irish context.

### 2.2 - Influences on Work-Life Balance

Alongside increasing global competition, the changing workforce demography in Ireland has put greater pressure on organisations to streamline efficiency and raise productivity levels. As these workplace pressures increase, recent WLB explorations have focused on three labour market issues insofar as they have been specifically linked to work-life balance levels: how working time is organised; the level of work intensity and pacing; and employee stress levels and overall job satisfaction (EFILWC 2002; Employment and Social Affairs 2003). These issues are significant in understanding how workers experience tensions between their personal lives and work as well as to what degree they are able to balance such strains. This section contextualises how these topics
relate to the creation of various WLB interventions (e.g. policies and programmes) in the EU(27) and Ireland as well as the organisational level.

2.2.1 - The Influence of Working Hours on WLB

Long hours have been consistently linked to difficulties in balancing work and personal life (Fine-Davis et al. 2004; Fine-Davis et al. 2005). Since 1993, the EU has mandated a maximum working week of 48 hours or less (European Council 1993). The UK, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and most new member countries have the highest maximum statutory hours set at 48 hours per week while Spain, Portugal, Austria, Finland and Sweden set their limits at 40 hours per week. Belgium has the lowest at 39 hours per week (Employment and Social Affairs 2003).

However, the 'agreed' normal working times (or the hours organisations expect employees to work), remain well below this statutory maximum in all countries (except Belgium) with the average full-time employee working 40 hours a week in 2001 (Table 2.4). The average 'standard week' between states varies widely from 30.1 hours in the Netherlands to 40.2 hours in Greece among all employees and from less than 39 hours in France, Italy and the Netherlands to 43.3 hours in the UK for full-time employees (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). Similarly, there is a substantial disparity between 'usual' working hours for employees across occupations with average hours being generally longer for managers, legislators, service workers and skilled manual workers while tending to be lower among professionals and technicians.

Table 2.4 - Statutory Maximum, Average Agreed and Usual Weekly Hours: Ireland, UK and EU, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statutory Maximum</th>
<th>Average Agreed Hours</th>
<th>Average Usual Hours of all Employees</th>
<th>Average Usual Hours of Full-Time Employees</th>
<th>Average Usual Hours of Part-Time Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The UK has the highest proportion of employees working long hours in the EU(27) with the European Labour Force survey showing almost 20 per cent of full-time workers exceeding 48 hours per week – a level comparable only with Latvia (LFS 2006). In comparison, only 5 to 10 per cent of workers in Ireland and new member states average more than 48 hours per week while most other EU(27) member states fall below 5 per cent (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). In Ireland, 37 per cent of men and almost 9 per cent of women worked over 42 hours per week while 14 per cent of men and 2 per cent of women worked 60 hours or more (OECD 2003).

Recent data has shown this trend to be increasing. Since 2007, around 17 per cent of men and 3 per cent of women worked more than 45 hours per week (CSO 2009). Conversely, only 8 per cent of men worked less than 35 hours per week compared with over 41 per cent of women. Despite these differences, the vast majority of all workers, regardless of sex, reported working between 35 and 39 hours each week (Table 2.5).
Table 2.5 - Usual Hours per Week by Percentage of Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usual Hours / Week</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;34</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;19</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-34</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from CSO data 2009

The landmark Irish study, 'Off the Treadmill', showed that longer than standard hours were also prevalent throughout the workforce with the authors finding a correlation between responsibility-level and long hours. Specifically, 86 per cent of senior managers and 61 per cent of junior managers routinely exceeded their standard hours compared with only 30 per cent for manual and non-manual workers. Working beyond the standard hours was also rewarded differently between occupations with only 6 per cent of senior managers receiving overtime pay compared to 84 per cent of manual workers (Drew et al. 2003).

These findings were supported by a 2007 national study on working hours which found that, on average, all grades of staff worked more than their contracted weekly hours (McCarthy and Grady 2008). The study also showed that longer weekly hours were related to higher levels of responsibility with senior managers reporting an additional 9.9 hours above their contracted week compared with 8.1 hours among middle managers, 6.7 hours for other professional staff, 4 hours for clerical/administrative staff and manual/technical staff working an additional 8.1 hours above their contracted weekly hours.

These statistics indicate that the increasing trajectory of work hours is well documented in both the EU(27) and Ireland. As research has found a strong link between long hours and poor WLB, these findings help explain the rising
government and scholarly interest in developing more effective WLB programmes. Yet it is important to note that working hours alone cannot predict WLB levels insofar as other factors can alternately mitigate or intensify these needs (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). The following sub-section explores the respective roles of job quality and satisfaction levels as additional factors motivating the increasing attention to WLB development.

2.2.2 - Job Quality and Satisfaction

The degree to which workers report job quality and satisfaction levels plays a significant role in their perception of WLB (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). In the EU, the importance of job quality was first raised at the March 2000 Lisbon Summit. As used in this context, job quality “means not only looking at or taking account of the existence of paid employment but also looking at the characteristics of that employment” (Employment and Social Policy 2001: 7). In other words, how an employee perceives their job satisfaction is as important to their sense of WLB as other quantitative factors such as working hours.

In determining the fairly subjective notion of job quality, the Employment and Social Policy study posited that crucial determinants were not only wages, but also job satisfaction, career security, work-time arrangements and access to training and career development. While according to these criteria the majority of jobs in the EU are considered high quality, at least one-quarter are of relatively low quality and lacking in the necessary employee supports (Figure 2.2). The European Commission 2003 yearly report noted that this had resulted in over one-quarter of those employed in these jobs moving into unemployment within one year (Employment and Social Affairs 2003).
One aspect of job quality that has been linked to WLB levels – job satisfaction – varies greatly between EU(27) countries with about 20 per cent of employees in 2003 claiming dissatisfaction with their job. Greece, Italy, Spain and the UK had the highest level of dissatisfied workers in contrast to almost 90 per cent satisfaction rates among employees in Denmark, France, Ireland, the Netherlands and, most notably, Austria (Figure 2.3).
Satisfaction levels were also measured in a number of recent Irish studies. For example, a study by O'Connell et al. (2004) attempted to measure job satisfaction by surveying specific employment aspects such as working hours, conditions and earnings. The authors confirmed the Eurostat findings with over 90 per cent of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were satisfied with their current jobs. The lowest level of satisfaction was reported in terms of earnings with 30 per cent of all respondents reporting discontent with their pay (O'Connell et al. 2004). The research team also explored the relationship between job satisfaction, occupation and workplace characteristics and found higher satisfaction levels among workers in permanent positions as well as senior officials, public employees, those in the education sector and those with smaller workloads. In contrast, those in the hotel and restaurant sector and those on temporary contracts reported the lowest satisfaction levels.
Research has further linked working hours, job quality and job satisfaction to perceptions of work-life balance levels (EFILWC 2002; Employment and Social Affairs 2003). The literature presented in this section illuminate some of the broader issues facing Irish workers. Ireland has a higher percentage of workers employed in low-quality jobs than most EU(27) countries and the average full-time employee in Ireland works 39.5 hours a week, just below the EU average of 40 (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). Yet despite the low quality of their jobs, workers in Ireland report higher than average job satisfaction rates suggesting that Irish workers might report higher levels of WLB than some of their EU(27) counterparts – a point explored further in the following sub-section.

2.2.3 - Work Intensification, Stress and Reported WLB Levels

As discussed earlier, increased competition in the global economy has contributed to market intensifications whereby work is being carried out faster and under tighter deadlines than ever before. Recent research has shown no indication that this trend is reversing (EFILWC 2003; EFILWC 2006). This increased pressure has been associated with poor general health and overall tensions in the personal lives of individual workers (Burchell et al. 1999). Work intensification affects all sectors of industry and occupational groups throughout the EU(27) (EFILWC 2006).

In 2002, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions surveyed working conditions and found that, between 1990 and 2000, EU(15) workers reported a major increase in workplace intensity levels (EFILWC 2002). This intensification was attributed to radical changes in organisational structures within both the local and global economies. Among these changes were a workforce reduction stemming from organisational restructuring and budgetary constraints such as those reported in a study by EFILWC (1995) of the hospital sector where job intensification resulted from chronic understaffing. Workplace intensification has also been correlated with growing market pressures forcing companies to increase productivity (EFILWC 1998; EFILWC 2002).
In the EU(15), 25 per cent of employees reported working under almost constant high speeds with 30 per cent affected by tight deadlines and 20 per cent lacking sufficient time at work (EFILWC 2003). In other words, more than one in five workers are exposed to high work intensities caused by excessive speed, deadlines or time constraints (Table 2.6). In general, blue-collar workers were more likely to report high-speed working with 49 per cent of industrial workers and 46 per cent of craft workers affected compared to 33 per cent among junior executives.

Table 2.6 - Average Frequency of High Speeds and Tight Deadlines by Employment Grade (1995 - 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Executives</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Executives</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technicians</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Staff</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Workers</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft Workers</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Workers</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled Workers</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>38%</strong></td>
<td><strong>40%</strong></td>
<td><strong>42%</strong></td>
<td><strong>44%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (EFILWC 2003)
In EU(27) research, this intensification has also been linked to an increase in stress and musculoskeletal disorder as well as to workplace violence and harassment (EFILWC 2002; O'Connell et al. 2004; EFILWC 2007). Moreover, job quality has been linked to working conditions with low quality jobs correlated with high exposure to intense and more hazardous workplace settings (EFILWC 2002).

Similar results were reported in the Irish context by O'Connell et al. (2004) who found that Irish workers were under considerable pressure with 82 per cent of participants having to work 'very hard', 51 per cent feeling under a great deal of pressure at work, 38 per cent never having enough time at work to complete their duties and 47 per cent often having to work extra time to get their job done (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 - Percentage of Employees Reporting Having to Work at Very High Speeds or under Tight Deadlines

[Bar chart showing percentage of employees working at very high speeds and to tight deadlines over three years (1990, 1995, 2000).]

Source: EFILWC 2003

O'Connell et al. (2004) also explored the degree to which work was causing stress by 'spilling over' into people's home life and found that one-quarter of
Irish employees always or often found their work stressful. Moreover, 31 per cent reported always coming home from work exhausted with 18 per cent always too tired to enjoy things outside of work. Overall, between 10 and 15 per cent of participants reported a significant inability to balance their work and family lives. Based on these findings, O'Connell et al. suggest that, "there is a work/life balance problem for a significant minority of workers" (2004:39).

When considering who encounters work-life conflict, O'Connell et al. (2004) concluded that male employees experience greater levels of work pressure and stress. Despite reporting fewer responsibilities in caring/household work than women, job rigidity and longer work hours led to higher levels of work-life conflict. They also found that work pressures were likely to increase with age and peaking among those aged 40-54. Nevertheless, stress levels were also high among the 25-39 age group – the period of key career development and family formation. Not surprisingly, participants of any age with children of pre-school age reported the highest levels of workplace stress and pressure.

Similar results were found in a recent nationwide study based on 1,218 one-on-one interviews (Fine-Davis et al. 2005) which found that 25 per cent of participants reported difficulty in combining their job and personal lives and with 18 per cent reporting dissatisfaction with their current WLB. In contrast to the findings of O'Connell et al. (2004), men were slightly more likely than women to report that they found it easy to combine work and life (Figure 2.5). As O'Connell et al.'s study based their findings on other factors, such as stress levels and workplace pressures, the disparity suggests that men might be less likely to report poor WLB even when they experience it. This is supported by the Fine-Davis et al. findings that men are more likely than women to want more time with their families.
The Fine-Davis et al. (2005) study also explored the relationship between work characteristics and WLB. The authors found a positive correlation between the flexibility an individual had over their working hours and their likelihood to express satisfaction with their WLB. For example, those that were happy with their working hours and arrangements were less likely to express a desire to spend more time with their family or a need for more personal time. Satisfaction with their working hours and arrangements was also related to lower stress levels, better health and greater overall life satisfaction. These findings lend further support to the role of working hours and workplace supports in maintaining a healthy WLB.

Similarly, in a more recent study consisting of 729 employee questionnaires and 148 interviews across 15 Irish organisations, McCarthy and Grady (2008) found that 75 per cent of employees reported satisfaction with their own WLB. Employees in the public sector had higher levels of WLB compared to those in the private sector. Marital status also accounted for significant differences with married workers reporting the highest levels of WLB satisfaction and unmarried or co-habiting partners the lowest. Like Fine-Davis et al. (2005),
they also found that despite reporting satisfaction, the majority of employees experienced imbalances between work and life insofar as eighty-nine per cent wanted more personal time and 65 per cent felt rushed in achieving their daily duties. Similar to the O'Connell et al. (2004) study, 64 per cent claimed to feel 'physically drained' by the end of the day.

Studies such as these have contributed to growing suggestions that more pointed WLB interventions are needed in the Irish market (Fine-Davis et al. 2005). Indeed, those employers who offer greater flexibility and WLB supports can have a substantial effect on their workers' ability to maintain a healthy balance (RUSSELL et al. 2009). Yet while such supports have traditionally focused on parents, they are not the only ones experiencing increased pressures in combining their work and domestic responsibilities. As such, policies that exclusively target families overlook the needs that many others have for greater WLB. This is particularly true of family-friendly policies that are taken almost exclusively by women despite research showing that men are facing higher workplace stress and pressure levels. To this end, the following sections explore existing theories on policy creation underlying organisational and governmental responses.

2.3 - Work-Life Balance Policy Creation

Policies are not created in a vacuum; rather they are a reflection of their creator's personal views (Walby 1990; Leira 1992; Lewis 1992; Esping-Andersen 1999). Consequently, policies take on a degree of political and sociological agency wherever the power and influence of these largely invisible perspectives are actualised in the recreation or perpetuation of social norms. This can be further understood by examining the various EU(27) policy responses to work-life balance needs. In this regard, we find a trichotomy between states whose policies either: further segregate the workplace along gender lines by discouraging women's labour market participation; promote measures to allow both genders greater access to paid employment; or refrain from policy initiatives altogether by arguing that the free market is the best

This section explores the role of feminist literature in highlighting the mode in which personal views are inherent in policy creation. When applied to the study of WLB policies and programmes, these theories allow a deeper understanding of the underlying aims and subsequent consequences of personal perspectives in their implementation. In this context, we can see that work-life balance regulations within the EU(27) are pursued through three major channels: EU, state and organisational. While all three are influenced to varying degrees by public pressures and labour market needs, they are directly shaped by human agency which, although largely invisible, reflects personal beliefs that affect policy outcomes for workers. The following sub-section explores an example whereby policies are created alongside largely invisible assumptions about the modern family.

2.3.1 - The Hidden 'Agency' of Policy

The once hegemonic 'breadwinner' model has been largely in decline throughout the West and is being displaced by recent restructuring leading to reduced demand for labour in traditionally male-dominated industrial sectors in inverse proportion to female-dominated service sectors. This has consequently facilitated higher female participation rates in the workforce overall. Esping-Andersen argues that "it is in large part the changing role of women that explains the new household structure, our altered demographic behaviour, the growth of the service economy and, as a consequence, the new dilemmas that the advanced societies faces." Most European countries, he continues, "have failed to adapt adequately to the novel challenges and the result is an increasingly serious disequilibrium" (Esping-Andersen 2004: v).

As the Irish economy demanded more qualified workers, the interaction between the workplace and personal lives became increasingly complex. With entrenched labour policies reflecting this 'breadwinner' model, working parents and caregivers struggled to balance responsibilities in the absence of sufficient institutional supports. In attempting to address these issues, policies were
implemented although Drew *et al.* (2003) found that these arrangements were aimed exclusively at making the workplace 'family-friendly' and, consequently, the Irish take-up tended to be highly divided along gender lines. Arguably, the fact that certain policies were taken almost exclusively by women further helped solidify the belief that the relationship between the labour market and family was solely an issue for mothers of young children and therefore inapplicable to all workers.

While it remains more common for women to make adjustments to their working patterns in response to household responsibilities, changing socio-economic conditions render such concessions increasingly difficult (Esping-Andersen 2004). Without their full-time domestic counterpart, one result of this is that men are reporting greater imbalance between their work and life (Kimmel 1993; Fine-Davis *et al.* 2005). Moreover, dual-income couples are facing new challenges as a result of the increased pressure for companies to compete in the global economy. As such, the limited nature of existing family-friendly policies often merely reinforce traditional gendered breakdowns of labour and do little to address the actual issues and pressures inherent in these new familial structures (Walby 1990; Leira 1992).

While statutory regulations have attempted to address the needs of working parents, the limited nature of Irish policies and general lack of financial compensation does little to address their needs. Leave take-up remains highly gendered and unpaid parental leave is largely a luxury. As such, these policies do little to help groups whose labour market participation is most vulnerable. In other words, the powerful skill sets of older workers, single parent, parents of larger families and those struggling with mental or physical disabilities are often lost within the lack of adequate support systems (Fine-Davis *et al.* 2005).

To date, most Irish WLB arrangements have focused on reconciling work and family life with a primary emphasis (bordering on exclusivity) on women. The Commission on the Family criticises this focus as ignoring the changing role of men in society, stating that:
Expectations are changing about what it is to be a good father. It is no longer presumed that the father is the sole breadwinner or that his role is simply to provide the weekly wage packet. There is a presumption that today’s father will want to be present at the birth of their children, to be emotionally involved with them and subsequently to take interest in their schooling and to share the housework (Commission on the Family 1998).

Workers from countries offering more public provisions, such as national childcare, report that it is significantly easier to combine their jobs and family lives and also report higher levels of workplace gender equality (Walby 1986; 1990; Leira 1992; 2002; Fine-Davis et al. 2004). As such, there is evidence to suggest that WLB policies hold the potential to effect a wider degree of social ills beyond their traditional focus on motherhood.

2.3.2 - State 'Agency' and Policy

With state policies resulting in different and often unpredictable outcomes, researchers began to focus on causation. Such research has contributed to various frameworks aiming to explain why states act in the manner they do. This sub-section focused on three such explorations contributed by Walby, Leira and Esping-Anderson.

Walby (1990) argued that, by focusing policy initiatives on relieving the tension between women’s paid work and family lives, the state is the dominant force in perpetuating or changing workplace inequality. Her theory is based on the belief that the state has an inherent interest in maintaining the gender-divided status quo. This male-centric hierarchical system, which she labels patriarchy, is supported by the state in a number of ways including: limiting women’s access to paid work (the Dilution Acts, cf Andrews 1918; protective Legislation, cf. EOC 1979; Braybon 1981); the criminalisation of fertility control (abortion and contraception - both in certain times and places and abortion presently in Ireland- cf. Greenwood and Young 1976; Gordon 1977); discriminatory income maintenance (Land 1976); and action against radical dissent such as the response to the suffrage movement (Morrell 1981) (for a more complete list of state patriarchal actions, see Walby 1986).
Leira (1992) expanded on Walby’s work by identifying two models concerning the relationship between the state and women: the ‘patriarchal’ model and the ‘partnership’ model. In the former, the state’s primary function is to ensure that women continue to satisfy the state’s care-giving needs. In the partnership model, or ‘feminist state’, the state empowering women to work by facilitating more progressive gender roles and supportive policies (Hernes 1987).

Research continues to show that policies aimed at women, work and childcare are one of the main explanatory variables in women’s participation levels (Walby 1990; Dex 1993; Hofferth 1996; Joesch 1997) to which Leira’s partnership model (based on the ‘Nordic’ welfare system) lends support. In pointing to the Norwegian parental-leave system as an example of state-based feminist intervention, Leira demonstrated how partnership states play a major role in providing women with opportunities to combine family and work (Leira 1992). Through this system, labelled the ‘paternity quota,’ special leave rights are given to both mothers and fathers with the rationale that fathers have an obligation to stay home to care for their children.

Esping-Andersen (1990; 1999) presents a different way of analysing state influence in referring to work-life balance policies as an attempt by the state to “defamilialise” the labour market or buffer women’s participation in the workforce from their unpaid care responsibilities. His work is highlighted here insofar as it has received widespread attention and praise in promoting gender equality in that, when such policies encourage women to enter paid employment, household income contributions and power relations become more equal between partners (Hobson 1990; Huber et al. 2001). Yet on the other hand, feminists have accused Esping-Anderson of gender-blindness in ignoring how these defamilialisation policies may actually create the inequalities that they purport to eliminate (Lewis 1992). In other words, since most policies are aimed at relieving the tension between women’s main role of traditional domestic obligations and their secondary role of paid employment; defamilialisation has the effect of perpetuating traditional gender roles.
From a different perspective, gendered wage gaps appear to suffer as a result of these initiatives (Walby 1990); a process which feminist research has linked in part to this defamilialisation. For example, Hansen (1995) found that state interventions aimed at easing conflicts between women's roles at home and work have essentially resulted in women self-selecting lower-paying jobs. Furthermore, these policies have resulted in some employers practicing 'statistical discrimination' against women in anticipation of their shorter hours and discontinuous employment (Persson and Jonung 1998). For instance, extended maternity leave has been found to harm women's career prospects by prolonging the career breaks associated with childbirth (Ronsen and Sundstrom 2002). Employers may therefore choose to avoid hiring women for top jobs or else pay them less than men for comparable work.

It has also been argued that when the receipt of family-related benefits is conditional on women's employment, as it is in Nordic states, it lowers the selectivity of the female labour force by drawing "women less endowed with marketable productive characteristics" into the market (OECD 2002: 106). This can have a number of negative consequences insofar as women saturate the labour market in search of 'family-friendly' jobs which lowers demand as well as stimulating occupational segregation with its well-documented negative effects on earnings (Leira 2002; OECD 2003).

Feminist research into policy development has shown how policy is not free from personal intervention. While this thesis does not focus on policy development specifically, it nevertheless remains sympathetic to the argument that policy must be examined through the lens that Wably and Leira present. This is particularly the case insofar as their work highlights the importance of feminist thought in WLB research and demonstrates how gender and patriarchy play an integral role in conceptualising WLB.

2.4 - EU(27) and State Policy Leave Responses to Work-Life Balance

The European Union has been a driving force in response to WLB concerns through a series of recommendations and directives. Yet to date, these 'family-friendly' interventions have focused almost exclusively on parental
leave. Statutory entitlement and compensation levels of these family leaves vary by country, but the European Union has set minimum standards. This section examines these state and EU(27) policies in terms of family leaves.

In October 2008, the EU Commission proposed that the minimum maternity leave should be increased from 14 to 18 weeks and paid at 100% of the employee's salary. To date, minimum maternity leave remains 14 weeks though is generally exceeded by individual states and is the most generously paid type of leave. For example, as of March 2009, working mothers in Ireland are entitled to 26 weeks maternity leave paid at a rate of 70 per cent (with a maximum of €280 per week) and an additional 16 weeks unpaid at the birth of each child. The most generous maternity leave allowances are paid in the Scandinavian countries which provide the largest percentage of per capita income toward maternity and parental leave benefits (Table 2.7).

**Table 2.7 - EU(27) Member State Comparisons of Maternity Leave**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Weeks of Paid Leave</th>
<th>Payment Rate</th>
<th>Total Leave in Weeks</th>
<th>Flexibility in Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>90%*</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>No*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70% (Max €280/Week)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>No**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100% (Max €709/Week)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100% (Max €470/Week)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>18-20***</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Yes****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>18-20***</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 90% with no max for 6 weeks plus a flat rate payment of £117.18 for 33 weeks
** Except when leave can be started before birth.
***18 weeks for first birth, 20 weeks for subsequent births
**** Unused leave can be transferred to the father
Source: (Deven and Moss 2008)

While parental leave is now a statutory entitlement in Ireland, it remains unpaid and availability is extremely limited for same-sex and cohabitating partners. As of 2006, paternity leave, childcare leave and career breaks remain uncovered by statute as is the right to request flexible working except
in the limited case of breastfeeding mothers. However, adoptive leave is available with the same entitlement as maternity leave and may be taken by either parent. Likewise, force majeure is available to care for dependants with up to 3 days paid leave in any 12 consecutive months and 5 days in any 36 consecutive months (Drew 2008).

While maternity leave is designed exclusively for use by the mother, parental leave is allocated to both parents and may typically be used over a period of time. The availability and structure of parental leave also varies by country. However, it is generally unpaid and consequently poorly utilised. In Ireland, for example, parents are entitled to 14 weeks unpaid leave per child to be taken before the child’s eighth birthday (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8 - Member State Comparison of Parental Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Duration of Paid Leave</th>
<th>Total Leave</th>
<th>Upper Age Limit for Child in Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13 Weeks (5)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 Weeks</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6-11 Months (1)</td>
<td>6-11 Months (1)</td>
<td>3 or 8 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>32 Weeks (2)</td>
<td>40 Weeks</td>
<td>1 or 9 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>43-48 Weeks (3)</td>
<td>43-48 Weeks (3)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>480 Days (4)</td>
<td>420 Days (4)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) 11 months can be shared, with maximum of 6 months for mother and 7 months for father - compensation only if child is under three (unconditional for first six months of leave and means-tested thereafter)
(2) 52 weeks with compensation of 80% of income or 42 weeks with 100% compensation, to be shared by the two parents (nine weeks reserved for mother and four for father) - also acts de facto as maternity and paternity leave, which do not exist;
(3) 480 days to be shared between the two parents, of which 60 days are non-transferable - also acts de facto as maternity and paternity leave, which do not exist;
(4) Employers and employees should agree arrangements for taking leave, but minimum 'fall-back' scheme allows up to four weeks’ leave per year;
(5) To be taken after maternity/paternity leave, but a block of 8 to 13 weeks may be postponed for the period until the child reaches nine years old.
Source: EIRO and European Commission (COM 2003 (358) final). Updated by (Deven and Moss 2008)
Unlike maternity leave, for which there is very high and (in some states obligatory) take-up, parental leave has low take-up in most EU(27) states. As we can see in Table 2.9, take-up levels, particularly among mothers, are high in member states that offer paid leave. In contrast, fathers remain underrepresented among those who avail of parental leave in all states except Sweden where a portion of parental leave has been allotted for their exclusive use.

Table 2.9 - Comparison of Parental Leave Take-up among Member States by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member States</td>
<td>• SE, DK, FI, DE</td>
<td>• ES, FR, NL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take-up Rates by Fathers

- SE - 42% and rising; fathers take an average of 28 days which is only 16% of the total days of parental allowance available to families; IT (7%), DK (6%, length of leave taken is increasing), DE (5%), PL (2%), SI (2%), FI (low but Rising)

- IT (75% of all eligible mothers), SI, CZ (until the child is 2 or 3 years), HU
- PL - rate has declined since 1993

- More than 10% of fathers:
  - NL (16%) - usually on a part-time basis
  - Very Low: ES (less than 2%) and FR (1%)

- Unpaid Leave Systems: EL, IE, PT, UK, CY

Take-up Rates by Fathers

- Even lower than for mothers
- For example, IE (5%) and UK (about 10%)

Adapted from: (EFILWC 2007; Deven and Moss 2008; NFCWLB 2008)

In the UK, research shows a low knowledge about (and use of) unpaid leave. For example, in 2002, only one-third of parents were aware of its availability and only eight per cent of mothers and ten per cent of fathers availed (DWP 2002). Similarly low levels of take-up were found in Ireland where it is estimated that only 20 per cent of eligible employees have taken parental leave, 84 per cent of which were mothers (MORI MRC 2001). The largest reported barrier to take-up was financial; since parental leave is unpaid, it is only an option for individuals who can afford to take the time off without pay (Newmarket Consulting 2001).
2.5 - Conclusions

This chapter established the broader context within which organisations and their WLB supports are operative. A key component of this is the demographic shifts that the EU(27) and Ireland specifically have recently experienced. These changes have lead to increased pressure for all workers in balancing their personal and working lives. As such, scholars and policymakers have come to recognise a rising need for workplace initiatives to allow workers increased flexibility and support in maintaining a healthy WLB.

In determining the extent of work-life imbalance, working hours, intensity levels, stress and job satisfaction all contribute to a worker's ability to achieve balance. This chapter explored how the trend towards longer working hours is well-documented in both the EU(27) and Ireland. Coupled with the general intensification of the workplace, there is a rising sense of imbalance among Irish workers.

Yet how WLB policies are created is of equal importance to their ability to alleviate this imbalance. The theoretical examinations of policy creation presented in this chapter located the broader context from which WLB supports operate. As both Walby (1990) and Leira (2002) illustrate, policies are created under certain social presumptions and result in an alleviation or perpetuation of the gender (in)equality inherent in the social system within which it is predicated. These 'hidden aims' in policy can thwart the usefulness of WLB measures by creating highly gendered or stigmatised supports.

Although the primary focus of this thesis is on the influence managers have on WLB in their organisations, this chapter illustrated the importance of the context within which they operate. Managers in Ireland have increasingly high pressured jobs with very long hours and these traits hold significant influence over their perspectives of WLB needs. Equally important is an acknowledgement of the origin of policies aimed at alleviating work-life imbalance. Managers in member states where policies strategically encourage fathers to be active in the domestic care of their children (e.g. Scandinavian states) will have a much different understanding of how to meet WLB needs.
than someone from a state that prioritises women's right to stay in the home (e.g. Ireland). Accordingly, this chapter set the foundation through which to understand the concepts and empirical findings subsequently presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 3 - Organisational-Level Work-life Balance Policy and Literature Review

3.1 - Introduction
This chapter reviews existing academic literature on organisational level WLB policies and explores the main theoretical underpinnings and approaches pertinent to this thesis. While the previous chapter examined the broader theoretical and demographic context of this study, this chapter pursues a more focused explanation of WLB as it relates to the organisational level. It begins by examining the empirical research in terms of WLB supports for the EU(27) and more explicitly for Ireland.

The remainder of the chapter is structured around three distinct elements permeating to the research questions: organisational culture; WLB policy formation and interpretation; and managerial perspectives of gender and justice. These sections begin with an examination of the literature pertaining to an organisation’s WLB culture alongside a general discussion of policy creation and the role of managers in both demographical and theoretical terms in academic discourse. Managerial perspectives are then examined using both feminist theories of gender and organisational justice theory insofar as they serve as the theoretical grounding to this study’s analysis.

3.2 - Organisational Responses to Work-Life Balance Needs
While the statutory rights evaluated in the previous chapter are available to all Irish workers, many organisations complement legislation with a range of WLB options. This section examines these options and the academic discourse and empirical findings surrounding them.

3.2.1 - Organisational flexible working programmes
The degree to which WLB programmes are available to employees varies by state, sector and organisation. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions launched a large-scale sample survey of organisations in 21 European states. Conducted in over 21,000 establishments and covering both private and public sectors, this study
explored the availability and take-up of WLB arrangements that go beyond the statutory requirements set by the member states (EFILWC 2006).

The EFILWC found that flexible working arrangements were operative in almost half (48%) of workplaces with 10 or more employees in the EU(21). The degree of flexibility in working times varied greatly between states with two-thirds of organisations in Finland and Sweden offering some flexibility regarding working hours compared to less than one-third in Greece, Portugal and Cyprus. Besides these two groups, the proportion of organisations offering some type of flexibility is relatively consistent in the other EU(21) states ranging from 40 per cent and 55 per cent in most countries.

Within the UK, a 2004 study carried out using 1,509 interviews with employees of randomly selected businesses showed that only two forms of non-traditional working times (defined as working arrangements outside of the typical 9AM-5PM, Monday through Friday week) were available to over half the participants with part-time (available to 67%) and working reduced hours for a limited period (available to 62%). The next most available arrangements were job sharing (41%) and flexitime (48%) (DTI 2004). The take-up of working arrangements also varied by type: flexitime was most commonly availed of (55%) whereas teleworking (working from home) was the most desirable option for employees with more than half of workers in organisations where this was available reporting working from home within the past year (DTI 2004).

3.2.2 - WLB Arrangements in Irish Organisations

There have been a number of studies examining the availability and take-up of WLB measures within Irish organisations though conclusions have varied. The fact that different studies found seemingly contradictory results has created difficulty in understanding the context of the WLB supports in the Irish workplace. This sub-section compares findings and attempts to establish some level of context within the Irish workplace.
In one of the first studies of this nature in Ireland, Fisher’s (2000) exploration of employers in small- and medium-sized organisations focused on family-friendly work arrangements and found that 71 per cent of respondents had some non-statutory support in place. Smaller companies were more likely to have part-time work followed by emergency / special leave and then personalised / flexible work hours. Medium-sized companies were similar, but were more likely to offer emergency / special leave over part-time work. All other arrangements were rare with term time being the least available followed by career breaks and job sharing (Fisher 2000).

Family leave was also examined in another Irish study, (Drew et al. 2003) which surveyed employers on the availability of non-statutory leave arrangements. The authors found that 90 per cent of organisations made compassionate leave available to all staff and 86 per cent offered bereavement leave. Paternity leave was available in 58 per cent of organisations while only 40 per cent allowed staff to take career breaks. In addition, the study found that 7 per cent of organisations offered some family care supports, mostly related to childcare, with a total of 3 per cent offering information about local childcare provisions and a further 2 per cent offering on-site childcare.

In terms of workplace flexibilities and supports, studies have been largely inconsistent. Four major research projects investigating the availability and take-up of WLB arrangements in Ireland – the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC 2000), The Irish Council of Trade Unions (ICTU 2002), National Framework Committee for Family Friendly Policies (NFCFF) (Drew et al. 2003) and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) (O'Connell et al. 2004) – are summarised below (Table 3.1):
Table 3.1 - Summary of Research Findings: Percentage of Availability and Employee Take-up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IBEC n=673</th>
<th>ICTU n=825</th>
<th>NFCFF N=1006</th>
<th>NCPP n=5198</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Sharing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take-up</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Sharing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>&gt; 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* unavailable in study

Source: IBEC 2000; ICTU 2002; (NCPF) O'Connell et al., 2004; (NFCFF) Drew et al., 2003

This table reveals the level of inconsistent results between studies and suggests that Irish research on WLB faces considerable methodological issues. To some extent, these may be a result of the large disparity in workplace supports in Irish organisations which make it difficult to posit generalisations. Inconsistencies aside, the studies reveal a number of interesting findings even if not generally exportable to the entire Irish workforce.

For example, the NCPP study explores the availability and take-up of WLB supports by ranking whereby it was revealed that home-working is available to 39 per cent of managers and high professionals compared to only 4 per cent of semi-skilled manual workers. This trend holds true for most arrangements in that only part-time working is available to semi-skilled workers at a higher rate than managers / high professionals which suggests that these types of working arrangements are reserved for higher ranking workers (O'Connell et al. 2004).

Similarly, in a more recent national study consisting of 729 employee questionnaires and 148 interviews across 15 Irish organisations, McCarthy and Grady (2008) found that over 90 per cent of employees reported having education schemes while over 80 per cent reported the availability of paternity leave, informal / emergency leave and counselling programmes. In contrast,
the least common options available to workers were compressed work weeks, annualised hours and childcare supports such as an on-site crèche (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 - Reported Availability and Take-up of WLB Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arrangement</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Take-up</th>
<th>Arrangement</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Take-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leavess</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working-times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternity Leave</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Job-sharing</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Leave</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Part-time Working</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career breaks</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Time off in Lieu</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other support</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling &amp; Support</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Flexitime</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Advisors</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Term-time</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Facilities</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Home-working / Teleworking</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education schemes</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Compressed Working Week</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site crèche</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subsidised Nursery Places Outside Work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from (McCarthy and Grady 2008).

Despite having programmes in place, 73 per cent of the HR managers reported that it was not practical for all staff to have access due to the nature of their jobs or spatial / grade location in the organisation. The study also explored middle manager’s views regarding the practicality of availing of WLB programmes with 47 per cent indicating that these programmes might not apply to all workers. In contrast, managers in the public sector were more likely to feel that everyone could avail with 76 per cent agreement compared with 41 per cent in the private sector (McCarthy and Grady 2008).
The McCarthy and Grady (2008) study also examined the development side of WLB policies and programmes and found that, in all 15 participating organisations, it was the HR director who took the lead. Twenty-six per cent of organisations reported that senior managers would have little to no involvement in WLB formation while 100 per cent reported that middle / line managers, while playing no role in policy formation, were expected to play a more central role in managing and implementing these policies and programmes. Middle managers were also asked to gauge their involvement with 60 per cent reporting no input on the policies themselves although 86 per cent reported having a great deal of discretion in determining which employees were able to avail.

3.3 - Perceived Barriers and Supports for Organisational WLB Programmes

While most Irish companies offer some degree of support beyond the statutory requirements, the low take-up suggests that they are either not of the needed form, actively discouraged or simply advertised poorly. To date, only one study has directly examined the role that an organisation’s WLB culture can play in understanding this trend in Irish organisations (McCarthy and Grady 2008). The authors examined managerial and organisational supports for WLB in their questionnaire. In general, employees agreed that management in their organisation was supportive of WLB with 83% claiming that managers accommodated personal needs, 78% understanding when employees had to prioritise personal issues and 61% feeling that senior managers encouraged supervisors / line managers to be sensitive to employees’ personal and non-work concerns.

At the organisational level, 57% of employees agreed that they were expected to work extra hours to get ahead in the organisation with 29% believing they were expected to take work home at night or over the weekend. Similarly, 44% reported that they were expected to put their jobs ahead of their personal lives. Despite this, 68% of employees felt their organisations respected their desire to balance their work and personal life with 69% reporting that their organisation made an effort to resolve issues when
employees faced conflicts between their personal and working lives (McCarthy and Grady 2008).

In terms of the costs and benefits associated with WLB arrangements, McCarthy and Grady (2008) found that employees reported negative consequences to career progression if they availed of WLB supports. Fifty-six per cent felt that turning down a promotion or transfer due to personal issues would negatively impact their career progress while 52% felt that employees who avail of work-family programmes were viewed as less serious about their careers. Similarly, forty-three per cent agreed that availing employees were less likely to advance their careers.

These results confirmed similar findings from Drew et al. (2003) whose interview subjects working non-traditional work weeks reported the main disadvantages as:

... difficulty in arranging cover, possible loss of promotion, employee not considered serious about their job by colleagues / employer, difficulty in managing all employees with different working times and loss of earnings (:81).

More positively, staff who had availed of WLB programmes in Drew et al.'s study noted a number of personal advantages: greater flexibility and control; higher levels of organisational commitment and loyalty. McCarthy and Grady (2008) found further evidence of this issue in that 30% of employees felt they would be working elsewhere within a year due to a desire for greater work-life balance.

In most cases, employees believed that workplace WLB supports had positive effects on the organisation. Almost 90 per cent of employees in McCarthy and Grady's (2008) study agreed that WLB programmes foster good employee relations and over 80 per cent felt that these programmes increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, lowered staff turnover, had a positive impact on recruitment and retention and improved staff motivation and commitment. In contrast, the impact of WLB programmes on workloads was found to be a negative impact of WLB supports with 55% of employees in the McCarthy and Grady (2008) study agreeing that these work arrangements led
to staff shortages. Moreover, half of the respondents felt that WLB programmes increase managerial workloads and 42% of the employees reported that the operation of WLB policies and programmes increased overall costs to the business.

The research by Drew et al. (2003) offered deeper insight whereby colleagues who could not avail of flexible working arrangements reported resentment due to 'extra work' while those who could were seen as 'not pulling their weight'. Other workers operating under traditional working hours reported the possible abuse of the flexi-time system by those on non-traditional arrangements. Among the co-workers of those availing of flexible working arrangements, employer disadvantages were reported in relation to complexities in facilitating arrangements, increased costs and difficulties over administration and coordination - e.g. rostering of staff. In this regard, full-time employees were resentful and staff who availed were perceived as less reliable, committed and productive which thereby led to discontinuity in work flows.

Although the lack of consistency has led to some difficulty in obtaining a clear picture of workplace supports in Irish organisations there are some clear trends. The level and degree of support available to workers varies significantly with senior and professional grades enjoying higher availability of supports compared to semi- or unskilled workers. Where supports are available there is mixed reaction; although employees feel that offering these supports fosters good employee relations and increases productivity, they report that availing of them can have negative career consequences. Equally concerning, employees report that these supports can be divisive by creating workload imbalances and causing resentment in staff who cannot avail or feel they are left with 'extra work'.

In terms of policy development and allocation, HR Directors are almost exclusively responsible for forming WLB policy with a few organisations seeking input from their senior management team. On the other hand, while middle managers have little to no involvement with the creation of policies themselves, they report having a great deal of discretion in allocating supports...
within their team. These finding further suggest that understanding how these managers make these decisions is critical to the field.

3.4 - Perspectives of Work-Life Balance Culture

In understanding why WLB supports remain underutilised, previous research has focused on the power and influence of organisational culture. In this regard, the culture of work-life balance can vary significantly between organisations. As such, this section explores some key reasons why organisations may offer different WLB arrangements as well as some of the foundational research relevant to the study of organisational approaches.

WLB programmes encompass a variety of practices that aid workers in balancing the demands of work and personal life (Lobel and Kossek 1996). Many have argued that these programmes offer additional organisational benefits by enhancing recruitment while reducing both absenteeism and turnover (Hall and Parker 1993; Lobel and Kossek 1996; Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1997; 1999; Lobel 1999). This is particularly salient when tensions between job demands and personal life may lead employees to expend less time and effort on their jobs (Konek and Kitch 1994; Brett 1997), move to a position that generates less stress (Felmlee 1995; Greenhaus et al. 1997) or leave the workforce altogether (Oppenheim-Mason and Durerstein 1992; Klerman and Leibowitz 1999). In contrast, in order to enhance their ability to recruit and retain a high-calibre workforce, organisations may choose to provide employees with flexibility and resources to aid in their work-life balance (Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1999; Lobel 1999).

In light of the increasing benefits and desire for work-life balance arrangements, organisations have sought to create corresponding initiatives though the level of commitment and orientation varies across and within sectors. Different organisations have different needs in terms of these programmes and previous research has focused on a number of factors through which to predict the level of need organisations may have. For example, Konrad and Managel (2000) discovered that the productivity impact of WLB arrangements was contingent on the type of workers employed by the
firm whereby firms hiring mainly unskilled, less autonomous and lower paid workers report fewer productivity gains than those employing professionals and a higher percentage of women. This suggests that WLB programmes are more likely to be successfully implemented at firms who maintain a workforce that require such initiatives to either retain or recruit a qualified labour pool.

3.4.1 - 'Work-Life Balance Culture' Dimensions

Organisations with WLB programmes implement them in a variety of ways with some having extensive formal policies in place while others rely on a more informal negotiation process (Wood et al. 2003). When seeking to understand this difference, organisational environments can be fundamental (Starrels 1992; Sherer and Coakley 1999; Thompson et al. 1999; Campbell 2001; McDonald et al. 2007). Thompson et al. (1999:394) refer to this aspect of the broad organisational culture as 'work-life balance culture' and define it as “the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and lives.” This is constructed of five distinct dimensions; three identified by Thompson et al. (1999) who developed them into a theoretical model for evaluating an organisation's work-life balance culture (Figure 3.1): 'Managerial Support'; 'Organisational Time Expectations'; 'Career Consequences' and two additional ones contributed by McDonald et al.: 'Gendered Perception of Policy use' and 'Peer Support' (McDonald et al. 2005; 2007).
It can be argued that these conceptually distinct dimensions represent the underpinnings of an organisation’s WLB culture. For example, even where formal WLB arrangements are in place, managers may subvert them by refusing to allow employees to participate or by applying the policies unevenly (Managerial Support - Thiede and Ganster 1995; Thompson \textit{et al.} 1999; McDonald \textit{et al.} 2007). Research suggests that employees may be reluctant to avail for fear of jeopardising their careers (Career Consequences - Morris 1997; Thompson \textit{et al.} 1999). Varying elements of these five dimensions of WLB culture have been examined in academic literature summarised in Table 3.3.
Table 3.3 – Summary of Literature that Supports the Five Proposed Dimensions of Organisational WLB culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of WLB Culture</th>
<th>Supporting Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial Support</td>
<td>(Thompson et al. 1992; Perlow 1995; Thiede and Ganster 1995; *Thompson et al. 1999; Allen 2001; Wharton and Blair-Loy 2002; *McDonald et al. 2005; *McDonald et al. 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Consequences</td>
<td>(Solomon 1994; Morris 1997; *Thompson et al. 1999; Whitehouse and Zetlin 1999; Kirby and Krone 2002; *McDonald et al. 2005; *McDonald et al. 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gendered Patterns of Uptake</td>
<td>(*Haas and Hwang 1995; Liff and Cameron 1997; Hobson 2002; Mills 2002; *McDonald et al. 2005; *McDonald et al. 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Expectations</td>
<td>(Solomon 1994; *Thompson et al. 1999; *Mills 2002; Wharton and Blair-Loy 2002; White et al. 2003; *McDonald et al. 2005; *McDonald et al. 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-worker Support</td>
<td>(*Young 1999; *Allen 2001; Hegtvedt et al. 2002; Kirby and Krone 2002; *McDonald et al. 2005; *McDonald et al. 2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Studies that draw conclusions specific about a dimension of WLB Culture

Within some organisational cultures, employees believe that the amount of time one spends at work is interpreted by their managers and co-workers as indicative of their contribution and career dedication. Consequently, such environmental norms may make employees reluctant to take time off or reduce work hours to attend to personal elements of their lives (Lobel and Kossek 1996; Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2007). This is a critical point in that formal WLB programmes may be undermined if the organisational culture is (or is perceived to be) unsupportive. However, despite the fact that researchers are beginning to recognise the role of organisational culture in either encouraging or discouraging WLB programmes, few studies have explored these cultural dimensions directly (McDonald et al. 2007).

In a non-EU(27) context, Thompson et al. (1999) used data collected from 267 managers and professionals who graduated from two U.S. MBA programmes to measure the elements of the work-life balance culture. After
evaluating a number of variables, they concluded that managerial support for WLB programmes was the most critical factor in employee uptake. Wharton and Blair-Loy (2002) further extended the link between managerial support and take-up by arguing that employees in their U.S. sample were more likely to avail of WLB supports if they worked with a powerful supervisor who could buffer them from the perceived or actual negative career effects. In light of these findings and the critical gaps in both the EU(27) specifically and the field in general, this thesis explores elements of organisational cultural with a specific focus on managerial influence.

3.4.2 - 'Work-Life Balance Culture' Perspectives

Wood et al. (2003) argue that the manner in which organisations confront WLB policies or their 'management policies' allows researchers to infer their WLB commitment level or their 'Work-Life Balance Culture'. An organisation's WLB cultural perspective is assumed to be an identifiable and integrated phenomenon coherently linked to WLB policies (Wood et al. 2003). To this end, the authors posited five perspectives of Work-Life Balance Culture which have been examined in other WLB research (e.g. Appelbaum et al. 2000; White et al. 2003).

The basis of these five perspectives is that an organisation responds to certain pressures in either creating or changing current policies, but that each perspective places a different emphasis on where this pressure originates. Their 'institutional theory' perspective, for example, argues that normative pressures from the wider society compel companies to create WLB arrangements while the 'high-commitment' perspective suggests that WLB arrangements are created to encourage a strong employee commitment. Common among all the perspectives is a perception of both power and agency within the management team in recognising tensions and responding to them. In other words, specifically through their perceptions (and subsequent decisions), management can either promote or discourage WLB policies.

Prior WLB research has often failed to recognise this power and therefore lacks a specific focus of managerial influence in facilitating work-life balance. As
such, this thesis aims to address this oversight by acknowledging and examining the role of managers in WLB support while operating under Wood et al.'s (2003) contention that an organisation's cultural perspective is an identifiable and integrated phenomenon coherently linked to their WLB policies (Wood, de Menezes et al. 2003). To this end, this thesis examines each of the participating organisation's managerial influences on WLB policies with the aim of identifying the integrated phenomenon to which they are linked.

3.5 - Literature on Managers

In furthering the focus on the role of management in work-life balance, this section identifies the characteristics, such as working patterns and WLB levels, which make managers a unique group. The section begins with an exploration of current demographic details along with the ways in which these unique characteristics affect the analysis and methodology of research followed by a review of existing perspectives on the role of organisational management in WLB.

To date, little work has been done within the context of the EU(27) on the relationship between managers and WLB. Given this overall dearth, the research presented here stems primarily from within a U.S. framework insofar as it has served as the focus for the vast majority of in-depth research that has been conducted. Caveats aside, research indicates that, as a group, managers consistently have the lowest levels of personal work-life balance within their organisation (O'Connell et al. 2004) and report both the longest hours (DTI 2004), and the highest stress levels (O'Connell et al. 2004). Yet surprisingly, few researchers have specifically focused on managers in their WLB studies and those that do often limit their inclusion to merely a single element of their exploration. Likely this is due to managers' idiosyncratic role within the workforce insofar as they tend to have higher educational levels, higher salaries, different working conditions and are predominantly men. These dissimilarities present methodological difficulties in comparing them to the rest of the workforce.
International research on managers shows an intensification of working pressures and a significant lengthening of their work week over recent years. For example, Scase and Goffee (1993) reported that most of the managers in their studies worked a weekly average of 50 hours and had experienced a general intensification of their working hours. These long hours play into what Wajcman (1999) calls the 'macho manager' or the concept that being a manager requires total commitment and sacrifice to the organisation whereby the job is prioritised over anything else.

Powel (1993) suggests that long hours in management positions are common due, at least partially, to the difficulty in assessing the quality and productivity of managerial work. In other words, given the absence of other metrics, commitment is measured in terms of time spent in the workplace. Seron and Ferris (1995) similarly found that long hours often emerged as a sign of organisational status. This continues to surface in more recent studies whereby few managers can afford to work standard hours or avail of WLB programmes for fear of hampering their careers through a perceived lack of organisational commitment (Thesing 1998; Drew 2008).

Even when statutory policies have attempted to reduce working hours, such as the French 35-hour laws ('Aubry 1' passed in 1998 and 'Aubry 2' passed in 2000) which imposed a collective reduction in working hours, the long-hour pattern remains endemic. Indeed, these laws only applied to eight per cent of employees at management and supervisory levels. Furthermore, despite an average reduction of 1 hour 20 minutes for white collar and 2 hours for manual workers, the hours of top and middle managers remained practically unchanged (Fagnani and Letablier 2004). This pattern has also been observed in Irish organisations where Drew et al. (2003), for example, found a prevailing long-hour culture along with a low take-up of WLB arrangements at senior levels, particularly among men.

Moreover, studies have found that management in general is highly gendered and, despite the overall increase of women in the labour force and the fact that they are increasingly occupying professional and managerial roles
(Wajcman 1999), top management jobs are still overwhelmingly held by men (Powell 1999). For example, in an extensive study of UK-based companies, Gregg and Machin (1993) found that 92 per cent of top executives were male. Their relative share also rises dramatically at higher levels of the organisational hierarchy. This male monopoly is more tenacious in the United States where only five per cent of women have entered higher management – a number relatively unchanged over the last decade despite the significant increase of women in the fields (Wajcman 1999). Moreover, several studies of gender differences in management have concluded that there remains a significant gender gap in authority and pay (Jacobs 1992; Reskin and Ross 1992; Wright and Baxter 1995).

Feminist research has spent much time exploring impediments for women’s access to top management positions (see Wajcman 1999 for a detailed review of this literature). Evidence suggests that women in management face promotional limitations within corporate hierarchies before encountering a ‘glass ceiling’ that prevents or reduces the likelihood of reaching top management or executive status (Powell 1993; Dreher 2003; Drew 2008). Even in the conceptual sense, managerial careers continue to be expressed in highly gendered terms whereby the hierarchal model of continuous service and regular promotions is both designed and developed to suit the ‘organisation man’ (Whyte 1956; Kimmel 1993; Wajcman 1999; Drew and Murtagh 2005). It has been argued that this structure penalises women for childbirth and their role as primary caregivers to children (Sinclair 1998; Drew 2008).

Identification of this patriarchal structure has also been employed to explain the highly gendered patterns of marital status and childlessness among management. In U.S. research, Brett and Stroh (1999) found that of the 1000 managers interviewed, only 45 per cent of female respondents were married compared to 86 per cent of men. Moreover, 62 per cent of male managers had children compared with only 20 per cent of women. Similar trends emerged in UK-based studies and, in the U.S., Wajcman (1999 p 143) notably concluded that, for women, “childlessness is a precondition of a successful management career.”
In Ireland, Drew and Murtagh (2008) surveyed 162 managers, 62 of whom were at the senior level and, of which, 26 were women and 36 men. Within these groups they found similar patterns to international data. Men were older (averaged 46) and much more likely to be married (83 per cent) compared with women who averaged 43 years old and only 46 per cent of whom were married. Similarly, men were much more likely to have dependent children at 86 per cent in contrast with only 39 per cent of their female counterparts.

While the causes of this gender inequality may be beyond the scope of this thesis, it is clear that men continue to be the key decision-makers in world organisations. Among fortune 500 companies in 2000, women represented only 13 per cent of all corporate officers and less than 5 per cent of top earners (Catalyst 2000). There continues to be much debate over whether men and women manage differently and if having more women at the top would affect organisational decisions. While there is little agreement over how, if at all, men and women differ in their leadership, the debate is generally centred within the feminist ‘same’ verses ‘different’ debate.

Feminists argue that management must be understood in terms of gender whereby “managers and other leaders occupy roles defined by their specific positions in a hierarchy but also simultaneously function under the constraints of their gender” (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001:6). Gutek and Morasch (1982) similarly reason that gender roles spill over to organisations and Ridgeway (1997: 231) maintained that gender provides an “implicit, background identity” in the workplace. Thus, when studying corporate policies, it is unfortunately necessary to assume that the majority of policies have been created by men and, as such, must be understood as much as possible from a masculine gendered lens. While these feminist concepts are explored further in section 3.7, the following section examines literature on the general management of WLB policies.
3.6 - Managing Work-Life Balance

Besides being responsible for the overall creation of WLB arrangements, lower managers typically serve as gatekeepers as well. As such, management is an important facet of WLB research insofar as they are responsible for the actual allocation within the organisation. Yet to date, most WLB studies have focused exclusively on what types policies are available at a corporate level with little attention on how they are disseminated and distributed within the organisation itself (Fisher 2000). To the extent that this level of research has been done, it continues to show that an employee’s WLB levels are greatly affected by their managers (Galinsky et al. 1996). In fact, having a powerful manager to buffer employees from negative career ramifications has been highlighted as a major factor in enabling uptake of certain WLB arrangements (Wharton and Blair-Loy 2002; Hill 2005).

The following figure (Figure 3.2) illustrates the point that, although arrangements may be available, they are filtered through both the organisation’s culture and a managerial gatekeeper before actually reaching workers. Therefore, the study of WLB must maintain a distinction between the policies themselves and the ultimate realities following these influences.
Other studies have revealed evidence of the importance of human-resource managers in interpreting WLB arrangements. For example, Kossek et al. (1994) observed that an organisation’s likelihood of developing childcare facilities was directly related to the views of the HR director. Likewise, Miliken et al. (1998) explored the importance of this role and found that HR executives’ interpretation of potential strategic issues accounted for almost twenty per cent of the variance in their respective organisations’ overall responsiveness to WLB issues.

One reason HR managers play such a vital role may be because other managers experience difficulty in implementing organisational policies and thus rely heavily upon their advice. In fact, Kodz et al. (2002) emphasised this lack of guidance given to managers in implementing WLB programmes. In particular, they found that managers reported difficulty in deciding which employees should have access to flexible working arrangement as well as a
lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities and doubts over their own capacity to manage the 'people side' of implementation.

3.7 - Feminist Literature on WLB

The influence that managers' personal views have on the allocation of WLB is likewise evident from within the framework of feminist literature. Indeed, the role of the manager itself can be explained through a feminist lens in which gender and patriarchy play an integral role in work-life balance. Although WLB arrangements may be available within an organisation, most are disseminated through a gatekeeping manager before reaching workers themselves. Looking at policy in this way, it becomes clear that WLB programmes cannot be understood without recognising both the role and power that managers' personal views play in the allocation and interpretation of WLB policy.

Indeed, feminist discourse offers one of the strongest explanations of how individuals understand WLB through a gendered lens. For this reason, the following sub-section explores current feminist debates of WLB issues beginning with a general description of feminist theory and then focusing on how different elements relate to the field of WLB. Subsequently, these feminist debates are applied to the way managers view WLB as well as how these views influence the way that they understand their role in determining allocation.

3.7.1 - Treating Women and Men the Same or Differently?

Feminists have long been concerned with the so-called 'sameness / difference' debate (Tong 1998; Guerrina 2001; Smithson and Stokoe 2005). These contrasting views have lead to two distinct political perspectives in the feminist movement: 'equality feminism' and 'difference feminism.' Feminists argue that this binary operates at a subconscious level in every person, state and institution. Although people are unaware of its affects, the views of how men and women relate to each other influence how individuals and organisations perceive WLB. In applying such a perspective to WLB, we find that policy creation as well as interpretation and allocation remain inseparable from an individual's perspective of gendered sameness / difference views.
The origin of this debate is most often credited to Betty Friedan (1974; 1981) whose works highlighted the differences between various feminists who argued that, in order to be equal, women needed to be the same as men as opposed to feminists who believe women can be men’s equal provided society values the feminine as much as the masculine. Within this context, ‘difference feminists’ would advocate for gender-specific (rather than gender-neutral) workplace policies and legislation as the best way of addressing equality between the sexes. These feminists argue that policy must level the field as is evident by the fact that, when policies do not exist, women succeed only when they behave like men (Dryburgh 1999; Wajcman 1999; Rutherford 2001). In contrast, ‘sameness feminists’ criticise this view by arguing that if men do not receive special treatment on account of their sex or gender then neither should women. Yet ‘difference feminists’ feel that this line of reasoning is misguided in simply treating women as ‘male clones’ (Friedan 1986:63).

Rosalind Rosenberg offers a good summary of this debate in noting that:

... if women as a group are allowed special benefits, you open up the group to charges that it is inferior. But, if we deny all differences, as the women’s movement has done, you deflect attention from the disadvantages women labor under” (Rosenberg 1986:64).

Yet while this ‘sameness’ versus ‘difference’ debate originated within a disagreement over how to best promote a feminist agenda, its application is significantly wider. As feminists’ literature points out, this debate is present at some level in everyone’s perspectives. Consequently, WLB interventions are built upon these assumptions and must be understood from within them (Walby 1986; Leira 1992; Lewis 1992).

3.7.2 - Application of the ‘Sameness’ versus ‘Difference’ Debate to WLB

According to WLB proponents, the progressive increase of women in the labour market continues to highlight the imperative for policies and legislation to address new issues facing the workplace. To the extent that these policies reflect the ideology of the organisations and their authors, a great deal of attention has focused on creating goal-oriented language such as ‘family-
friendly,' 'work-family balance,' 'affirmative action' and 'flexible working'. These often interchangeable terms have been constructed to convey an ideological goal and where one term becomes associated with a negative side-effect of a policy, a new term is used in its stead.

The effects of this can be seen today through the changes in terminological usage permeating statutory and organisational policies (Sinclair 2000). Increasingly, contemporary organisations, governments and academic inquiries rely upon a semantic framework of difference in emphasising choice, flexibility and work / life balance in contrast to the previous discourse of equal opportunity, positive discrimination and family-friendly policies (DFEE 2000; DTI 2002; Smithson and Stokoe 2005). This shift has, in many ways, followed the same path found in Friedan's work. In other words, whereas equality was previously promoted through sameness, there has been an overwhelming shift to promoting equality through difference. Yet neither approach has been highly successful and both have received heavy criticism.

In contrast, gender-neutral initiatives emphasising sameness aim to level the playing field through policies such as affirmative action and expanding 'family-friendly' to WLB. Yet Liff and Cameron (1997) argue that these gender-neutral initiatives fail to get to the root of gender equality by simply allowing women to mould themselves to male working patterns rather than addressing the gendered nature of organisational practices. Consequently, they tend to uphold the hierarchical and competitive basis of the existing social order. Lewis (2001) also demonstrated that by emphasising 'sameness', such policies come to be seen as favours rather than entitlements. Consequently, this has led others to identify the beginning of a backlash based on the view that this is 'unfair' (Young 1999; DFEE 2000; Sinclair 2000; Liff and Ward 2001). As such, when WLB policies are understood as a way for everyone to combine domestic responsibilities with work then they can be interpreted as a benefit or favour as compared to policies that are designed to address possible differences between people which could be seen as necessary for everyone to be equal.
The feminist argument for highlighting women's different needs in the workplace rests largely on the biological difference attributed to childbirth and the corresponding importance of maternity rights (Bryson 1992; Hare-Mustin and J 1994) though it is also based on the awareness that women still tend to take on the vast majority of childcare responsibilities. While the suggestion that childcare is not primarily a women's issue may be a feminist ideal, it is far from an everyday reality for most women (Smithson and Stokoe 2005).

However, 'difference' approaches have been criticised for relying upon biological determinism in equating the role of carer with motherhood (Evans 1994; Guerrina 2001) and for over-generalising women's experiences (Butler 1990).

The limitations inherent to both approaches has contributed to the dominant perception that greater recognition of diversity is needed in both working styles and WLB needs rather than policies that specifically enable working mothers to manage paid work with family life (Drew et al. 2003; Smithson and Stokoe 2005). Kondola and Fullerton (1994:7) suggest there are various definitions of diversity, including "understanding there are differences between employees and that these differences, if properly managed, are an asset to work being done more effectively." Similarly, Smithson and Stokoe (2005) propose using a 'diversity' approach in place of either 'sameness' or 'difference' by arguing that this would move the debate from being just a human resource or women's issue to being an issue for all managers in focusing on all employees. This perspective would be positively driven by business needs versus the other legally-driven approaches (Kondola and Fullerton 1994; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000).

Gender-neutral terms and policies of diversity have gained popularity partly in an attempt to 'mainstream' WLB issues within organisations (Kandola and Fullerton 1994). For example, the recent popularisation of the term 'flexible working' is an attempt to move away from viewing 'family' and work accommodations as a women's issue. Likewise, the Drew et al. (2003:28) study concluded that the future development of WLB arrangements needs to account for the increasing diversity of familial structures noting that:
... flexible working arrangements are not a 'women's issue', they are a 'people issue'. All employees, irrespective of their family situations or personal responsibilities, need and want to have greater balance between their lives inside and outside of work.

It has been argued that by shifting emphasis to 'flexible working' and 'work-life balance', men and organisations will respond more positively than they would to gender equality terms (Smithson and Stokoe 2005).

Of course, this new 'diversity' approach is not without its critics. For example, Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) use critical discourse analysis to argue that 'diversity' terms can perpetuate rather than eliminate inequalities in the workplace by prescribing essentialist categories of difference. Critics also argue that by focusing on individual differences and choices, there fails to be adequate focus on the power differentials or inherent structural inequalities present in the workforce (Liff 1996; Lorbiecki and Jack 2000). Similarly, Sinclair (2000) claims that arguing "all people are different" validates systemic sources of inequality. Still others assert that such a focus dilutes societal and organisational responsibility for providing equal treatment and opportunity (Liff and Cameron 1997; Linnehan and Konrad 1999).

Yet despite these concerns, alongside the increasing fear of a backlash against gender equality issues, the diversity approach has received significant attention. For example, Cox (1994) and Sinclair (2000) have argued that the language of diversity can reduce backlash propensities. However, Lewis (2001) found that such terms have limited effectiveness since the low male take-up of flexible working or WLB arrangements continues to leave such terms associated with issues of women and the family. Likewise, Smithson and Stokoe's word-use studies uncovered similar findings where, despite gender-neutral language, flexible working was largely attributed "to women, and primarily younger women with children, [which] occurred repeatedly in both studies, by women and men, young and old, at all levels of the organisation" (2005:154).

Another concern raised with the diversity approach is that it reflects a fallacious yet growing ideological view whereby structural gender inequality is
deemed to no longer exist with modern women and men having equal choice and opportunities. In contrast, feminists have argued that gender inequality has long been central to workplace inequality and that, with organisations structured hierarchically in favour of men, there is a strong demand for normative policies (Rutherford 2001; Mills 2002; Britton 2003). Indeed, alongside trends showing a departure from gender-specific policies and language, one can infer a corresponding ideological shift whereby contemporary policy-makers feel that the workplace is no longer discriminatory and therefore normative policies are no longer needed (Smithson and Stokoe 2005). However, such claims lack empirical support, but research actually supports the opposite conclusion in noting that parental leave (especially when paid) and other organisational-level work-family policies continue to increase the overall level of mothers’ employment (Hofferth 1996; Joesch 1997). This suggests that the workplace would experience a great reduction in the number of working mothers if such policies were removed.

While the various ‘sameness’ versus ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ debates have influenced policy development and terminology in the field, they also shape the way managers view work-life balance. Managers maintain personal views of how men and women relate to each other (i.e. are they generally the same or different) and the way they understand this debate is central to their conceptualisation of WLB. This thesis therefore applies the theories surrounding the sameness / difference debate in its examination of WLB concepts in this study. The following section examines various elements of the gender debate and how they are used in WLB research.

### 3.8 - Gender and Work-Life Balance

Within the context of feminist literature, gender has little to do with biological sex; rather, gender is one's socially-constructed sex based on what it means to be a man or a woman in a specific temporal-cultural period. Since its first conception, gender theory has been applied to almost all academic fields, including work-life balance. In fact, the general need and overall effectiveness
of WLB policies can be viewed through what Greenstein (1996) describes as a gender ideology lens. These gender-role attitudes serve to filter personal views of the world and, in particular, understandings of inequality (Howard and Hollander 1997). This section explores how gender theory shapes individuals' views of WLB and how these debates inform personal perspectives when making decisions on allocation, interpretation and policy creation.

3.8.1 - Gender Ideology

According to Greenstein (1996), all aspects of life are viewed through the lens of gender ideology. This gender ideology may be described as the mode through which a person self-identifies in terms of the marital and familial roles traditionally linked to gender. These gender-role attitudes serve to filter personal views of the world and, in particular, understandings of inequality (Howard and Hollander 1997). For example, Grover (1991) observed that those who held traditional gender-role beliefs were more likely to perceive parental leave policies as unfair. Likewise, Hegtvedt et al.'s (2002) research revealed similar results insofar as men with traditional gender-role beliefs were more likely to resent the extra work caused by parental policies than their liberal counterparts. Through such research, they concluded that "with the advent of dual-earner couples and the increase in single parenting, employers have been forced to consider their workers' familial responsibilities" (389). In other words, WLB policies must be understood in terms of gender-role attitudes since their very existence resulted from the changing role of women. Moreover, the authors discovered that people supportive of women working outside the home were likely to hold different gender-role beliefs than those who do not or:

... individuals with liberal gender role beliefs may view the benefits ensured by work-family policies not as 'extra' but simply as part of what is necessary to support women's participation in the workplace - if the benefits are not 'extra', no inequality is created (Hegtvedt et al. 2002:389).

From within this framework, we can see that differences in gender-role beliefs create differences in an worldview (Greenstein 1996; Greenstein 1996; Kroska 1997; Nomaguchi et al. 2005) and therefore, this 'gender lens' affects the
ways that policies are created and viewed (Blair and Johnson 1992). For example, if one feels that women should stay at home with their children then they would likely support policies that facilitated this while those who believe family life should be shared equally would more likely support policies that allow equal access to leave arrangements. This notion of gender ideology is used directly in a number of foundational theories in this field and is also a cornerstone of related models explored here to highlight discussions that have taken place in the field of household labour related to work-life balance.

3.8.2 - Gender in Household Labour Research

Relatively few studies have specifically focused on gender and work-life balance and this represents a critical gap in the field (Parasuraman and Greenhaus 2002). Many explorations have either focused exclusively on women (e.g. Bernas and Major 2000) or have ignored the gender element altogether (e.g. Barnett 1998; McCarthy and Grady 2008). Research into the division of household labour, on the other hand, has maintained a gendered perspective for many years (e.g. Berk 1985) and this contrast suggests that the idea of separate public and private spheres continues to exist (South and Spitze 1994). Yet analysts have consistently noted that gender is stronger determinant of domestic work than most other factors such as resources, power, available time and employment (Ferree 1991; South and Spitze 1994).

Based on these findings, it is important for WLB research to incorporate gender perspectives to the extent they currently enjoy in domestic labour inquiries. This sub-section explores how gender has been used in the area of household labour division and how the field of WLB could similarly incorporate it. Two gender models have become popular in the exploration of the division of household labour. The first, identified here as the 'time availability model', focuses on gender differences in allocating roles either at work or at home. In contrast, the 'gender-role' model suggests that gender differences are explained by variations in what people learn are appropriate behaviours for their gender.
3.8.3 - Time Availability Model

The time availability model draws on human capital theory (see, Brines 1993) to focus on how couples allocate time between market and household work. This perspective suggests that husbands and wives perform housework relative to the amount of free time after paid work. This perspective assumes that gender differences derive from different social positions and the demands stemming from those positions. In this manner, the focus on time allocation is a rational process akin to Becker's (1981) economic perspective. While economists assume that time allocated to housework and paid work is jointly determined by the relative efficiency of husbands and wives in both arenas, most sociologists feel this division is more causal.

While scholars employing this method have found an increase in the amount of time husbands of employed wives spend doing housework, these differences tend to be rather small. There also continues to be specialisation in both the labour market and household work along traditional gender lines (Waite and Goldscheider 1992; Becker and Moen 1999). This model fails to explain these differences and has been criticised for presuming that, if men and women are positioned equally and spend equal amounts of time in paid jobs, housework, childcare and free time activities, that they would not differ in feelings of work-life balance. In other words, when time allocations are controlled, mothers and fathers should have similar levels of strain in any given domain. These assumptions are based on a post-gendered world where decisions are free from gendered feelings (Nomaguchi et al. 2005).

3.8.4 - Gender-Role Model

In contrast, Carling (1992) argues that couples in which women earn more do not follow this simple 'economic rationality' in the division of household labour because they are also influenced by cultural norms. Arber and Ginn (1995) argue that the normative ideology of gender roles in marriage is a major stumbling block to women's equality both in the labour market and the domestic sphere. The gender-role model reflects this view and assumes that work-life balance and family division of labour are not simple reflections of
structural differences in work and family demands. This viewpoint suggests that husbands and wives divide their time based on what they have learned and have come to believe is appropriate behaviour for men and women (Goldscheider and Waite 1991).

A number of scholars have suggested that social norms regarding what behaviours make a good mother and wife are vastly different from what makes a good father and husband (e.g. Ferree 1990; Perry-Jenkins et al. 2000). Therefore, the division of time cannot be understood simply by time allocation but must incorporate gendered perceptions of appropriate time use. Thus, husbands and wives differ in feelings that they spend enough time with family members or in paid employment based on their beliefs over appropriate gender behaviours.

3.8.5 - Doing Gender Model

Another model that has received significant attention in the areas of household and labour market research was best articulated by West and Zimmerman in their 1987 article “Doing Gender.” In this model, the authors suggest that, once a person is labelled a member of a gender, they assume a social obligation to behave accordingly; in other words, they are expected to ‘do gender’. Within this framework, researchers have argued that the division of housework in heterosexual couples must be understood through the notion that performing household tasks reaffirms one’s gendered self-identity defined as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West and Zimmerman 1987:127).

The process of ‘doing gender’ does not operate, for the most part, on a conscious level. Berk (1985:207) points out that it goes on “without much notice being taken.” Likewise, Hochschild (1989) discovered through in-depth interviews that gender ideologies are enacted through the performance of housework and may operate in a contradictory manner through conscious and unconscious levels. They found that peoples’ ideas about gender are often
"fractured and incoherent" (:190) and that contradictions abound between what people say and what people seem to feel.

These models highlight the strength of gender ideology in explaining the gendered division of labour. On a subconscious level, understandings of gender dictate how work is distributed. As such, it stands to reason that work-life balance, or how one decides who qualifies for workplace supports, is also dictated by understandings of gender.

3.8.6 - Gender Ideology

Elsewhere, Kroska (1997) identifies a weakness in the way these models of gender differences conceptualise gender ideology. She maintains that the problem is that most researchers approach gender ideology as a belief system and therefore construct instruments and scales to assess these attitudes. In other words, Kroska argues that these measurements tend to show only a weak or nonexistent relationship with housework behaviour because the foundational theory sees gender ideology as a belief rather than an identity. On the other hand, she argues that gender ideologies are how a person identifies themselves with regards to marital and family roles. Coffman (1977) defines gender ideology conceptualised in this way as "the deepest sense of what one is" (:315), self-held definitions (such as male and female) whereas contemporary constructions of gender are based around attitudes which should instead be seen as the definitive elements that make up one's identity.

Accordingly, Kroska (1997) proposes that gender ideology must be viewed as an identity. This means that a person may have an identity (i.e. a self meaning) as an 'egalitarian' or 'traditionalist,' just like he or she has identities as, for example, parents or doctors. She asserts that the shift to view gender ideology as an identity as opposed to simply an attitude is important for two reasons. The first is that identities tend to predict behaviour more accurately than attitudes. Kroska points out that this is consistently demonstrable throughout a number of different research areas such as drug and alcohol use (Biddle et al. 1985), blood donation (Chargn et al. 1988) and voting (Granberg and Holmberg 1990). Secondly, if gender ideology is operationalised as an
identity, then researchers can use people’s commitment to such identities as a moderating force through which to link identities and behaviour. Since gender attitudes has demonstrated limited success in predicting the division of labour in heterosexual couples (Thompson and Walker 1989; Ferree 1990), Kroska (1997) suggests shifting the focus. Gender ideology should be conceptualised more as an identity because:

... those who give themselves a label to signify their espousal of an ideology pursue behaviour consistent with the belief system more regularly than those who simply support the ideology (and do not self label) (:308).

Gender ideology can thus serve as a lens through which events and inequalities are examined. People with strong commitments to their gender identities are more likely to reconceptualise events through this lens. For example, Greenstein (1996) found that wives’ perception of fairness in unequal division of labour is affected by their gender role identities whereby wives who identify as ‘traditional’ are more likely to view an unequal housework arrangement as fair than are those with ‘egalitarian’ views. Similarly, in the work domain, Grover (1991) observed that those who identify as ‘traditional’ are more likely to perceive parental leave as unfair.

Thus we can see that feminist literature offers powerful insight into how personal perspectives mould understandings of reality. When applied to work-life balance, these insights highlight some often overlooked operative elements. In other words, research tends to fallaciously operate from the perspective that issues like WLB are free from personal intervention when it may be more productive to proceed with the view that gender beliefs informs behaviours.

Throughout this section, we have seen that feminist literature has contributed relevant theories such as the way in which gender ideologies constructed as an identity operates upon WLB realities as well as how the sameness / difference debate influences policy development and terminology in addition to shaping the way that managers view work-life balance. While WLB research has largely ignored an in-depth application of gender theory, Kroska’s (1997)
idea of reconceptualising gender ideology around a deeper notion of gender identities incorporates many of the ideas present in previous models of gender in time-use research. Gender ideology, in this form, is applicable to WLB as these beliefs are universally held by those responsible for its design and application in addition to its organisational implementation and management.

3.9 - Organisational Justice Literature

While feminist literature presents a persuasive explanation of how WLB perspectives can differ according to personal views of gender and sex relations, this section considers distributional organisational justice as an additional essential element. The first part outlines the general details and needs for organisational theory in the field followed by some definitions while the second highlights how this theory is currently applied to WLB research and what it may offer future research.

Young (1999) argues that, despite the apparent positive consequences to WLB policies, some workers (e.g. those who are single or childless) may be required to work extra in order to compensate for working parents who avail of such policies. Similarly, that these workers may also be excluded from certain benefits fosters a sense of injustice which may ultimately lead to resentment. To this end, organisational justice literature explores WLB arrangements in relation to perspectives of justice. In other words, to the extent that managers often allocate such policies through their sense of equality, organisational justice broadens WLB exploration to include metrics of fairness.

Considering the adverse consequences associated with an unequal distribution of benefits, fairly adopting and implementing policies that are generally unavailable to all presents a challenge for organisations (Grandey 2001). In this context, Grandey (2001) suggests that, “fairness perception surrounding family friendly policies is a vital part of the policies’ success at an organisational level” (:153). When an employee views an action by their employer as fair, then the organisation as a whole is seen as supportive, and
employees therefore exhibit more positive outcomes (Organ 1988; Masterson et al. 1997).

While there are many reasons for introducing work-life balance policies (e.g. help struggling parents, increase employee retention and cement commitment) there are differences in how these polices can be perceived. For example, employees can view polices as a way to help them balance the demands between their work and non-work lives, thereby reducing stress. Yet alternatively, opponents can view such policies as responsible for creating inequalities in the workplace by providing some with extra benefits while increasing the workload for those remaining. This oppositional view is part of the larger WLB backlash documented by Burkett (2000).

Such arguments are an application of the classic distributional justice model which is "a descriptive theory about how people make judgements about what is fair or unfair and what they do with those judgements (Sheppard et al. 1992:3). Organisational justice has long been studied in other fields such as organisational studies (see Greenberg 1990 for a review) and law (reviewed in Thibaut and Waler 1975). Grover (1991) suggests that organisational justice theory can provide a useful framework for categorising the underlying principles that inform work-life balance practise.

Theorists have delineated two forms of organisational justice: procedural justice and distributive justice. Procedural justice refers to "the perception of fairness about processes and procedures used to make decisions regarding outcomes" (Byrne and Cropanzano 2001:10). The second type of organisational justice (distributive) refers to "the fairness of outcomes received in a given transaction" (Byrne and Cropanzano, 2001:4), in this sense, the word justice is synonymous with fairness. This latter form appears to be most applicable to understanding implications pertaining to employees' perceived inequality in accessing WLB programmes. When policies do not apply to all employees, such as flexible or home-working, an unintended side-effect is that these policies reinforce occupational stratification (Appelbaum and Golden 2002; Swanberg et al. 2005).
Research suggests that an employee’s perception of how such benefits and other resources are distributed affects their loyalty (Schaubroeck et al. 1994), commitment (Folger and Konovsky 1989) and role behaviour (Moorman 1991). Additionally, research has found a link between employees’ views of injustice and negative organisational behaviours like rule-breaking (Tyler 1990), theft (Greenberg 1990) and retaliatory behaviours (Skarlicki and Folger 1997). Similarly, if desired benefits are perceived to be allocated unfairly, employees are likely to exhibit counterproductive behaviours like displaying negative attitudes or withdrawing (Colquitt et al. 2001; Grandey and Cordeiron 2003).

From this perspective, although the presence of WLB arrangements has been associated with positive outcomes, Grandey and Cordeiron posited that the perceived fairness of policy distribution may influence utilisation and effectiveness. Within the domain of distributive justice, three principles of fairness have been identified as informing the perception of fairness (Deutsch 1975; 1985): equality, equity and need. These principles can be applied to understanding employees’ reaction to an organisation’s decision on how to allocate WLB programmes such as home-working.

The equity principle is based on the assumption that rewards and resources should be allocated based on merit. In essence, equity theory implies that the distribution of WLB arrangements should be in direct proportion to employees’ contributions to the organisation. Conversely, the equality principle holds that everyone should receive the same allocations, regardless of performance or other contingencies. Specifically, Grandey (2001) suggests that according to the equality principle, “work/family policies can be considered fair when the policies are available to everyone” (155). The equality principle can be applied to WLB arrangements in two ways: either everyone gets the same benefit or everyone gets no benefit at all (Young, 1999). Finally, the need principle calls for the allocation of rewards and resources on the basis of individual circumstances. This principle suggests that those in the most need of a resource should receive it, regardless of input or output (Schwinger 1986;
Stone 1988). In this case, allocating WLB programmes is considered fair when delivered to the employees with the greatest need.

For the most part, these respective principles operate on a tacit level. In other words, people are typically unaware that their perceptions affect their basic assumptions of fairness and are equally unaware that their perceptions may not be shared by others. Depending on the organisation's purpose for instituting WLB arrangements, any of these three principles can be applied in the programmes allocation (Stone 1988).

For instance, if an organisation uses home-working as a benefit for performance then the equity principle is operative. Thus, top performers would theoretically have greater access to working from home than average or poor performers (Grandey & Cordeiron 2003). However, access to such arrangements may only be relevant to employees who need the benefit. If, for example, an organisation wanted to start an on-site crèche, then allocating spaces based on performance is only relevant if the high performers have children of the appropriate age. Grandey (2001:156) suggests that "family-friendly policies are typically need based allocations." While the enactment of the need-based principle in WLB allocation is a logical model, to some employees it violates the equity and equality principles and is therefore interpreted as an unjust practise (Grandey 2001).

Despite its relevance, the field of work-life balance has mostly ignored distributional justice which has created a significant gap in the field. The few work-life balance studies that have used justice theory have been limited and concerned almost exclusively with how WLB policies are perceived in the context of potential backlash (Grover 1991; Young 1999; Hegtvedt et al. 2002; Swanberg et al. 2005). Moreover, Hegtvedt et al. (2002) have argued that the limited research in this area has overly focused on identifying the 'who' while failing to simultaneously appraise the effects of positional perspectives like self-interest. They argue that Grover's (1991) study demonstrates how personal perspectives are equally important insofar as
females, those of childbearing age, parents and those holding non-traditional views of women were more likely to describe WLB proposals as fair.

While Grover attempted to explore the role of personal perspective, such as views regarding gender-role beliefs, Hegtvedt et al. contend that Grover's results fail to adequately assess how these factors temper the patterns revealed in his study. Research by Galinsky et al. (1997) explore some of the effects of personal perspective, though Hegtvedt et al. again point out that this study fails to disaggregate them from other effects. Hegtvedt et al. attempted to remedy these problems in their 2002 study by examining the theoretical and empirical impact of self-interest, gender-role attitudes and workplace context on justice.

While the research by Hegtvedt et al. was certainly an improvement, their study was limited to an examination of employees' perception of fairness in terms of WLB policies without focusing on the more complex issues surrounding policy allocation or examining the affect of managers' personal perspectives. Given these limitations, they offer only a partial picture of the complexities involved in the perceptions of WLB arrangements. The following section (and this thesis overall) takes Hegtvedt et al.'s (2002) model a step further by identifying gaps in contemporary research and highlighting ways in which a combination of organisational justice and feminist literature can offer a step forward in WLB research.

3.10 - Creating a Gender-Justice Model

As organisational distributional justice and feminist literature demonstrates, people can have different views of the same policies. While some may feel that certain policies do a good job of meeting their current or potential needs, others may feel that such policies unfairly advantage or penalise groups for their life decisions or biological sex. Justice theory can be useful in explaining why people respond differently to the same policy whereas feminist research is effective at highlighting the ability of personal perspectives to influence how individuals evaluate the need for interventions and the direction such policies should take. That these abilities have been largely ignored by WLB research
represents a critical gap in the field. As such, this thesis aims to incorporate
the role of the manager with explanations of personal views such as feminist
and organisational justice research and WLB culture. This structure is
illustrated in the figure below (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3 – Schematic of the Theoretical Model

Justice theory can be useful when discussing the role that managers take in
the allocation of WLB arrangements. As seen in the Young (1999) study,
managers have considerable power in allocating work-life balance
arrangements to their employees. In other words, even when an organisation
encourages WLB on the policy level, it is ultimately up to managers to
subjectively determine who qualifies for need or equity based WLB
arrangements. While justice theory may certainly illuminate ways in which
individuals view WLB – such as a reward for good performance or a way to
compensate for disadvantage – there are questions that emerge through these
value judgements such as why some people invoke the need principle at a
time when others use the equality principle.

The research by Hegtvedt et al. (2002) was the first to consider personal
characteristics in the application of justice theory in hypothesising that a
number of contextual factors such as self-interest, gender-role attitudes and workplace atmosphere influence which principle(s) people invoke. Yet although they explored gender-role attitudes, they admit to using a limiting single-item measure which suggests that they considered gender-roles as merely a mitigating factor worthy of exploration. In this respect, they also were surprised to find that gender role beliefs did not account for as much variance as they had hypothesised – this thesis suggests that this was due at least in part to their methodological weakness rather than a limitation of gender theory to help explain the phenomenon. Nevertheless, although their research was limited to a superficial explanation of gender-roles, they indeed uncovered evidence that some contextual factors consistently and strongly affected feelings toward workplace WLB arrangements. This suggests that certain situational and environmental elements can indeed influence which justice principle people invoke in a given situation.

In supplement to the research done by Hegvedt et al., this thesis asserts that while gender-roles are applicable to justice theory, they must be applied in a more central manner. In other words, gender must not only be used to examine how the principles of justice are invoked, but must be constructed around the belief that the gendered-self cannot be disaggregated as merely a contextual or mitigating factor and must therefore be understood as an inherent part of who managers are and how they view the world. This can be understood in part by what Greenstein (1996) describes as a gender ideology lens whereby individuals cannot separate their worldview from either gender identity or gender attitudes. In other words, these gender-role attitudes serve to filter views of the world and, in particular, understandings of inequality (Howard and Hollander 1997).

As opposed to gender-role attitudes about how a person feels about the role of being a woman or man, gender ideology (Kroska 1997) should be constructed from a deeper sense of who one is through self-defined constructs such as male and female, mother and father, doctor and lawyer. This thesis is grounded in the assertion that research must incorporate this 'gender identity' theory to the extent that it provides a stronger foundation than gender
attitudes (Kroska 1997). Whereas the applicable research focus may remain on how the individual feels about what is appropriate behaviour for men and women (gender attitudes), using 'gender identity' further requires the analysis to acknowledge that inconsistency can exist at an ideological level insofar as such ideologies are often fractured and incoherent with contradictions abounding between what people say and feel (Hochschild 1989). This is particularly salient in Western society where individuals are so attitudinally bombarded with a diversity of gender attitudes that they may espouse affiliation with a politically correct view of gender rather than the one they actually hold. Using the idea of 'gender identities' helps to compensate for this by encouraging awareness of its possibility and requiring a deeper exploration of how one identifies with gender roles.

Figure 3.4 - Relationship between Gender Ideologies and Gender Identities

Another important element that is largely absent within WLB research is an understanding of how an individual's ingrained view of the inherent nature of men and women can affect their perceptions. The 'sameness versus difference' debate plays out in the personal perspectives of managers and policy-makers responsible for the allocation and creation of WLB arrangements. The viewpoints held by those responsible for work-life balance arrangements about the essential nature of women and men can significantly affect what policies are introduced and how they are allocated. In other words, if women are seen as inherently different then they might uniquely require access to certain policies that men might not whereas, if men and
women are seen as the same, then sex could no longer justify unequal WLB allocation. Due to the significant differences such perspectives have, work-life balance research must acknowledge the importance of each and the influence such pivotal belief systems have on the allocation and creation of WLB policies. This thesis expands the field's boundaries by exploring the ability of both gender and justice frameworks in explaining how managers understand and allocate work-life balance arrangements among their staff.

3.11 - Conclusions

As organisational distributional justice and feminist literature demonstrates, people may hold different views of the same policies. While some may feel that certain policies adequately meet their current or potential needs, others may feel that such policies unfairly advantage or penalise groups for their life decisions or biological sex. In this manner, the 'same verse difference' debate plays out in the personal perspectives of managers and policy-makers responsible for the allocation and creation of work-life balance arrangements.

Justice theory can be useful in this area for its ability to explain why people respond differently to the same policy whereas feminist research is effective at highlighting the role of personal perspectives in influencing how individuals evaluate the need for interventions as well as the direction such policies should take. That the interplay between these two theories has been largely ignored within WLB discourse represents a critical gap. Consequently, research is needed that incorporates the role of the manager with explanations of personal views such as feminist and organisational justice research in relation to the WLB realities of workers.

Rather than pursuing WLB research, such as Hegtvedt et al.'s (2002), which views gender in merely contextual terms, this thesis asserts that while gender-roles are certainly applicable to justice theory, they must be applied in a more ingrained manner. In other words, gender must be used to examine how the principles of justice are invoked alongside an acknowledgment that the gendered-self cannot be disaggregated as a simply contextual element or mitigating factor but rather must be understood as inherent to who managers
are and how they view the world. Indeed, while this can be understood in part by what Greenstein (1996) describes as a gender ideology lens insofar as these gender-role attitudes serve to filter views of the world and in particular understandings of inequality (Howard and Hollander 1997), ideology is itself incomplete. Rather, this chapter asserts the need to utilise the idea of gender ideology constructed around identity (Kroska 1997) insofar as such self-definitions form a deeper sense of who one is and demand a greater acknowledgment that inconsistency can exist at an attitudinal level.

Due to the significant differences such perspectives have, work-life balance research must acknowledge their respective importance as well as the influence such pivotal belief systems has on the allocation and creation of work-life policies. This thesis furthers the field by exploring the ability of each perspective to explain how managers understand and allocate WLB among their staff. In pursuit of this, the following chapter lays out the methodology for the data collection and analyses detailed in the remainder of the thesis.
Chapter 4 - Methodology

4.1 - Introduction

This thesis expands WLB discourse through an examination of the interplay between feminist theories of gender and organisational justice theories in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the effect managers have on their departmental WLB. In combining these theories into a gender-justice model, this thesis explores how such a framework helps to explain some of the complexities of conceptualising WLB through a sample of Irish senior and middle managers in the context of their respective organisational cultures. In so doing, this thesis posits gender-justice as a more inclusive theory through which to understand how managers use these concepts in deciding when and how to meet the WLB needs of their staff. The following sections explain the methodological approach in greater detail.

4.2 - The Research Approach and Strategy

Many studies make the mistake of starting with the decision of which research tools should be used. Alternatively, Saunders et al. (2003) suggest that, before coming to this central point, there are important layers of what they term a 'research onion' that need to be peeled away (Figure 4.1). Within this onion, the first two layers raise questions about the research philosophy and its implications for analysis. The final three layers examine what they call research strategy, time horizon and data collection methods.
Similarly, this research project began by exploring this research onion as a useful approach to determining the most appropriate research strategy. As such, this chapter utilises this ‘onion’ as an outline in exploring how the study was constructed within each respective category.

4.2.1 - The Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is an abstract way of viewing the world and determining how it may best be studied. In this regard, it helps define the development of knowledge along with the role or view that the researcher takes toward its understanding. For the most part, three major views of the research process dominate literature: positivism, interpretivism and realism. While all three views are different, none are considered ‘better’, nor are they mutually exclusive. Moreover, despite their collective dominance, these are not the only accepted philosophies. Feminist theory, for example, is of particular relevance to this thesis insofar as it offers a further epistemological
philosophy that is often ignored in mainstream research. Specifically, this thesis relies upon a combination of feminist and interpretivist epistemologies.

As opposed to realists, interpretivists argue that people are far too complex to produce law-like generalities. Rather, interpretivism argues that the world must be analysed as an ever-changing entity within which researchers can only examine a particular set of circumstances and individuals. While findings can aid our understanding of a subject, one study, no matter its magnitude, can fully and concretely understand the complex situation it aims to explore. Furthermore, since all situations are unique, it devalues the need for generalities. Nevertheless, interpretivists operate under the assumption that one can discover what Remeinyi et al. (1998:35) describe as “the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them.” This is often referred to as social constructionism since it views the world as socially constructed in that people may impose a variety of interpretations upon situations in which they find themselves. It is therefore the role of the interpretivist to seek to understand the subjective reality of those they study in order to understand their motives and actions.

In a narrower sense, feminist epistemology and philosophy highlights the ways in which gender does and ought to influence our conceptions of knowledge, the knowing subject and practices of inquiry and justification. In this manner, it identifies ways in which dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge attribution, acquisition and justification systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups. Various practitioners of feminist epistemology and philosophy of science argue that dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by:

(1) excluding them from inquiry;

(2) denying them epistemic authority;

(3) denigrating their “feminine” cognitive styles and modes of knowledge;
(4) producing theories of women that represent them as inferior, deviant, or significant only in the ways they serve male interests;

(5) producing theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible; and

(6) producing knowledge (science and technology) that is not useful for people in subordinate positions or that reinforces gender and other social hierarchies (Anderson 2009).

Feminist epistemologists trace these failures to flawed conceptions of knowledge, knowers, objectivity and scientific methodology and subsequently offer diverse accounts of how to overcome these failures. They also aim to:

(1) explain why the entry of women and feminist scholars into different academic disciplines, especially in biology and the social sciences, has generated new questions, theories and methods;

(2) show how gender has played a causal role in these transformations; and

(3) defend these changes as cognitive, not just social, advances (Anderson 2009).

The central concept of feminist epistemology is that of a situated knower or that research implicitly reflects the particular perspectives of the researcher. To this end, researcher's must 'situate' their own understanding of gender arguing that how one understands these concept directly influences how they interpret what they see.

Using a combinational approach, this thesis recognises that each situation and individual is different and complex. As such, in order to generate valuable insight, one has to remain open to the views and opinions of those involved and, as such, generalities are impossible (interpretivism). Yet in keeping with feminist epistemologies, this thesis also proceeds from an implicit understanding that research and knowledge are inseparable from the researcher (situated knowledge) insofar as they reflect the author's particular
perspective of socially constructed phenomena such as the influence of patriarchy or gender roles (feminism).

4.2.2 - The Research Approach

Whether a research project uses an inductive or deductive approach also holds major implications for how research proceeds. Deductive research has been informally called a 'top-down' approach whereby one begins with broad theories from which to narrow down into more specific hypotheses. Conversely, in inductive research, observations are made from which patterns are discovered and used to construct broader theories through more of a 'bottom-up' approach. While it can certainly be said that the deductive approach owes more to positivism whereas the inductive approach corresponds to interpretivism, both can be used within any philosophy.

Perhaps a more useful way to view the difference between these approaches is to understand the relationship as 'before or after'. In deductive research, the project begins with a view about what the outcome is going to be. This is normally established in the literature review of past studies. Alternatively, in inductive research, data collection proceeds without a particular view or agenda through which themes form and theories are established. Given the brevity mandated within an exploration of this magnitude, this thesis utilises a deductive approach to WLB and management based on the literature review and established theories and hypotheses.

4.2.3 - The Research Strategies

As opposed to the research tactics (discussed in the following sub-section) which focus on the finer details of data collection and analysis methods, the research strategy is concerned with the overall approach to how the research question is answered. In this thesis, the strategic approach is to focus on case studies whereby research examines a particular individual, group or organisation and uses a variety of methods to explore complex phenomena within the context of the case or cases (Yin 2003). Robson (2002:178) defines case study as "a strategy for doing research which involves an
empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence." This strategy allows a deeper understanding of the rich context operative within a given situation.

Case study research strategies often use multiple methods and triangulation of data. As such, it can freely combine both qualitative and quantitative research, have an inductive or deductive approach to theory, and can focus on either one or multiple cases (Gilgun 1994; Yin 2003). This allows for a greater exploration of existing theories while also providing a source of new hypotheses (Saunders et al. 2003). In this regard, case studies are considered an appropriate approach to the study of complex social situations or interventions where multiple variables exist (Yin 2003; Walshe et al. 2004) such as the complex, context dependent and multiprofessional elements of WLB research. Likewise, these characteristics are advantageous for WLB research insofar as their breadth, collaborative approach, recognition of complex contexts, use of multiple research methods, realistic focus on process and outcome, and its flexible yet rigorous approach allows all the goals and views of this project to be obtained (Robson 2002; Yin 2003; Walshe et al. 2004).

4.2.4 - The Research Tactics

As mentioned in the previous sub-section, research tactics focus on the finer details of data collection and analysis and show how the research strategy is applied in the development of the research design and structure. In this context, Casper el al. (2004) examined current methodological research tactic trends in WLB research and concluded that they remain almost exclusively quantitative with 85% relying on surveys and 16% on archival data. A few studies used interviews (13%) and focus groups (1%) and most were cross-sectional (89%), in field settings (97%) and correlational (89%). Moreover, data was most often collected by one person (76%) utilising a single collection method (77%) and research findings were rarely corroborated across sources (e.g. employee and spouse) or methods.
Within this context, this thesis aims to diversify the field's method design in an effort to provide convergent validity for research findings. Given the heavy reliance on surveys in WLB research, this study primarily utilises qualitative methods to strengthen existing conclusions in WLB discourse as well as overcome some of the criticism of theoretical weaknesses inherent in quantitative studies (Casper et al. 2004). In order to provide ballast to these weaknesses and criticisms, this design will be triangulated with both qualitative and quantitative data in order to corroborate research findings across sources.

Triangulation in social science is defined as the mixing of research methods or data (referred to as data triangulation) so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon topics as well as help validate the claims that may arise (Olsen 2004). Olsen (2004) argues that triangulation means mixing approaches so that there are two or three viewpoints upon the themes being studies:

The resulting dialectic of learning thrives on the contrast between what seems self-evident in the interviews, what seems to underlie the lay discourse, what seems to be generally true in survey and what differences arise when comparing all these with official interpretations of the same thing (Olsen 2004: 4).

Applying triangulation in a case study approach allows for multiple research methods to be used. In order to analyse the WLB culture, a three-strand approach was used to gather the data within each organisation:

(i) a sample of middle / line managers from each organisation was chosen to participate in the study and 90 minute face-to-face interviews were conducted with them (n=23) and the senior managers to whom they report (n=5)¹;

¹ Participation numbers are further explained later but due to the complicated structure, manager interviewed could fall into two groups and thus be counted twice in the above numbers, for example the middle managers in HR are counted within both groupings (i) and (ii).
(ii) a 90 minute face-to-face interview was conducted with each organisation's HR team including the executive HR director (n=2), a senior HR manager (n=4) and a middle/line HR manager (n=2); and

(iii) an electronic or paper-based questionnaire was sent to the staff of selected participating middle managers (n=62).

These are then compared to what is known from past research established in the previous literature review chapters. While this method would certainly fit into the above definition for triangulation, the data was also designed around a 360° organisational approach. In the context of this thesis, this entailed collecting data from multiple sources within the organisations in order to corroborate research findings across sources as well as to obtain a more detailed picture of the context surrounding managers’ WLB roles in the Irish workplace.

In applying a 360° approach to this study, the first step was to establish the academic context for the research. As laid out in the previous chapters, this represents what is currently known about managers and WLB in the Irish workplace. From this desk research, it was established that there remain major gaps in the existing discourse. This thesis set out to address these gaps in two ways. First, it aims to increase the field's understanding of the role managers play in the WLB realities of their staff by exploring how they help set their department's cultural tone and the degree to which they can encourage or discourage their staff's WLB. Secondly, current WLB research has been criticised for methodologically deficiencies in its overall lack of triangulation, corroborating evidence and overreliance on single-source, self-reporting surveys (Barnett 1998; Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1999). Alternatively, this thesis will use both triangulation and corroborating evidence gathered from in-depth interviews in order to allow for a more open and flexible strategy through which to obtain a deeper and fuller understanding of the context and operative social phenomena.

In order to obtain this 360° view of managers and the WLB culture, data collection focused on the organisational structure as well as what current WLB
programmes exist within the organisation. Moreover, in-depth interviews were held a total of 35 senior and middle managers over four organisations. Of these, 30 were held within organisations A and B, 23 interviews with middle managers as well as with their direct supervising senior managers (5 interviews) and the respective organisation’s HR executives (2 interviews).

While this study focuses on the data collected from these 30 interviews, a questionnaire was also distributed to some of the managers’ staff in order to obtain an even deeper understanding by providing a source of quantitative comparison (62 respondents). The questionnaire was designed to take less than 10 minutes and was completed by the staff of 8 of the 11 managers at organisation B (a total of 42 responses) but only 4 of the 12 middle managers at organisation A (a total of 40 responses) leading to a total of sixty-two responses across organisations A and B; the discrepancy between the participation of managers is explained in later detail.

Based on the fact that research suggests that different areas of the labour market have differing levels of WLB, four organisations were selected to take part in these case studies. While it was hoped that, by having multiple organisations, this study would form a better picture of WLB in Irish organisations, the ultimate goal of the case studies was to develop a deeper understanding of a given phenomenon rather than to facilitate generalisations. As such, it was decided to select organisations outside of sectors that are stereotypically associated with high levels of WLB.

To this end, whereas research has linked the increased availability of workplace WLB programmes with sectors that maintain high levels of female employment, two organisations were selected within traditionally male sectors. The first is a well-established private manufacturing organisation (organisation A) and the second a large public utility organisation (organisation B). These organisations were selected based on specific strategic similarities and differences, some of which are listed below (Figure 4.2):
The research began with an empirical examination of WLB programmes through a detailed literature review. Based on these findings, interview protocol was developed and the majority of interviews were conducted within organisations A and B (30) and utilised a 360° research design centred on middle management (23 interviews) followed by interviews with the supervising senior managers (5 interviews) to whom the middle managers report (Figure 4.3). The research then examined the HR department’s views by interviewing HR Executives (2 interviews), senior managers (2, included in the count above) and middle managers (2, included in the count above).
In recognition of the fact that WLB arrangements are created by the HR and senior management team, a further five interviews were conducted with senior level managers located within the health (organisation C) and education (organisation D) sectors of the public service. These interviews took place with one senior HR representative from each organisation as well as additional senior managers (two at organisation C and one at D). These interviews were conducted to serve as an additional source against which to corroborate/compare the findings obtained through organisations A and B as well as to offer more in-depth insight into the level of policy creation.

In total 35 interviews across 4 organisations contributed to this thesis, illustrated in Table 4.1:
Table 4.1 - Summary Table of Sample Size by Organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Survey</td>
<td>4 out of 12-40 responses</td>
<td>8 out of 11 -42 responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 - Sampling and Response Rates

Within each of these organisations, personal in-depth interviews were held with the HR executive. Following these interviews, they were asked to help select departments they felt would be good examples to take part in the study. As it was not necessary for the data set to be statistically random, this study used a combination of non-probability sampling techniques. The majority of the departments were selected using the quota sampling technique which, as a type of stratified sampling, involved dividing the population into specific groups based on variables that represent the differences within the population. These quotas were selected alongside the HR directors to gain a clearer picture of the organisation’s overall structure and departments were chosen insofar as they represented the major organisational branches. Following this, a purposive sampling technique was applied which involved pinpointing departments that might exhibit extremes – high or low levels of WLB – as well as a few special departments to the extent that they had unusual programmes or working conditions that the HR directors felt might be of interest.

Once the departments were selected, letters were sent to the senior managers of each department inviting them to participate. All invited managers agreed to be interviewed, many of whom were charged with the management of more than one of the selected departments. A total of seven in-depth interviews were conducted with those considered to be at senior levels (labelled as ‘directors’ or ‘executives’) within their respective organisations.
Within the departments that the senior managers oversaw, middle managers were asked to participate. In the event of smaller departments, all middle managers were invited to participate. In the larger departments, individuals were again selected based on quotas that would represent the mainstream worker as well as workers that might represent WLB extremes. When departments had middle managers who were on unusual working arrangements, they were almost always suggested for interview. In total, 29 middle managers where sent invitations to interview and while only three officially declined, scheduling conflicts eliminated two others, leaving a total of 24 middle manager interviews.

After these interviews were completed, five additional interviews were conducted with senior managers in the public service health and education sectors. All the senior managers who were asked to participate accepted and within the group, a senior HR executive participated from each sector as well as one additional senior manager in education and two senior managers in health. This resulted in an additional 5 interviews, two from HR executives and three from senior managers.

In terms of the surveys, only 4 out of 12 of the middle managers at organisation A allowed their staff to participate (a total of 40 responses). In contrast, all middle managers at organisation B allowed their staff to be surveyed though only 8 out of the 11 resulted in responses (for a total of 42). This was due to a recent restructuring within one area that resulted in two managers moving to a new department only days before and, based on this, it was decided their staff would be unable to speak to their management style. Apart from this, there was one additional manager at organisation B whose departmental time commitments contributed to a zero responses rate from his team.

4.4 - Research Tools Development

As described in the previous section, in-depth interviews were conducted with the 35 managers from various levels of four Irish organisations. The interviews took place between January and May 2007 and were conducted on-
site in either the manager's private office space or an alternate area which could provide complete privacy. All interviews were conducted in person, face-to-face and, although not time-limited by the interviewer, took between 60 and 120 minutes depending on the interviewee. Each interview was taped and then transcribed for qualitative analysis.

Once the organisations were selected, contact letters were sent and a detailed meeting was held with key personnel - the HR executive at one organisation and a senior HR manager at the others. At these meetings, details about the goals and expectations were discussed as well as the time and resource commitments for participating organisations. Each organisation was informed that they would be compared to other Irish organisations but that they were guaranteed full confidentiality.

Once selected, all invited managers were emailed a letter of invitation from their supervising manager or the HR executive as well as a letter of introduction from the researcher. They were told how their interview would fit into the research being conducted, the time commitment involved and informed that all aspects of their participation would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. They were also told that the goals of the research were to:

- identify how managers negotiate and understand work-life balance;
- examine what role formal and informal policies play in work-life balance; and
- explore the role of managers in facilitating work-life balance within an organisation.

In each organisation, an individual was selected from within the HR department to help organise the details of the interviews. These individuals followed up on the emails and scheduled a time and location for each interview.

In total, thirty-five interviews were conducted. Each interview began by giving a printed copy of the invitation letter to the managers as well as a copy of the informed consent form (appendix A). The interview topics were discussed in
advance and subjects were informed of the estimated time commitment and reminded that their participation was voluntary. They were informed that the interviews would be taped and that, while the tapes would be transcribed and analysed, no part of the data would be available to anyone outside the research team at Trinity College Dublin. They were also informed that their identity would be held in strictest confidence and that identifying markers would not be used nor would transcriptions be published.

4.5 - Interview Protocol

While it was hoped that the interviews would take an open and conversational form, there were nevertheless some key areas to discuss. This was achieved through a semi-structured open ended interview structure. Topics were outlined in the developed interview protocol which helped reduce the possibility of errors or biases (see section 4.7) (Raimond 1993). This form was used at each interview and the participants were informed that, although there were questions and topics to be discussed, they should feel free to bring up anything else they felt would be of interest.

The interview protocol (Appendix B) explored three areas: the organisation’s WLB culture; the allocation of WLB programmes through formal and informal means; and individual WLB and personal information. Each interview began on a formal note with the first section offering suggested questions to elicit information about the organisation’s culture. Subjects were asked to describe the general attitude in the workplace regarding WLB as well as attitudes toward those who avail(ed) of special accommodation such as parental leave or flexi-time. They were then asked to personally define work-life balance.

The majority of interviews would then take a more conversational approach and would simply need to be steered towards certain topics though a small minority did maintain a formal structure throughout. Toward the end, all interviews were again steered to return to the protocol and ensure that all areas had been discussed. This format worked well in that it offered a bit of uniformity and structure to the interviews while still allowing room for themes
to spontaneously emerge. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the following major topics were discussed in all interviews:

1. The WLB culture in the organisation
2. The allocating of WLB supports through formal and informal means
3. Individual WLB and personal information

These topics were developed specifically to address the research questions using dimensions of WLB culture, the influence of managers and the philosophical perspectives of gender and organisational justice theory highlighted in the literature review. These themes helped to develop the interview protocol which was grounded in the methodological structure of past studies. Gender role research, for example, has been actionalised in past research with varying degrees of success through both qualitative and quantitative collection methods. When developing the questions and protocol surrounding this topic, past studies were explored with a focus on criticisms and validated results. This served as a starting point in developing the protocol around each topic.

4.6 - Questionnaire Protocol

In addition to the interviews, a survey was created to be distributed to the staff of middle managers (Appendix C). While this thesis remains primarily focused on qualitative interview data, it was hoped that the questionnaire would serve as an alternate form of corroboration and a means through which to identify future avenues of research. Caveats aside, this survey explored the respondents’ personal WLB levels, their views of workplace policies and culture, and their perceptions of the management styles in the organisation itself. The questionnaire was created to be sent to the staff that reported directly to a participating middle manager in order to see how their views compared. Similar themes to the interviews were explored including:

- Current working arrangement;
- Desired working arrangements;
- Organisational communication;
Workplace culture toward WLB and perceptions of those that avail of supports;
- WLB levels and definitions;
- Levels of resentment among those who do not qualify;
- Current management styles in their department; and
- General demographic details.

The questionnaire was designed to take less than 10 minutes and was completed by a total of sixty-two staff members. Each participating manager was offered the opportunity to have their staff partake in the survey though many declined. In a discussion with a senior manager of one department at organisation A, it was disclosed that the managers in his area declined out of fear that their staff would become aware of such programmes and the survey would thereby 'open the flood-gates' of staff seeking access to WLB programmes.

4.7 - Credibility and Limitations of the Research
When discussing the credibility of research findings (Raimond 1993) argues that one cannot answer questions such as 'How do you know?' and 'will these results hold up to scrutiny?'; rather, the best that researchers can do is to try and reduce the probability of being wrong. This, he concludes, is where sound research design is important. In reducing the chance of being wrong, attention has to be paid to two particular emphases of research design: reliability and validity (Saunders et al. 2003).

4.7.1 - Reliability
Robson (2002) asserts that there are four threats to research reliability. The first is subject or participant error whereby, for example, an employee who fills out a survey on their manager may be more kind if they just got promoted than someone who was recently reprimanded. Secondly, he warns of subject bias in that participants may say what they believe their bosses want them to say. Third, there may be an observational error in which the interviewer may have more enthusiasm for the first interviews than the last ones on a given
day. Finally, there may be an observer’s bias whereby the interviewer may ‘get on better’ with some participants than others and feel that conversation flows more easily.

All these threats may be reduced by creating data collection protocol. For example, by introducing even a slight structure to an interview, researchers may reduce the chance of observer bias and error. Insofar as structural levels are also inversely proportional to conversational levels, this project chose the semi-structured open interview structure to allow for a degree of spontaneity in data collection while minimising, as much as possible, the chances of bias and error.

Moreover, participant error and bias is difficult to control in an interview setting in that there is no way to accurately judge if an individual is being truthful or simply parroting what they believe the organisation wants them to say. Research suggests that awareness of this type of bias is the best defence and participants should be told in advance how the data will be handled. To this end, this project assured participants that no one in their organisation would have access to the data and that anonymity would be maintained at all times.

4.7.2 - Validity

Validity is a concern over whether findings really are about what they appear to be. The potential lack of validity in conclusions can be minimised by good research design. In this area, Robson (2002) has charted six threats to validity: history, testing, instrumentation, mortality, maturation and ambiguity about causal direction.

Applied to this study, Robson’s six points require a degree of foresight regarding the structure and analysis of data and attention was therefore given to form an inclusive understanding of ‘history’. In this context, both organisations A and B had experienced a degree of down-sizing that may have informed the perspective of the manager interviewed. Apart from this, there was no recent introduction of WLB programmes or any major restructuring.
Regarding Robson’s second threat, ‘testing’ would be of concern if participants felt that their performance or participation in the research would in some way affect their position in the organisation. As such, all subjects were told in an introductory email which was confirmed verbally directly before an interview or questionnaire that participation was voluntary and that the research project was confidential and in no way attached to their workplace.

Instrumentation is where Robson stresses the use of a unified instrument for testing as multi-area data collection can lead to significantly different results. To minimise this threat, protocol were developed for the interview and a standardise questionnaire was used (Appendix B and C).

‘Mortality’ threats deal with participants dropping out of the study. As explained earlier, this study aimed to interview managers and survey their staff. Unfortunately not all participating managers later agreed to have their staff surveyed. This could certainly affect the validity of the questionnaire results as it may be reasonable to presume that managers who feared negative or conflicting results from their staff may have self-opted out of the survey. As such, this study used the survey results only to the extent that they could diversify the 360° approach by corroborating or contradicting the qualitative analyses.

‘Maturation’ threats would be more relevant to longitudinal studies. In the context of this study there could possibly be a change in a manager’s style between the time of their interview and when questionnaires were sent to their staff. This could mean that the opinions and views they stated in the interviews would not be adequately reflected in the questionnaires returned by their staff. This threat was reduced by limiting, as much as possible, the time between the interviews and the surveys. In all cases, interviews were conducted first and the surveys were sent within two months though, in most cases, the time between events was less than two weeks.

Robson’s final threat, ambiguity about causal direction, warns that A may cause B or B may cause A. In other words, the direction of causation is
extremely difficult to show and therefore researchers should be wary of overstating their conclusions.

4.8 - Ethical Issues

In the context of research, ethics refers to the appropriateness of behaviour in relation to the rights of the subjects. Wells (1994:284) defines "ethics in terms of a code of behaviour appropriate to academics and the conduct of research." Such concerns emerge throughout all research projects when seeking access to the organisations and individuals as well as in the collection, analysis and reporting processes.

Within this project, the most significant ethical issue is that of consent and confidentiality. Each organisation was informed that their participation was voluntary and guaranteed full confidentiality. To achieve this, each organisation has been identified within this thesis by labels (e.g. organisation A) and every attempt has been made to remove identifying markers that may allow someone to discern their identity. A similar commitment was made to individuals who agreed to participate in the in-depth interviews and questionnaires. As the interviews were arranged by the HR department, each manager was asked to verify what information they had received regarding the interview. As many of the managers had not been forwarded the invitation letter or had received otherwise inadequate information about the interviews to make an informed consent, they were given a printed copy of the invitation letter as well as a copy of the informed consent form and were allowed additional time for review. The interview topics were discussed in advance, as was the estimated time commitment, and subjects were informed that their participation was voluntary and that the research project was in no way affiliated with their organisation.

To secure the managers' identities, they were informed that the interviews would be taped and that the tapes would be transcribed and analysed. Moreover, participants were assured that no part of the data would be available to anyone outside the research team at Trinity College Dublin and that such data protection would likewise extend to their organisation. They
were also informed that their identity would be held in strictest confidence and that neither identifying markers would be used nor transcriptions be published.

Finally, all surveys were distributed to the relevant manager’s staff. In this event, respondents were similarly informed that their participation was voluntary and that their identity would be kept confidential with all surveys inaccessible to anyone outside the TCD research team.

4.9 - Data Analysis

The research tools identified in previous sections were developed to address the thesis' research questions. In answering these questions, text-based interview data were analysed using a largely deductive approach by examining statements consistent with each of the pre-specified themes. Within each of these areas, relevant information was further grouped and categorised to represent sub-components of the major themes. For example, although a range of participant responses spoke to the theme of 'manager supports', they also exhibited sub-themes including 'leadership' (the extent to which managers lead by example) and 'trust' (how closely the manager monitored their employees' day-to-day work). However, the data was also explored to allow themes which did not 'fit' the original framework to emerge.

The following four chapters are centred around the major themes revealed in the data and outlined to specifically answer the study's research questions (Figure 4.4)
To this end, each chapter answers one of the thesis' sub-questions. Ultimately, this thesis is an exercise in theory building by challenging conventional methodologies in WLB research. As such, rather than beginning with a managerial profile, Chapter 5 therefore focuses on WLB culture of participating organisations insofar as this both defines the environment in which managers are operative and serves as the primary framework through which the theoretical approach is grounded.

This structure also allows chapter 6 to shift the focus onto the managers themselves by exploring how they understand and define WLB in their own lives from within this organisational context (set out in chapter 5). Chapter six also discusses the demographic elements of study participants while Chapter 7 examines the managers' personal perspectives on gender and organisational justice. Finally, Chapter 8 presents an analysis of how these managers view their role in allocating WLB programs and explores the
decision-making process they follow in deciding who may avail of which supports.

Based on the methodology outlined in this chapter, these chapters present the relevant analyses of the primary data collected though one-on-one interviews along with a discussion of the survey results in Chapter 9. The analyses are approached through three main avenues. The first analysis focuses on the interviews using contextualisation techniques which involve examining the interviews directly to locate main themes. Secondly, interviews were coded into quantitative variables which involved establishing dependent and independent parameters around the project's themes and topics and then assigning participants scores for each. Finally, advanced statistical analyses were run on the coded data in order to further validate the findings as well as highlight areas that may not have been evident though standard qualitative analyses.
Chapter 5 - The Five Elements of Work-Life Balance Culture

5.1 - Introduction

Chapter Background: Academic research is only beginning to examine the relationship between an organisation’s culture and WLB conceptualisation and allocation which has left a considerable gap in the field. To date, the only theoretical approach to have gained significant traction in WLB research came from Thompson et al. (1999) who posited a tool for evaluating organisations culture based on elements of WLB (Figure 5.1). This is constructed of five distinct dimensions; three identified by Thompson et al. (1999) who developed them into a theoretical model for evaluating an organisation’s work-life balance culture: ‘Managerial Support’; ‘Organisational Time Expectations’; ‘Career Consequences’ (Thompson et al. 1999) expanded to later include ‘Gendered Perception of Policy use’ and ‘Peer Support’ by McDonald et al. (McDonald et al. 2005; 2007).

Figure 5.1 - Five Cultural Elements of WLB

Chapter Structure and Analysis techniques: In answering the research question, What effect does an organisation’s work-life balance culture have on the way managers understand and allocate WLB supports? This chapter first establishes the organisational context in which the managers work before
aiming to expand the field’s current conceptual knowledge of WLB cultures. In regards to theorising WLB culture, this thesis operates around the model created by Thompson et al. (1999) and is structured around the five identified WLB cultural elements that have emerged from their model. This approach allows for a degree of theoretical grounding in terms of examining the cultures while also offering an opportunity to further WLB inquiries by both examining the validity of their model as well as exploring what further theoretical areas may be needed. To this end, it is hoped to lay the foundation of organisational WLB culture insofar as it is the first element through which institutional supports permeate and therefore defines the immediate framework through which managerial staff operate.

To achieve this, the interviews were analysed using contextualisation techniques which involved exploring themes as they appeared in the transcripts and is the most frequently utilised tool of qualitative analysis. All themes in this chapter were examined through multiple variables which are discussed in order of relevance including: manager-level views (i.e. comparing the views of senior / executive managers with those of middle managers; organisational perspectives (i.e. public versus private companies); and, to a lesser degree, themes will be discussed in relation to participants’ gender, parental status, location in the organisation (HR versus sales) and other relevant terms to the extent that there exists interesting variance.

Interviews are referred to and quotes cited by the organisation (A, B, C or D) as well as the manager’s position and sex (e.g. MM:Male:Organisation A) according to the following legend:

- Position
  - MM - Middle Manager
  - SM - Senior Manager
  - ExecHR - Executive HR Manager
- Sex
  - Male
  - Female
5.2 - Managerial Support

This section examines 'Managerial Support' which can be understood in three distinct ways. The first examines how 'management policies' or the organisation as a whole 'manages' work-life balance; in other words, their goals or aims in creating WLB programmes. The second is how proactively or efficiently an organisation communicates available WLB supports. Finally, this section examines the extent of organisational support in both encouraging managers to maintain personal work-life balance as well as to what extent they are encouraged to promote a healthy WLB in their staff.

5.2.1 - Organisational Supports

As discussed in previous chapters, policies are not created in a vacuum but are rather a reflection of their creator's personal views (Walby 1990; Leira 1992; Lewis 1992; Esping-Andersen 1999). Consequently, policies take on a degree of political and sociological agency wherever the power and influence of these largely invisible perspectives are actualised in the recreation or perpetuation of social norms. Wood et al. (2003) argue that by examining these 'management policies' you can deduce an organisation's 'Work-Life Balance Culture'. In this context, an organisation's WLB Cultural perspective is assumed to be an identifiable and integrated phenomenon coherently linked to its WLB policies (e.g. Appelbaum et al. 2000; White et al. 2003). This subsection applies this perspective in exploring the types of cultures active in each of the participating organisations by examining managerial support as an integral cultural aspect.
Managers individually and organisations as a whole constitute a strong and to some degree mutually reinforcing component in both setting the WLB culture as well as determining the degree to which staff feel encouraged to maintain a healthy work-life balance. In relation to this personal encouragement, organisations reported significant variance in their WLB cultures. While managers from organisations B, C and D (all public organisations) reported strong WLB supports, organisation A reported few formal imperatives through which to proactively encourage WLB. Indeed, the only positive encouragement reported in organisation A came from the executive HR manager who noted that:

... the CEO is a really good boss in that sense, he hires good people and lets them do their own thing ... The culture in my department is, 'let the people do their own thing and they'll be fine'. You don't have to closely control people (ExecHR:M:Organisation A).

However, senior managers at organisation A did not appear to share this positive cultural view. Conversely, they uniformly reported not feeling encouraged to have WLB claiming, “I'm not encouraged by the organisation or peers” (SM:Male:Organisation A) and “it's what I do myself to make it happen” (SM:Male:Organisation A).

In contrast, those in senior levels at organisation B reported feeling highly encouraged to “try to keep the balance” (MM:Female:Organisation B) with some exclaiming “definitely” (SM:Male:Organisation B) and “without a doubt” (SM:Male:Organisation B). In this organisation, senior managers overwhelmingly noted that “the facilities are there...” (SM:Male:Organisation B) to support workers with one senior manager claiming:

The culture would be generally to encourage and support people involved in external activities whether family or sports or hobbies, and anyone involved in that is encouraged and acknowledged, their achievements in those areas are recognised (SM:Male:Organisation B).

This view was supported by the other managers who felt that the supports were in place should they be needed. Moreover, the supports are not only available, but also availed of by staff at all levels. Indeed, one senior manager offered a specific example of the supports he had used over the years:

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I took 3 months parental leave 5 years ago. They provide me with things like computer access, laptops, so I can balance my own work. There are informal flexibilities, like if I ring my boss and say I'm not going to be in until 11AM, he knows that there is no problem if he calls on me at 11AM on a Saturday (SM: Male: Organisation B).

Even where the need for WLB support had not specifically arisen, these managers reported an awareness that the formal and cultural supports were in place should they need them. Middle managers confirmed this point repeatedly:

I haven't looked to change my working hours but I have colleagues at the same level and two who are higher than me who have reduced hours so my perception is there is co-operation (MM: Female: Organisation B).

Very encouraging. I haven't taken up any of the facilities offered, my 2 staff both have flexible working hours. It is supportive (MM: Female: Organisation B).

Within Organisation B, many of the managers reported that the WLB culture allowed for a degree of autonomy among individuals. One way this appears to have been achieved is by departing from historically unfriendly WLB cultural norms, such as presenteeism, to a greater emphasis on performance:

As long as I deliver what I have to deliver, it all about performance. I'd never be asked if I was here or not here. If I were to go off for the day, it would be just fine (SM: Male: Organisation B).

Our contract terms are to fulfil a particular role and do what's required to do that, and that might be 60 hrs one week and 30 another... We're measured on outputs ... We're given the freedom to do the job and we're not asked in any specific way to account for our time (SM: Male: Organisation B).

Secondly, while organisation B provides a variety of supports and encourages flexibility, employees understand that "... they leave it more or less up to the individual to achieve these things. I think they put in place the various parameters and the various options" (SM: Male: Organisation B). In other words, the organisation communicates available options and aims to create a supportive environment in which staff have the autonomy to negotiate their own needs:

Everybody would have been told about it and you let people make their own minds up (MM: Male: Organisation B).
The organisation tells you what the policies are, they don't encourage you to go out and get on them, they say if you have an issue come and talk to us (MM: Male: Organisation B).

In this regard, organisation B has a proactively supportive WLB culture. There are wide varieties of supports both offered and availed of by staff at all levels. This can similarly be found in the interviews of the public service workers in health and education (organisations C and D) where managers felt that the supports were in place. There was also a reported take-up by senior-level managers such as one who had "... applied in the last couple of years and been granted unpaid leave for 2 months in the summer and I've been supported in getting that" (SM: Female: Organisation D). Though these managers qualified this by noting that, while there was a good level of support for the ideas and principles behind WLB, from an operational perspective, the reality was more limited:

In terms of time off or anything of that nature, that's not a difficulty for me, I can get it, but there's nobody taking work away from me in order that I can have a day off (SM: Male: Organisation C).

I feel it is supported in principle but they haven't got round to how it's going to be done in the school (MM: Male: Organisation D).

Within organisations B, C and D, the wide variety of supports is emblematic of a management team seeking to create either a system of equal opportunity and / or attempting to generate a level of high-commitment whereby WLB arrangements are created to encourage employee loyalty (Wood et al. 2003).

Looking at policy in this way, Wood et al. argue that if a management team places a high value on obtaining employee commitment then they will be more likely to develop work-life balance arrangements. To this end, organisation B offers an extensive list of programmes and supports with one manager extolling the cultural virtues:

... base[ed] on the fact that we have a lot of policies that are in the area of WLB and we have a lot of uptake ... [without] a lot of resistance from managers. It comes up from time to time but the fact that we have so many people on various leave forms of one sort or another or reduced working hours arrangements of one sort of another, is confirmation (SM: Male: Organisation B).
Within this high-commitment perspective, the organisational aim of these supports is explicitly engaged in order to increase employee loyalty. For example, the senior HR director offered an example of when a manager had a family matter arise and was seeking a formal reduction in hours:

... [I] felt that her contribution over the years have been such that it would have been mean to put her on a formal arrangement where an informal arrangement wasn't going to cost the organisation any money and, from a selfish point of view, I would get it back in spades through loyalty and good will and all that (ExecHR Director:Male:Organisation B).

Other managers reported similarly offering flexibilities to staff in hopes of gaining increased loyalty and commitments.

Yet while these comments suggest that such organisations use these policies to create high loyalty and commitment, the policies could also be regarded as emerging from the goal of 'equal-opportunity.' In this sense, an organisation creates WLB arrangements in order to remove discrimination – particularly on the basis of race, gender or age (Wood et al. 2003). While the management of policy in organisation B might easily be seen in terms of either of these two goals the managers often reported hoping that flexibilities would increase loyalty or could be used to reward staff commitment.

Within organisation A, the lack of supports and organisation-wide policies suggests that they operate within a reactive WLB culture. While they of course offer all the statutorily required WLB programmes, there is no formal / informal support for anything beyond these. This suggests that organisation A creates WLB supports in response to normative pressures from the wider society rather than more altruistic motives. In other words, work-life balance arrangements are created and allocated in terms of the bare minimum and in response to external compulsion. The HR manager described WLB as resting at the sole "discretion of managers" in their respective departments but admitted that "it wouldn't be at the top of their agenda" (SM:Male:Organisation A). This appears to be indicative of the organisation as a whole insofar as other managers reported not being encouraged to have WLB or to prioritise the issue: "I would like to have more life than work. I do
have freedom of autonomy to have WLB to a degree, but the pressure is there not to have it (MM:Female:Organisation A).

In a larger sense, a senior HR manager felt that the majority of managers would not even understand the organisation's legal obligations in offering parental and maternity leaves, though there was a general understanding that they exist: “Where there is a legal obligation we have a healthy attitude to it but to the others we don't” (SM:Male:Organisation A). Yet even this limited 'healthy attitude' was questioned by middle managers who felt that, “I know that if I asked for unpaid leave, for parental leave, which I'm entitled to, I'd have to struggle to get that” (MM:Male: Organisation A).

Where they are available, non-statutory policies were reported as “inconsistent [and varying] from manager to manager and director to director” (SM:Male:Organisation A). Moreover, almost all managers reported a lack of encouragement in pursuing a healthy WLB and none were currently or had recently availed of flexible arrangements. While the organisation had indeed published their legally mandated arrangement, the HR Director reported that “other things like working from home or flexitime, that's something we don't publicise” (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Given the lack of institutional support, managers who wanted a healthy balance felt that they had to find ways to make it happen themselves:

*It's not that they don't want you to have WLB [but] in some instances you have to say I need this time off (MM:Female:Organisation A).

While the organisation might like the idea of staff having a WLB, managers feel that the overall motto in the organisation may be, WLB, 'yes, as long as the job is done' (SM:Male:Organisation A).

This theme was repeated by a large number of the organisation's managers:

*I'm sure they'd encourage me to have a WLB but at the same time I'm sure they'd want me to be the way I am. Like okay, hold your family when a problem arises. Yet they wouldn't say don't solve [work] problems when your off-site. You have to kind of be on call (MM:Male:Organisation A).

There also appeared to be a general feeling that the organisation maintained no interest or obligation outside of their staff's work life with one manager
saying, "I wouldn't say my boss has a concern about whether I balance my work and my life" (MM:Female: Organisation A). Indeed, many middle managers at Organisation A felt that the organisation was uninterested in their personal lives and, consequently, saw no support or acknowledgement that they might have to focus on personal issues. One manager felt this may have been "because managers are expected to work every hour that the business needs, make a sacrifice" (MM:Female:Organisation A).

In a broader sense, organisation A's managers described the WLB culture in terms of presenteeism and "getting on with the work" (MM:Male: Organisation A). There appeared to be little understanding that variance could exist between individuals:

*I would say I'm going with the flow, we all tend to have the same attitude toward WLB, we all know what our job is and we can work within that criteria and still get a day's work done and go home yet still have a home life at the end of the day (MM:Male:Organisation A).*

This idea of 'going with the flow' appeared to imply an employee's tacit agreement to these working practices and criteria. Alternatively, going against the flow would describe those who tried "to have more of a life and less work" (MM:Female:Organisation A) whereby the implication appeared to be that the pursuit of a 'private life' was antithetical to the baseline of organisational culture:

*My own opinion is the job has to be done and if it goes into your social or after work life so be it ... when you're given a task to do, you do it. Time-management, that's a good key word (MM:Male:Organisation A).*

5.2.2 - Communication of Supports

In this manner, organisation A's managers appear to regard WLB as an individual concern to be achieved only after they have completed their work and without an expectation of organisational support. Unsurprisingly, organisation A had therefore reported the lowest level of WLB take-up alongside a distinctly apathetic approach to offering and/or promoting available options.
In terms of this promotion, although each organisation reported maintaining an internal communication system, there were varying degrees of passivity in disseminating WLB information. Within organisation A, for example, almost all managers were stumped when asked to describe how WLB policies were communicated. Even within the HR department, there appeared to be a great deal of confusion:

That's a good question. You have to ask the people who deal with most of that. I don't deal with it on a day-to-day basis, but there should be a formal policy in relation to it ... The induction manual will tell you what your hours of working are. There's always flexibility in relation to it, but we're just talking about the set times and I think it would discuss a bit about work life balance (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).

Yet although the executive director of HR referred to a subordinate, even the director a step below him remained unaware of how to answer these questions. In fact, the executive director's referral was a recurring theme in his interview:

The HR manager will do a better job [explaining]. I would say from time to time we have something to communicate, but it's not a regular feature, it's not high on agenda.

HR would tell you and it would normally come through a department head. If someone wants to know something they would ask their boss, and it would come to HR

I think you need to ask the HR manager ... (laughs) yet I know that some of the stuff would be documented (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).

Additionally, neither senior level HR manager appeared versed in where this information was available. Although they may not deal with these issues on a daily basis, their respective comments, along with those of the middle managers, revealed that this ignorance stemmed more from the non-existence or poor dissemination of formal policies. As the senior HR director noted, "it's not a regular feature, it's not high on agenda ... things like working from home or flexitime, that's something we don't publicise" (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).

When the head of HR (to whom both senior HR managers referred) was interviewed, she indeed offered the most concrete answers. In fact, of all the
participating managers from this organisation, the HR manager was the only one who seemed to know where the information on WLB policies was located:

The main ones would be maternity leave, parental leave, force majeure leave, we have a carers leave policy as well. They are all developed by HR, managed by HR, and listed in the HR policy and procedures manual and that is given out to managers within the organisation. Fifty per cent of current managers have it but there may be some new managers, who wouldn't have it. They might not know if it exists and we are trying to get that to them so they would know when situations arise. That's the main source of information (MM:Female:Organisation A).

As she explains, currently half of the managers would not know about such policies or have access to the policy manual. To further complicate the dissemination of information, she later explains that, for the most part, WLB policies are:

... not explicit if they are there at all. There's room for managers to have discretion in their departments but it wouldn't be at the top of their agenda ... so it is low on the organisation's priority list. It just doesn't exist here (MM:Female:Organisation A).

This was confirmed by comments from senior managers who, for the most part, simply noted that "[the policies] don't exist" (SM:Male: Organisation A). Likewise, over half of the middle managers expressed no awareness that such policies existed:

I would think we have no policies here ... I would ask HR (MM:Male: Organisation A).

Communication is done through team briefs, but there isn't really any WLB communication ... [As a manager] you'd have to approach HR and query it with them. [My staff] would come to me and query it with me (MM:Female:Organisation A).

Indeed, only one manager had knowledge of the HR manual though reported that, while "there is a hard copy," in terms of policy descriptions, he "really can't understand them" (MM:Male:Organisation A). Managers consistently reiterated that "there isn't really any WLB communication" and that, when in doubt, "you'd have to approach HR and query it with them" (MM:Male:Organisation A). A few managers did appear to make a distinction between statutory entitlements and non-traditional working arrangements:
Maternity and paternity leave, yes, there would be policies on them. I would say they are too little communicated in one sense. I know if I asked guys on the factory floor what's the paternity or maternity leave entitlement, they more than likely would not know. They'd know where to get it but, have we actually told them that it's here and we have a policy on it? More than likely not. When it comes to tele-working I wouldn't be sure that there's actually a formal policy on it (MM:Male:Organisation A).

In any case, organisation-wide communication, even with regards to statutory leaves, was reported to be low and done "very informally" (SM:Male:Organisation A). While managers claimed that "you just have to ask and you're told your rights" (MM:Male:Organisation A), most managers themselves had no awareness of the basic entitlements:

For what your entitlements might be, they wouldn't be advertised. I think you'd have to go digging for them and you'd probably do that through your local manager or shop steward (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Personally I don't know the maternity leave policy. Within my team I haven't had it, I'm only in the job a couple of months. But if it did a quick phone call to HR, they'd tell me (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Although such entitlements remain statutory, this information was not readily available although all managers reported the same course of action in determining what programmes might be available: "They'd come to me and I'd go to HR. But generally I think it's set in stone" (MM:Male: Organisation A). Once again, such comments illustrate the importance one's manager plays in WLB at organisation A.

This lack of consistent organisational communication in terms of WLB was cited by certain managers as a source of contention for those who may have great need or desire of WLB:

I know an employee that left because there hasn't been opportunities to engage in WLB; at least two women left because of that and not letting the organisation know that was why (MM:Female: Organisation A).

Consequently, a number of managers pinpoint the absence of a forum through which to discuss the supports staff may need as resulting in certain cases of staff leaving the organisation.
At organisation B, the executive HR director expressed similar difficulty in describing how policy is communicated:

> God it's a good question, and there's probably other people you'll interview that know that better. I would expect that your line manager should know, your HR manager should know, I would expect that you'd be able to find the HR policies on the Internet ... You should have no difficulties accessing what's available (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B).

Yet unlike organisation A, the director felt secure that staff should have “no difficulties accessing what's available” (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B). This was confirmed in that every manager interviewed, both middle and senior levels, was able to describe where the information was available. In this manner, one senior manager fully outlined the dissemination process:

> There tends to be procedures documented. They could be on the internet sites, internal websites, maybe formal briefings when there's a change ... Certainly any of the formal arrangements would tend to be formally communicated ... We do have a formal cascading briefing process for everyone in the organisation to be briefed once a month and it's available from the top down. The chief executive briefs the directors, they brief the next level and so on. If there was a particular WLB issue or flexible working arrangement issue, it would come out through that and would be briefed to everybody in that way ... It would be emailed and verbally briefed as well (SM:Male:Organisation B).

The proactive stance toward WLB at organisation B likewise appears to permeate through their commitment to communicate available initiatives. Whereas the majority of managers at organisation A were uncertain about even what legal entitlements their staffs had, every manager in organisation B was fully briefed from the top down and were immediately notified when changes occurred. Similarly, they also maintained a strong intranet system that almost every manager highlighted as a freely available source of information to which all staff could refer for details on available WLB initiatives:

> Probably two main ways: one's through formal briefing any time there's something new and the second is that there are very regular items on the intranet reminding people that certain things are available. If they do have a query about anything then there are obviously the HR people (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Besides these main sources of information, a few managers also offered further suggestions:
The basic one would be to contact your immediate supervisor and they'd be able to get the information (MM:Female:Organisation B).

I've been at presentations on WLB, there's a WLB day, they make reasonable efforts to communicate what's available (MM:Male: Organisation B).

In this manner, it was clear that the organisation prioritised making policy information readily available to managers and staff. Moreover, one manager noted that clarification supports were also in place:

If I wanted to check the specifics of any particular element, or I was unable to precisely gauge from what the document said, if there was some ambiguity in the document, I would go to an HR specialist and if they don't know they could ask some of their specialist colleagues in the corporate and head office (MM:Female:Organisation B).

This manager continued by describing how there was flexibility within the policies through which to interpret them in context:

There is a very strong support culture around the policy documents, but quite often it's a matter of using your own common sense to interpret what seems reasonable (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Unlike organisation A, there appeared to be full dissemination of WLB policies from management to staff. In examining this process in interviews with public service managers, there was significant variation between departments with complicated formal systems and those that relied on more informal methods. To highlight some examples:

**Formal:**

First the intranet site so they are readily accessible and then the service managers carry the primary duty of care to the employees. So if an employee doesn't have access to the intranet and wants to know about whatever it is, we work it that they approach the manager and the manager gets the policy for them and gives it to them (SM:Male: Organisation C).

**Informal:**

We don't advertise it, but staffs know what they need ... They would ask either myself or their directors but then they would come to me as well. If I don't know, I ring personnel (SM:Male:Organisation C).

Yes, there is a formal system for WLB policies ... No, there is no handbook ... [Teachers] would be overly friendly and a lot of them would be able to deal with things from their experience but there's no handbook, and there's nothing on the web site and we have no intranet.
A lot of talk about it but nobody's done anything (SM: Male: Organisation D).

Although there appeared to be inconsistencies between departments in organisations C and D, they had a much more formal dissemination process for WLB information than organisation A. In a similar manner to organisation B, all departments reported that one's manager would be able to assist them in accessing and locating the information.

Indeed, a common theme among these public service interviews was an acknowledgement of the need to update their current communication systems with regards to WLB. A few departments reported currently working to clarify or update policies as well as finding ways to make them more widely accessible. Nevertheless, some departments also reported that it may presently be difficult for many employees to access or understand the existing policies:

“We've all the leave entitlements and criteria around them on the website and they are there to be accessed by the employee ... We've downloaded those and our plan is now to put them together so that they are in an easy to access format and move to outline the terms and conditions around them that aren't totally clear, to have them there as a handy resource for each department (SM: Female: Organisation C).

Well, as part of the project that we are working on at the minute, we decided that our internal communication structures weren't what they really should be in terms of advising people of their entitlements and particularly in the WLB area ... a person wouldn't be able to avail of WLB if they didn't know what their entitlements would be. To that effect we are in the middle of compiling an electronic handbook which would be web-based and available to all employees (SM: Female: Organisation D).

So unlike organisations A and B, both organisations C and D are actively seeking improvements in their WLB communication methods. This is consistent with problems reported throughout the public services stemming from insufficient departmental resources whereby, even if the programmes and policies may exist, the structures are not in place through which to support them.

When coupled with inconsistencies between departments, it becomes difficult to categorise the cultural perspective of organisation C and D. To a certain extent, the fact that most public service managers reported a high level of
commitment and recognised the need for flexibility in their staff's WLB might suggest understand the need of WLB supports in terms of equal-opportunity and/or high-commitment.

In any case, among all the participating organisations, B appears to have the most extensive and proactive system of managing WLB through a wide selection of programmes and initiatives alongside a broad system of informational distribution. Alternatively, the WLB culture at Organisation A is reactive in that programmes and policies emerge merely as a response to internal and external pressures.

5.2.3 - Supervisors' Supports

The final element this section examines is the direct role of managers in supporting or discouraging non-traditional working arrangements or other WLB programmes within their team. Managerial support for work-life balance has been highlighted in prior research as the most critical variable in an employee's decision to avail (Thompson et al., 1999). Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) further extended the link between managerial support and take-up rates by arguing that employees are more likely to use WLB programmes if they work with a powerful supervisor who could buffer them from negative career effects.

The previous sub-sections illustrated the relationship between how the organisation 'manages' and communicates their WLB perspective. It concluded that the public organisations B, C and D could be respectively seen as attempting to use WLB supports to create a high-commitment and/or equal-opportunity culture. Conversely, organisation A offers an example of a reactive WLB culture offering few formal organisation-wide policies.

As research suggests a link between WLB support and an employee's decision to avail, it is vital to understand the level of managerial support within each organisation (Thompson et al., 1999; Blair-Loy and Wharton, (2002). As such, this sub-section focuses on this 'supervisory support' or the direct role of managers in supporting or discouraging non-traditional working arrangements.
or other WLB programmes within their team. Specifically, it explores whether the organisations’ respective cultures encourage management to support a healthy WLB in their staff.

In terms of policy and operations, the executive HR director at organisation B expressed an operational preference for informal agreements built upon trust relationships. Nevertheless, he also recognised that, as an organisation, they could not rely entirely on such informality:

You can't just rely on relationships and culture, you can't rely on this benign view of the world. It just isn't that way so you need formal policies that deal with that so people can see them in black and white and understand what they are entitled to and managers can see what staff are entitled to and they both mutually signed up to. In the absence of give-and-take and trust, you need that formality (ExecHR:Male: Organisation B).

In recognising the inconsistency involved in such informality, the senior HR team created extensive formal policies to clearly detail availability and policy. To a large extent, this was an attempt to buffer staff that might not have the strong relationship needed to successfully navigate an informal system.

Similarly, the HR Executive at organisation A recognised the importance of the manager's relationship though he arrived at a different conclusion:

I like to think we don't need formal policies. I'd like to think we could convince our managers of the benefits of doing it without a formal policy but that may not be possible, that's my concern. I would prefer it whereby the top is committed to work-life balance, a genuine commitment to it without formal policy and they do it because it is the right thing to do (ExecHR:Male: Organisation A).

Although he acknowledged that relying on managers to 'do the right thing' may be problematic, the organisation had nonetheless declined to pursue formal programmes through which to buffer staff from unsympathetic managers.

From this perspective, it can be seen how the two different approaches trickle down to other WLB issues. Organisation B’s approach permeates on a cultural level whereby policies are proactive, diverse and well-communicated. Managers reported feeling a mixture of pressure and support in encouraging
WLB in their departments and to remain flexible with their staff. Alternatively, organisation A's managers reported a lack of direction in dealing with staff WLB issues which has resulted in inconsistencies between departments and managers. In general, however, the culture in organisation A is that concessions should only be granted under extreme circumstances.

Each of these Organisations takes a distinctive approach to communicating policy and culture. In organisation A, WLB varies according to one’s manager and, more importantly, the relationship one has with them. When arrangements were made, they were informal and considered inherently exceptional with one manager noting, "it is done very much behind closed doors and it is kept secret" (MM:Female: Organisation B). Based on this, it appeared that managers worried about being barraged by staff requests if initiatives are offered or widely communicated. This fear was so pervasive that many managers expressed concern that even allowing staff to participate in this research project would increase departmental unrest; an imperative sufficient for many managers to refuse staff participation outright.

In a more specific sense, managers were not instructed on how they should deal with staff requests though report generally feeling discouraged from promoting WLB or being flexible:

\[\text{Not at all (MM:Female: Organisation A)!}\]

\[\text{No, it was never encouraged. It would just be on our own, no one has ever suggested how I should deal with my people. It would just be my own way of dealing with them (MM:Male: Organisation A).}\]

Moreover, organisation A lacks any formal policy regarding how managers should deal with their staff in relation to WLB:

\[\text{It's never been discussed ... I can only speak for myself and with my own guys, I would always actively seek out a guy that's struggling, time-management is something I would look at with him (MM:Male: Organisation A).}\]

\[\text{I always say to my bosses I do the touchy-feely stuff. They're your team you look after them (MM:Female: Organisation A).}\]

This leaves managers having to rely upon their own subjective interpretation of the organisation’s culture in determining how flexible they should be. As
one manager explained, the norm was to manage their respective departments based on how they saw the senior level managers operating their own: “I would be open to consider a flexi-time in my department, but I would wait for the encouragement to come from the top. It’s got to come from the top down” (MM:Female:Organisation A).

In contrast, organisation B’s managers were able to articulate a clear vision of the WLB culture in addition to how they were expected to manage this in their respective departments:

We understand that there are times when people have stresses in their lives and time demands. Most managers would be flexible in the confines of the job (SM:Male:Organisation B).

I would say that our organisation is ahead of most other companies. I know companies where people have gone to their bosses and said I just want to ... and were told to just turn around and run out the door -- if you don’t like it here just clear out. We don’t do that. Where this organisation is not only reactive to people but being more proactive in terms of trying to have policies that would be ahead of most companies (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Senior managers at organisation B also reported feeling that it was part of their job to be “proactive [and] offer flexibility in the confines of the job” (SM:Male:Organisation B). Likewise, middle managers reported a similar understanding of the organisational policy and culture:

There would certainly be an attitude that, where I can, to be flexible (MM:Female:Organisation B).

The organisation would be proactive in being open to WLB requests. The organisation would publicise from time to time the fact that there are a variety of attendance and conditions that people could be employed under, but we would not proactively encourage people to take it on (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Everybody would have been told about it and you let people make their own minds up. We have a briefing mechanism as well, communication within the organisation is quite good, so it would have been briefed by the team leader down to the team as well as the emails ... If someone was getting into trouble you’d say, ‘would it help you if you took reduced hours?’ People know their entitlements (MM:Male:Organisation B).

Moreover, there was a strong theme permeating managers’ comments regarding organisation-wide communication on WLB that was absent from organisation A. Almost every manager mentioned WLB policies being ‘widely’
advertised noting that, in terms of what policies were available, “we all know about them” (MM:Female:Organisation B). Indeed, unlike organisation A where managers act on instinct and subjectivity, managers at organisation B are comfortable that their staff are fully aware that the organisation offers formal institutional initiatives to help them balance their personal lives with work.

As such, we see that managers maintain a great deal of power in encouraging their staff to maintain a healthy WLB. By extension, it can be argued that these organisations therefore rely upon their leadership to conversely serve as either gatekeepers or promoters. In this context, a few participants described their relationships with their managers and how this has directly affected their own WLB and working conditions. Within organisation B, for example:

To me it depends on who you are working for. For example, my case at the moment, my boss is incredibly supportive and would say – look, it’s five thirty, it’s time to go home, and why are you staying here late? Or, if you have any problem with the kids just give me a buzz. So I would find him incredibly supportive. That’s far more important in many ways than organisation policy or what’s written down (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Yes, with my current manager, I have been encouraged, you know, to do it rather than think about it ... absolutely no quibble about providing the flexibilities on the occasional basis that I might need it (MM:Female:Organisation B).

In my previous roles we’d have had tight deadlines, and I know at the end of it they would have said if you have to put in a bit of a stint now, have a couple of late mornings or a day off or something. They would keep their eyes open for things like that (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Collectively, managers in organisation B, whether male or female, middle or senior, reported general support and autonomy in setting their own schedules and those who had availed of WLB arrangements had all done so with the full acceptance and support of their managers:

If my manager was not open to this at all, what would I have done? ... I rely a lot on my relationship with my boss. We know each other and we know we can do that (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Initially, when I came back after my first child, I worked 4 days. My manager was very amenable to that and he let me manage it in my own
way. He didn’t get too stuck into it and let me work my way around it (MM:Female:Organisation B).

I tried to create a solution beforehand, so I tried to think of different jobs that would work. So I think that is a good way to do it; we should try and think ourselves and not just rely on someone to help us (MM:Female: Organisation B).

The research in this section confirmed previous findings that employees are more likely to avail of WLB arrangements when buffered by managerial support (Thompson et al. 1999; Wood et al. 2003; Drew and Murtagh 2005). As seen in the above comments, if managers are personally encouraged to maintain a healthy WLB, then they tend to report that supports exist should they ever need them. Alternatively, managers who feel no overwhelming support or encouragement to maintain a balance from their superiors consequently expressed no strong desire to encourage a healthy WLB in their staff. In this regard, it can be seen how an organisation’s WLB culture can be both created and defined by the senior management.

5.3 - Organisational Time Expectations

The previous section showed how an organisation’s management of policies may be used to evaluate their WLB cultural perspective. The second element this chapter examines is ‘Organisational Time Expectations’ or how the organisation evaluates and practices time use. Previous research has suggested that many employees are reluctant to participate in WLB programmes for fear of jeopardising their careers (Morris 1997; Thompson et al. 1999). This can be further compounded by the fact that, in some organisational cultures, the amount of time one spends at work is interpreted as an indication of employees’ contributions and career dedication (Starrels 1992; Perlow 1995) and these norms may make employees reluctant to take time off or reduce their work hours to attend to family responsibilities.

Indeed, these concerns are not without merit. For example, prior research has positively linked long working hours with managerial advancement as well as being inversely correlated with the take up of WLB initiatives (Judge et al. 1995; Thompson et al. 1999; Drew et al. 2003). As such, even where formal programmes exist, unsupportive work cultures may undermine their
effectiveness (Thompson et al. 1992). In this context, this section focuses on how each of these organisations understand time expectations with a particular focus on managers.

Within the participating organisations, the senior managers set the standard for working times:

*The CEO would come in at nine and would stay until seven in the evening and everybody else was afraid of going home because he would come looking for them and he wouldn't be shy about saying to them where were you – it's presenteeism* (SM: Male: Organisation A).

Likewise, lower level managers reported feeling uncomfortable leaving earlier than their boss:

*It can be difficult if your manager says to go home at 5 o'clock and you know that your manager is not going home until 7. For some people it makes it more difficult. I'd be much more comfortable if you're telling me to go home at 5 if you were going home at 5, then I would feel like I could leave* (MM: Male: Organisation A).

Similarly, the mode in which a manager prioritises work and hours sets their department’s standard with one middle manager noting, “*my own opinion is the job has to be done and if it goes into your social or after work life so be it ... when you're given a task to do, you do it*” (MM: Male: Organisation A).

Managers at organisation A clearly felt that work should be prioritised even if it meant sacrificing other areas of their lives. In other words, managers felt as though they were held to an even higher standard of time dedication:

*I think they are very busy, they have long hours ... I don't think there's pressure from their boss to help them obtain a healthy WLB ... maybe because they are expected to work every hour that the business needs, a sacrifice* (SM: Male: Organisation A).

In organisation A, the executive director of HR reported having attempted to challenge this culture of presenteeism:

*I changed that, because when I arrived in I started to work my own hours which was in at 7 out about 5 and the CEO caught me one day at the door and he said, 'you going?' and I said, 'yeah you need me?' He said, 'I wanted to talk to you' and I said, 'that's no problem I'll sit down and talk to you and if you ever need me I have my mobile, or you can email, blackberry' but I made no excuse and that was it. The other*
people saw that I had changed it – the culture. I know the CEO wasn’t too sure about it (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).

Yet despite this view, other managers felt that his efforts had been generally ineffective insofar as “everybody else is afraid of going home because he would come looking for them” (SM:Male:Organisation A). Likewise, the CEO was specifically mentioned by all the senior level staff when discussing working hours:

You can see it, he’s very much here as well, his predecessor wasn’t and there was a sense of freedom. I would say now that people are very conscious of his presence (SM:Male:Organisation A).

This illustrates the power and influence senior level managers have on their staff. Even though all of these managers were in senior level management roles themselves, they were nevertheless conscious of the CEO’s working patterns. Similarly, this held true in the organisation’s lower levels with one middle manager describing his views of the working hours within in his team:

My personal opinion is that in sales, the people I work with have a great WLB. [Managers] come in at 7AM and go at 6PM and as far as I’m concerned, that’s their life once they go home in the evening. The guys that work for me start at 8.30AM, by 5PM they’re gone. If they have to ring me in the evening they know I’m always there, but generally once 5PM goes it’s nothing to do with work after that. There is a definite feeling that between 8.30 and 5 that’s work, after that it’s our own life (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Likewise, organisation A’s managers reported long hours for themselves and their staff: “I would think most of us work late. We would have long days – early starts and six o’clock finishes also working weekends although we would try to avoid it” (SM:Male:Organisation A). They also reported feeling a strong cultural perspective that being away from the office would lead to a perception that they were not working:

Even if you’re getting the job done there is a perception that you might appear that you’re not working 100% even if you actually are. Since others aren’t seeing you, you’re not working, because you’re not here (MM:Female:Organisation A).

There is an attitude that if you’re not in the office you’re not working (MM:Male:Organisation A).
In contrast, organisation B appears to judge performance in terms of output and productivity rather than the amount of time spent in the office: "we're given the freedom to do the job and we're not asked in any specific way to account for our time" (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Yet although managers are not asked to account for their time, they nevertheless reported long hours and a general feeling that workload pressures were on the rise:

*The workload had been very high the last five years, so it has put pressure on people to work a lot of overtime or extra hours (MM:Female:Organisation B).

You'd be working 8.15 to 9.00 every night and some part of every weekend for 8 months of the year. That would not be unusual (MM:Male: Organisation B).

This sense of increasing pressure was reported by managers at all levels, though it was middle managers who specifically reported feeling pressured to get the work done without letting WLB practices interfere with the organisation's needs:

*I think the organisation adopts WLB principals. I think individuals within the management team will adopt this because, in my own case, I feel strongly about it ... But, when push comes to shove, the organisation expects you to be there ... There's quite a reasonable balance, but I have been involved in a lot of projects now and there is a clear expectation that the organisation's objectives and deliverables are central (MM:Female: Organisation B).

They certainly wouldn't want your health to be affected, they might say it's time to go home or you should get out of here or take a break at the weekend but half an hour later they would be back to things that need to be done for tomorrow. This is no reflection on them because they're under similar pressures ... the volume of work is going up ... I think they're in the same boat (MM:Female:Organisation B).

In terms of WLB cultures and time expectations, managers in all the organisations reported difficulty leaving the office if their senior managers were still on-site, even in cases where they had been actively encouraged to do so. Moreover, all managers similarly reported a sense that their workloads were increasing and therefore required longer hours. In organisation A specifically, managers admitted that this was seen as a sign of sacrifice by those in management positions and that those at senior levels in particular
needed to be available at all times: "we need a director here. My job and most directors jobs are seven days a week" (SM:Male: Organisation A).

In this area, the data confirms previous findings, such as those reported by Greenhaus et al. (1997), who found that managers were expected to prioritise the organisation's needs over their personal lives. In organisation A, this seems to be further compounded by a culture which correlates presenteeism with a manager's overall contribution and career dedication (similar to findings in Starrels 1992; Perlow 1995). This lends further support to perceptions in such organisations that managers who avail of WLB supports may be seen as less serious (as was also the case in Morris 1997; Thompson et al. 1999). Thus, despite formal programmes, unsupportive work cultures regarding time expectations hold the potential to undermine the effectiveness of WLB programmes (similar to findings in Thompson et al. 1992).

5.4 - Career Consequences

The third element this chapter examines is managers' perceptions of those who avail of WLB arrangements. Managers were asked to directly describe the perceptions they thought people had as well as whether they felt there might be an inherent stigma or opportunity cost. This section begins by examining the views of senior managers in organisation A.

The executive HR director, when asked to describe how he felt people viewed those working alternative arrangements he said, "I still think that there's a feeling that there's something wrong, something funny." When asked to expand on this he added:

*I would say that it is actually not a stigma. I would say that people still think it's a little bit funny, but it's a little bit more acceptable and understandable because of traffic and stuff like that* (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).

He went on to explain that managers have begun to allow staff to work around traffic times, when possible, allowing people to come in and leave during non-standard hours in order to avoid main rush hour times. In this context, he felt that the arrangement had helped managers see the benefits of flexible
working time. Yet, he defended the lack of take-up by explaining that "we have certainly tried all those things with different degrees of success" but that his experience with regards to such supports was that they "just [were] not working" (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).

As a result of this anaemic take-up in organisation A, there are few examples of staff working under WLB programmes, including statutory leaves, which left managers struggling to answer questions about how those that availed were viewed. Senior managers tended to respond from a more operational point of view in claiming that there was little need for such programmes considering the difficulties in their implementation:

I think where work life balance is being imposed by legislation than no, no there's no problem with [a stigma] ... I'd be aware of one or two cases where this might be causing an operational difficulty within the department (SM:Male:Organisation A).

There is not a lot of flexibility seeing that there is a lot of inconvenience there (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Considering that organisation A’s leadership appears to only understand the value of WLB arrangements in terms of avoiding heavy traffic times or meeting their legal obligations, it is unsurprising that the organisation would be less proactive in pursuing such programmes and that, when they do consider addressing WLB levels, the culture exudes a fairly negative view.

The middle managers in the organisation further expanded this view of WLB arrangements in unanimously agreeing that they were both rare and inconsistent. One manager felt that this had come from a general fear among staff that seeking WLB arrangements would damage their careers: "people just don't like speaking up on things that might damage their careers" (MM:Female: Organisation A). In other words, instead of jeopardising their careers or being considered less serious, employees simply do not seek the WLB arrangements they might desire.

Indeed, there may be sufficient justification for this fear insofar as these managers themselves appeared to hold a negative and hands-off view of non-traditional working. The only reported exception was in acknowledging the
benefits of maintaining flexibility around heavy traffic times. These views were further supported by middle managers in that not a single one had availed of a WLB support. Moreover, two middle managers who had requested the ability to work from home on an as-needed basis had been denied:

*I’m office-based every Friday. I wanted to work from home but the organisation didn’t want me to do it because they decided I was going to be outside my area. I was willing to set up my own office with my own expenses, but they were reluctant to do it because they decided it wasn’t the right thing to do* (MM: Male: Organisation A).

Managers were told that “working from home really isn’t an option ... You have to be hands on” (MM: Male: Organisation A). As such, no manager reported being able to avail of anything outside the traditional working structures. Furthermore, managers viewed such arrangements with suspicion that those who availed of statutory leaves were penalised in terms of their career progression:

*The ones who are taking maternity or parental leave, in my perception, it might go against them in terms of career development. I think that may be the perception because the management team is made up of mostly men* (MM: Female: Organisation A).

Organisation A’s HR director felt that, in a male-dominated organisation, individuals were judged on the amount of time they put into their careers. In other words, promotions were based on loyalty and commitment which was evaluated in terms of time on-site. From this perspective, he felt that it was a challenge for anyone attempting to balance their career and family:

*If they stop working then their career stops ... If I’m off on maternity leave I can’t be working and if I’m not working, I can’t get experience and if I have three children that’s a good bit of experience I’m losing. I haven’t got the same experience that they would see from someone the same age at the same point in their career, that’s the facts* (ExecHR: Male: Organisation A).

In other words, to move up the corporate ladder in organisation A, an employee has to be seen as committed and experienced. In both areas, this is judged heavily in terms of being present throughout their career and therefore making sacrifices in their personal lives.
Within the public service organisations C and D, some of these negative themes had also emerged, though to a significantly lesser degree. As was expressed at organisation A, managers in the public service also felt that those who took maternity or parental leave could be seen as less serious about their careers:

Certainly, I think the career risk is there in the administration stream, and possibly the nursing stream as well ... Types of penalty I would say for those who take up the scheme, I suspect that they put career progression, or a lot of people put career progression, on hold or defer it for a couple of years, although that's not always the case (SM:Male:Organisation C).

Another senior manager was generally more positive about those who availed though remained concerned that this might not extend to those at a managerial level:

No stigma attached, certainly not at the clinical level, I think for clinicians, even though it creates difficulty for their managers over hours, I wouldn't be aware of any stigma attached to it, I suppose it might be slightly different for managers (SM:Female:Organisation C).

Most, however, expressed concern about the possible logistical difficulties involved. For example, within the school environment, one manager felt that, although it was commonplace for staff to avail of leave, it also came at a cost:

We've absolutely no difficulty. If you take parental leave and you take teachers, essentially they are allowed to go when they want to go, and we will take in a substitute teacher and there is a cost to the organisation, if you use that term, but that is allowed for within our management practices and it's allowed for by government (SM:Male:Organisation D).

The manager explained how this created significant operational difficulties for him but felt that the general WLB levels were quite positive:

So I think we would have a positive view to WLB and I think a lot of that comes, not because of myself, but because the teaching profession is focussed on children and as well teachers will be off when their children are off which is a major advantage (SM:Male:Organisation D).

In organisation B, the managers' responses showed a far more complex relationship with and reflection of the influence WLB arrangements had on staff and their viewpoints. Unlike organisation A, the senior managers at organisation B all had firsthand experience with employees both seeking and
availing of WLB supports. Moreover, many had taken advantage of some of these programmes themselves. The executive HR director offered some insightful comments:

*I still probably feel that there is a reticence on behalf of people to come forward and look for lifework balance initiatives out of some concern that maybe it will impact on their careers. So we are trying to address that as best we can, to try and encourage people that it's okay* (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B).

Nevertheless, he acknowledged that there remains an organisational stigma attached to those who avail. This was confirmed by some of the senior managers:

*I think there's a mix of different attitudes. Some people who do it and I've done it myself, there's a bit of envy, some people think they're courageous, others might feel they might be jeopardising their career. At some level there might be some frustration for managers because it makes their jobs more difficult if they have significant numbers of their staff whose working patterns can be quite complex and varied, and particularly for some initiatives, things you want to do around communication and co-ordination, they can add a significant level of complexion to the whole activity* (SM:Male:Organisation B).

*I think the attitude is generally ok. But, I say generally because ... unquestionably there is a minority of people who are, again, theoretically ... in favour of balance but who would complain and say, 'look, the reason I have so much to do is because Paul is on WLB and he's gone home at two o'clock or he only works half days, or he doesn't work Tuesdays or Thursdays'* (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Another senior manager felt that the stigma towards those who availed of WLB arrangements was largely nonexistent, through admitted that there was still an opportunity cost in relation to promotions:

*I would say it's considered a well-accepted model at this stage, I don't think it causes any issue... Certainly no stigma, it's so common at this stage in [organisation B], there are so many people on all sorts of various arrangements I don't think there's a stigma at any level. My perception would be there's less people using the different flexible options at more senior levels but it seems to work fine. Where it might count against people to some degree might be in areas such as promotion. Managers, maybe individually or collectively, would have a view that there are certain positions that aren't amenable to somebody working on a part-time basis or job sharing* (SM:Male:Organisation B).

The middle managers in organisation B also expressed detailed opinions on the subject. The two most common themes were: first, the threat of being
seen as less serious and the subsequent opportunity costs towards job promotion; and second, concern over the logistical problems such arrangements could cause within the department.

With regards to the former, managers reported that the risk of being considered less serious about careers differed between individuals. Men were at a greater risk of “being seen as less serious, I would believe, particularly at a senior level” though women did not appear to run the same risk: “I don’t think by availing of WLB [women] would be seen as less serious at a senior level, if they’ve achieved that position already I think they’re taken seriously enough” (MM:Female:Organisation B). However, this only appeared to hold true for managers rather than those at lower levels who were not seeking promotion. Others felt that the stigma was more theoretical with one manager noting, “It’s hard to say. Sometimes I would feel people who avail of it are a little bit defensive... there's no stigma but maybe a perceived one” (MM:Female: Organisation B).

Other middle managers at organisation B felt that this perception of opportunity cost might be legitimate:

> Probably a little bit around the promotional frontier. There will still be a few that I suppose feel if you’re not full-time that you’re not that serious about your work (MM:Female:Organisation B).

A few managers felt that this opportunity cost was justified insofar as people who are working half time were competing with individuals who were “putting in much more than 36 hours” (MM:Female: Organisation B). Moreover:

> There's two ways of looking at it, you could consider that as unfair if you were in that arrangement and then on the flipside you have people who are putting in 70 hrs a week saying why shouldn't I get the recognition for it, so it's a little bit of a double edged sword, but it's definitely a factor (MM:Female:Organisation B).

As such, despite holding significantly more positive views of WLB, managers at organisation B continue to correlate commitment and achievements with an employee’s time on-site. In other words, those who were there more often deserved to be recognised and rewarded for their dedication. On the logistical
side, managers also felt that the problems introduced by WLB supports had left them less than supportive:

There's the overriding knowledge that the organisation's attitude is one that is positive and encourages it, but that's sometimes balanced with the challenges offered to a manager in trying to manage his own work schedules and team and that the WLB options that people take sometimes make that more difficult for the manager to manage, so there's a mix, but nobody thinks it's a bad thing but it would definitely be a challenge (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Many of the managers gave examples of areas within the organisation that they felt were ill-suited to current WLB programmes and which had contributed to negative feelings and operational concerns:

I think for certain types of work it's not an issue ... somebody leaves and somebody else can take up the work, it's not critical to have it done today or tomorrow. There's other places where somebody has a more specific role and in those cases their managers ... can be very intolerant or quite dismissive of the arrangements because they find, for example, somebody who works 3 days one week 2 days the next, when they come in, they spend the first day doing their emails, might get into something the second day, they're thinking of leaving the third day, and something similar the following week ... for that reason you end up having almost groups of people in particular locations and nobody in other locations (MM:Female:Organisation B).

It's not unusual if the person next door works 3 days a week, it depends on the situation, if I don't have to interact with her every day, I can talk to her Tuesday and Thursday but if there's a person in another division whom I send an email on Wed night saying 'please do this for finance' and I hear back 'do what', and she's gone 'till Monday you're in deep shit then. It doesn't suit all posts (MM:Male:Organisation B).

When these difficulties arise, it is left to the department to take up the slack and managers specifically are charged with this task:

At times I've heard the comment that it's us [managers] that are actually the ones who are paying the price for others having reduced hours. The original job sharing would have meant two people shared the same post so the number of bodies was defined so your work load was measured to the number of full-time bodies that was required. As time went on we ended up where to support WLB we would have people who were either job sharing with themselves, which means they work 2 days one week 3 days the next, or they could be reduced hours. The reduced hours ones are the ones that are really causing the issues (MM:Female:Organisation B).

This manager went on to describe the logistical difficulties in keeping her department operational when so many of her employees were on different
working arrangements. A particular concern of hers centred around annual leave where she often had to deny time off for someone working under a traditional schedule because it would have left her department empty on days that non-traditional workers would be away. Her comments showed that she felt that these traditional workers therefore paid the price and she was visibly exasperated with how far the organisation had taken support initiatives.

From the managerial viewpoint, non-traditional WLB arrangements seem to cause great "inconvenience" and "operational difficulty within the department" (MM:Male:Organisation A). In this regard, it often becomes the managers' role to coordinate increasingly complex schedules and workloads in their departments. This can lead to hesitation and frustration on the part of managers who might otherwise be willing to enter into these arrangements. Views between organisations are rather similar on this topic. Although managers at organisation B expressed more complex views about the logistical difficulties and opportunity costs involved, the general sentiment was similar to organisation A's.

Once arrangements were in place, the general perception was that those who availed, even when leaves were of a statutory nature, were less serious and committed to their careers and risked becoming stuck in their current post or level. Despite the increase in availability and take-up in some organisations, managers still reported a stigma attached to non-traditional working arrangements – a risk perceived to be greater for those in higher levels specifically and for men in general. However, there did appear to be a distinction made between those seeking supports for commuting and those looking for personal leave.

5.5 - Gendered Perception of Policy Use

As discussed earlier, alongside the shift in familial structures from the breadwinner model, there is an increasing the likelihood that both male and female employees will have substantial household responsibilities in addition to their work obligations. Against this background, most WLB initiatives at both the state and organisational levels continue to focus exclusively on
women and family life which result in perpetuating the status quo (Walby 1990). The standard terminology has responded by departing from 'work-family' or 'family-friendly' to a more inclusive 'work-life', yet most policies and programmes still remain entrenched in the work-family rubric (Smithson and Stokoe 2005).

From an institutional perspective, gender-neutral initiatives have aimed to level the playing field through policy. Yet Liff and Cameron (1997) argue that they have largely failed to address the root cause of gender equality by simply allowing women to mould themselves to male working patterns rather than changing the gendered nature of current organisational practices. Rather than reforming the environments themselves, these initiatives uphold the hierarchical and competitive basis of the existing social order.

Based on the research in this thesis, similar patterns appear to also pervade organisational-level WLB. In organisation B, for example, there has indeed been a terminological shift with managers discussing arrangements in gender neutral terms such as, "I like to call it life-work balance so that life come first!" (SM:Male:Organisation B). Yet despite this shift, managers still understand WLB through a gendered lens. From this perspective, WLB is a workplace initiative to help buffer women from the added pressures of managing their presumed domestic responsibilities. Alternatively, though with similar results, organisation A has not undergone this terminological shift and programmes are still discussed in terms of family-friendly without pretence that arrangements are aimed at both men and women.

In other words, despite any gender neutrality in terminological reference, both organisations continue to view WLB as predominantly an issue for mothers. This holds true at even the higher organisational levels with the executive HR directors at both giving almost identical comments:

*I think the legislation on work-life balance is very much on the side of women. I don't mean that in a negative or derogatory way, but because of the family situation and maternity leave (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).*
The attitudes in Ireland and in our organisation are probably still that it’s the women who take the majority of leave. That puts a particular burden on them and those childbearing years (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B).

So despite differing terminological references, these organisations both understand WLB through the same gendered terms. Of course, this oversight should not be confused with intent as organisation B’s perspective suggests a view of WLB arrangements as a mechanism to achieve balance and create a more equalitarian workplace. This offers further support that the WLB culture at organisation B may be attempting to create equal-opportunity in which arrangements are created to remove discrimination (Wood et al. 2003); in this case on the basis of gender.

Despite an awareness that the policies themselves were explicitly gender-neutral, in practice, managers at organisation B expressed a clear understanding of their gendered nature with one noting, “it’s available to both but it’s only availed of by one side” (MM:Male:Organisation B). In other words, despite their theoretical neutrality of access, these initiatives nevertheless remain viewed as having been created for working mothers:

I would say that the organisation is definitely a lot more aware than it was to keep women in the work force along with the issues of their being driven by the need to manage your family circumstances as well. In the last number of years a number of senior woman have taken reduced hours which has been brilliant (MM:Female:Organisation B).

This gendered perception of policy intent was confirmed by the take-up in all echelons within the organisation:

I suppose in practical terms, and certainly my experience, would be that the vast majority of people using these options in the organisation are women. I don’t know of any man, certainly in our area, that’s in job sharing or reduced hours (SM:Male:Organisation B).

In other words, it continues to be the women who adjust their working schedules to meet domestic needs despite the availability of WLB to both men and women. In particular, senior managers often tend to be men who have full-time stay at home partners:

I think that a lot of the managers and operation management out in the field, if you interviewed any of them you would probably find most of
them have partners that don't have to work but would manage the home life (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Even in the few examples where both partners worked for organisation B, it was always the woman who reported reducing her hours or workplace responsibilities after becoming a parent. This remained consistent even where the woman held a higher position in the organisation.

Despite these trends, however, there were nevertheless reported cases of men availing of certain types of WLB arrangements, though even this was largely viewed as atypical:

Some men have taken things like parental leave and extended parental leave but we haven't really got any high profile men yet say working half-time or three days a week or that kind of thing; that hasn't come forward yet, which is probably as much societal as anything else, but it would be great if we had (SM:Male:Organisation B).

In other words, while men had occasionally availed of parental leave, it was to a far lesser degree than women and did not appear to extend to non-traditional schedules and working arrangements. In this regard, cultural perception appeared to be the main concern:

Men would be seen as less serious I would believe, particularly at a senior level. Women would ... I don't think it would change their attitude to them. I don't think by availing of WLB they would be seen as less serious at a senior level, if they've achieved that position already I think they're taken seriously enough (MM:Female:Organisation B).

As such, there appears to be a double-standard in that men would be seen as less serious about their jobs while the organisation understands that women are simply trying to balance their family obligations while remaining in the workforce.

These gendered patterns appeared in the public services as well (organisations C and D). Even when programmes were universally offered, those who availed were overwhelmingly female. Senior managers saw this as a cultural disposition in that women largely took on the burden of domestic responsibility:

Even if you paid men it wouldn't necessarily change things. If it was still transferable even if you paid for the time off I think the same
consideration would still apply from the cultural predisposition and then this economic optimisation side of things (SM:Male:Organisation C).

In other words, such managers felt that men simply did not want the time off. Alternatively, where women are expected to change their working patterns after becoming a parent, men are perceived to be unaffected:

We have 5 men who are professional staff and out of those, 3 are parents. We’ve only ever had applications from one of them. Whatever their personal situation is, they don’t seem to be affected by a child, there doesn’t seem to be the need for that day off to manage those situations. In terms of parental leave ... we’d have one [man] applying for parental leave and that would be isolated days for very particular instances. It certainly would not be regular (SM:Female:Organisation C).

So despite the explicit gender neutral terminological focus in organisations B, C and D, managers still interpreted policies as primarily a response to the additional pressures women have in balancing domestic responsibilities with labour market participation.

Organisation A, conversely, was not only clearer about their views, but may also have been more honest about their effects: “I think the family situation very much becomes a female issue” (SM:Male:Organisation A). Views about the gendered division of labour remain strong with one manager noting:

I believe that females take their domestic life differently. Say women work nine to five, the males work longer hours, females have more of a domestic role than the husband (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Moreover, within organisation A, there remains a far more explicit belief that not only are women and men essentially different – with the former remaining responsible for domestic activities while men were free for workplace commitment – but that there was also a significant degree of agency involved:

The male workers do not say, 'I have to go home to collect the kids from school' and things like that where you talk to a woman and she will talk about her children and picking them up from school. [Women] generally have more pressure, they have to leave work at a certain time and be home at a certain time ... [they] have family commitments, children, disabled parents and they may be more conscientious and more reluctant to take on a more senior role if it requires them to give more time to work and there is a certain amount of guilt that creeps in that their not giving enough time to family and therefore they choose that option over the corporate job (MM:Female:Organisation A).
Yet even though organisation A's managers perceive women's labour market role to be secondary, they still do not have support programmes in place. As the executive HR director noted, women 'just wanted to stay home with the children' regardless of what the organisation offered. In supporting this, he cited the example of a manager who was offered a chance to construct her own arrangement in returning from maternity leave:

*Even that wouldn’t do it for her. It just wasn’t working; she wanted to be home with the kids. That was her priority and that was her decision. It’s kind of a mixed bag of it. I think the opportunity should be there* (Executive HR Director: Male: Organisation A).

To a significant degree, perceptions of these gendered working patterns appear to be linked to marriage. In other words, managers reported that single women worked similar to men though, once they were married and children entered the picture, they became victims of additional pressures:

*There's a big difference when they are married, no doubt about it. Very few men take on the burden of the child, so women have this new kind of tyranny where they hold down two jobs. They do a full time work ... and they have to perform to a certain level and then they go home and start all over again, which I think is a new form of tyranny* (SM: Male: Organisation A).

The views expressed by organisation A's managers clearly showed a gendered understanding of WLB. Women who remained in the workforce after marriage (and particularly after having children) struggled to "hold down two jobs" (SM: Male: Organisation A). Yet even where WLB arrangements were available on a limited basis, they were still seen as "a mixed bag" in failing to address women's priorities - the desire to remain at home.

These findings support the view that organisational WLB remains understood in terms of 'work-family' or 'family-friendly' despite the terminological shift to the more inclusive 'work-life' moniker (Smithson and Stokoe 2005). This research also serves to confirm that the continued focus on women and family life is perpetuating the negative status quo highlighted by Walby (1990) and Liff and Cameron (1997). Where gender-neutral initiatives are in place, they have largely failed to address the root of gender equality; rather, they seek to enable women to mould themselves to male working patterns rather than
addressing the gendered nature of current organisational practices themselves.

5.6 - Leadership and Peer Support

This final section explores the influence of organisational leadership and peer support. Whereas these themes were highlighted in previous sections with regards to the other four elements of WLB culture, this section will pull together these discussions in order to illuminate the role of peer and leadership relationships in framing the organisational WLB issue. In this context, interview themes emerged around two issues: senior level leadership and peer support or resentment.

5.6.1 - Leadership

Within all the organisations interviewed, leadership appeared to play the most vital role in both interpreting and shaping WLB policies. Within each organisation, managers referred to their more senior level managers when discussing departmental norms. Middle managers at organisation A reported that support for WLB was not a priority for senior managers and that, even if they themselves would be open to implementing various workplace flexibilities, they "would wait for the encouragement to come from the top" (MM:Female:Organisation A). In other words, in the absence of support or precedent from the top, these managers felt they would be risking defiance of the organisation's culture. These findings were congruent with similar themes highlighted in the literature review.

This laissez-faire reliance is important in that middle managers felt obligated to anticipate their senior managers attitudes with one middle manager noting, "in my personal opinion it comes from the hierarchy, they're your boss so you're worried about their attitude" (MM:Male:Organisation A). An example of this can also be seen from those middle managers at organisation A who sought to work from home one day a week but were left with the feeling "that [the senior manager] didn't feel like I could handle the situation from home. It's a trust thing, if you're not here there's a feeling you're not working" (MM:Male: Organisation A). This environment had left him to interpret WLB as
an issue of trust which he would ultimately project onto his own team. Indeed, throughout this interview, he made multiple mentions of the need to watch his staff and ensure they actually were where they claimed to be.

Alternatively, this permeation also appeared to operate in reverse. For example, a senior level manager in organisation B indicated that his philosophy was to give trust and assume it would not be abused. In his experience, people who abuse the system were the exception and easily identified since every element of their job would suffer. These trust perspectives in senior management appear to have contributed to significantly divergent cultures through which middle managers interpreted their roles: in organisation B, middle managers would extend trust in allowing their staff to organise their work week while the those in organisation A felt obliged to regulate their staffs’ working times and presume that to do otherwise would raise doubt over whether they were actually working.

The trend for senior managers’ personal perspectives to permeate the organisation appeared to extend to virtually every element at all levels of the workplace. The most commonly cited example was in how the most senior departmental managers set the standard working times: “The CEO would come in at nine and would stay until seven ... it’s presenteeism (SM:Male:Organisation A). Consequently, lower level managers felt uncomfortable leaving earlier than their boss:

It can be difficult, if your manager say to you go home at 5 o’clock, and you know that your manager is not going home until 7. For some people it makes it more difficult. I’d be much more comfortable if you’re telling me to go home at 5 if you were going home at 5, then I would feel like I could leave (MM:Male:Organisation A)

Conversely, if a senior manager stops working earlier, then lower level employees feel secure in doing likewise.

Additionally, the perspectives that senior managers hold with regards to WLB are interpreted by their staff in a number of other ways. Lower level managers frequently surmised the state of their bosses own WLB with one noting, for example, “I don't think Monday to Friday he has private life. When
he goes home in the evening, I don’t think he switches off” (MM:Male:Organisation A). Managers use these perceptions to cue their own behaviours with, for example, the same manager quoted above continuing to describe his mimicry with a sense of pride: “I think I would be a little bit similar myself, in the way that he carries on, people have said that were very alike in that sense.”

The same appeared to be true in organisation B where managers often compared their own practices with those of senior level managers. In the event that leadership styles diverged, managers would often report vacillating between them:

If I looked at the six ... senior managers, I would say [that] maybe half would set examples consistent with balance and the other half would be here too early and home too late. And that sends its own messages out. I’d say I vary between the two. I mean I go through weeks when my actions wouldn’t be too supportive and then I go through weeks when I would say, no, I’m out of here (MM:Female:Organisation B).

These interviews also revealed the degree of power that an organisation’s leadership holds in setting the tone of the WLB culture. In organisation A, senior level managers reported working long hours, judging commitment and loyalty through presenteeism, and not prioritising WLB or personal lives in general:

At my level it seems to be very much strictly WORK. The little bit about what happens outside of work is not a lot, just a word in passing. We probably don’t know very much about each other’s life outside of work (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Similarly, leadership at organisation B equally reflected the active organisational culture. Yet unlike the senior managers at organisation A who reported knowing little about each other’s personal lives, the most senior organisation B manager reported a strong bond and support system between his fellow peers:

We have a lot of challenges and are very lucky in that we’re a very well bonded team. We get on very well. We enjoy each other’s organisation so spending time with each other is not a burden (HRExec:Male:Organisation B).

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This idea of being personally supportive and friendly with your co-workers was a recurring theme in organisation B’s interviews that was entirely absent from organisation A’s. Yet although reversed, the cultural permeation was no less operative in that, like their senior managers, middle managers reported strong working relationships with their managers and peers.

Similarly, these managers reported feeling that their senior managers attempted to maintain a healthy WLB in their own lives:

*Speaking of the guy I report to I’d say he has it very well mastered in terms of good WLB. He operates on quite a flexible basis and allows his team to operate on a similar basis (SM:Male:Organisation B).*

Managers in all departments reported a sense that WLB was supported from the top and that "*there’s encouragement from the chief executive down*" (MM:Female:Organisation B). Even among lower levels, there was a sense that people were trying to maintain balance:

*I think it’s quite good throughout the organisation. We’ve a lot of managers at a high level who avail of flexible working hours. People do avail of it at all levels (MM:female:Organisation B).*

*I see people making a bigger effort, at all different levels to bring work life balance into their own life (MM:Male:Organisation B).*

As such, the perception that supports not only exist, but that organisational leaders personally avail of them, allows lower managers the freedom to also pursue such balance. Consequently, there was strong evidence that leadership played the most vital role in not only directly shaping WLB policy, but also in determining how it was interpreted and how it influenced the larger development of the organisation’s WLB culture.

### 5.6.2 - Peer Support or Resentment

While the degree of support for WLB arrangements may be interpreted through the actions and perspectives of senior level managers, it is important to note that one’s organisational peers may hold differing views. Previous research has suggested that the nature of WLB programmes is also influenced by the emergence / reinforcement of a ‘family-friendly backlash’ from childless employees who feel penalised by those who avail (Young 1999). For example,
Young (1999) argued that some workers (e.g. those who were single or childless) may be forced to compensate for working parents. Therefore, although the presence of WLB arrangements has been associated with positive outcomes, Grandey and Cordeiron (2003) posited that the perceived fairness of policy distribution may negatively influence their utilisation and overall effectiveness.

Throughout these interviews, such findings were largely confirmed whereby managers in all organisations reported that WLB programmes could be divisive and have lead to staff resentment. The two most common complaints were from those unable to avail and from staff who felt their workload had increased in their colleague’s absence. However, although both organisations had experienced such resentment, the differences in culture and WLB initiatives had a significant influence on its manifestation.

Within organisation A, access to WLB programmes was based on individual circumstances. In responding to this style, staff reported resentment toward the unequal distribution of WLB flexibilities and leave. For example, one department had arranged for staff to come in early a few days a week and take one Friday off each month. Managers in other departments mentioned this example with resentment based on the perception that it was set up behind closed doors and operated in secrecy. Similarly, they resented their perceived inability to make similar concessions for their own staff.

Elsewhere, a senior manager gave an example of an employee who “received an extended holiday for three months and it created a bit of a problem with others in the organisation” (SM:Male:Organisation A). He felt that this was handled badly in that it should have been done more informally: “If it’s done quietly maybe it would be ok” (SM:Male: Organisation A). Yet this informal approach had been applied to past WLB attempts without alleviating the problem:

Some people take career breaks and they’ve all been handled differently. It was done secretively but there’s one particular girl who took a year out. The girl’s manager let that happen and didn’t officially give her a year out, they only replaced her with someone on a year's
contract and then when the year was up the girl came back and she was offered a new job above her old job ... When one of my guys asked for a career breaks they said no because you're in sales ... there's no policy on it (MM:Male: Organisation B).

In other words, regardless of the degree of formality or secrecy involved, staff can become aware of other employees' working arrangements and unequal availability can prove divisive. In the wake of this division, managers are forced to deal with discontent among the remaining staff with one complaining that the best he could offer was, "life isn't fair, but there's nothing you can do about it" (MM:Male: Organisation A).

While staff expressed animosity about how flexibilities were handled, the HR manager nevertheless felt that "people have respect for people who have maternity leave. Even their colleagues would not hold that against them" (MM:Female:Organisation A). Yet other managers reported maternity leave specifically as being a strongly divisive issue:

> I think that there is a little bit of resentment because she is going on maternity leave and she is getting off a bit and I'm not - I'm stuck here doing this and there is no appreciation for the person who isn't going on maternity leave (MM:Female:Organisation A).

Even those at senior levels in the organisation recognised a threat that the perceived injustice associated with maternity leave could create: "It can be seen as very unfair, one of the key area that comes out as unfair is maternity leave" (SM:Male:Organisation A). In his experience, this sense of injustice is based on an unfair workload redistribution caused by the employee's absence:

> Because [maternity leave] has gotten so long now, people who are left behind feel like companies don't often replace the person who's gone and that's left is three or four people in the department to pick up the work. So if you have three people pregnant one after another in a department where they can't be replaced, you're left with one person who is actually working there. People can get very resentful, very unhappy about it (SM:Male:Organisation A).

It is important to note that this resentment was not necessarily specific to organisation A. Similarly, a manager in organisation B reported a "very real" feeling of injustice by those not availing of WLB leave and flexibilities: "At times I've heard the comment that it's us that are actually the ones who are paying the price for others having reduced hours" (SM:Male:Organisation B).
Many of these managers mentioned gradual policy shifts in the organisation's leave management and reduced hour arrangements. Originally, they said that departments were staffed in terms of hours, so if someone went on leave or reduced hours then their hours were replaced or reallocated into a type of job-share situation; in other words, the absolute hours a manager had to complete his workload remained the same.

Yet this had gradually changed whereby the organisation now makes no concurrent adjustments in the wake of WLB take-up. Almost every manager interviewed mentioned this shift and the increased strain it put on their department and remaining staff. As one manager explained, the overreliance on those who work full-time traditional hours was inevitable, even when the staff was fully present:

*If I want something done in a hurry, I'm going to ask a person that I know is going to be there tomorrow so there are times when the distribution of work definitely would be influenced by the working time of an individual. At times I would say there's an over burden of work on the people who are not out* (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Indeed, this overreliance on those in full-time positions was the most commonly cited drawback to WLB programmes in organisation B. Managers reported that not only did their departments suffer from the loss of employee hours, but that even when they were on-site, their productivity levels would suffer as they struggled to catch up. This put "*a bit of additional pressure on colleagues and managers*" (SM:Male: Organisation B).

The second most cited divisive WLB issue was the inability of all workers to avail of a desired initiative:

*I think that there is resentment where somebody maybe would like to have taken advantage of reduced hours and, for business reasons, they weren't able to. They are bound to feel that 'I am here carrying the can'"* (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Even when supports are theoretically available to all, in practice this is far from reality. Specifically, there are certain jobs that are seen as largely incompatible with certain arrangements and therefore employees are prevented from availing of a desired programme. Organisation B strives to
facilitate these situations by transferring employees into a post more suitable for that arrangement. Yet despite these efforts, this has predictably lead to a number of cases where staff felt resentment over being ‘forced’ to change posts in order to achieve WLB. Moreover, even in the cases where this transfer may have allowed an employee to avail of a particular initiative, this concession is often offered only to those in caregiver roles and even then primarily to mothers:

In general, the policy of the organisation would be not to refuse people who were looking for reduced hours for family reasons, but if they wanted to work 3 days because they wanted to improve their golf or whatever we would take a different view (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Indeed, every senior manager mentioned the organisation’s commitment to accommodating requests for WLB from parents or other seeking support for a caring role. However, there was virtually no discussion of accommodating requests for WLB in other areas.

The type and level of resentment reported in each organisation was reflective of the organisation’s WLB culture. Within organisation A, the cultural perspective was largely passive and therefore took a reactive view of WLB initiatives which permeated throughout discussions of resentment. Many felt that policies were applied unevenly and shrouded in secrecy which had resulted in a general animosity toward those perceived to be ‘working the system’ or given special treatment. Yet far from being immune to such criticism, the WLB cultural perspective in organisation B towards those who seeking care-giver arrangements had also lead to resentment by those not in care-giver roles, but who would like to avail for other reasons. Similarly, it appears to have created animosity among those who felt they were “left holding the can” in their co-worker’s absence (MM:Male:Organisation B).

Similar themes emerged in the public service interviews with organisations C and D where senior managers reported that middle management often suffered increased pressures resulting from WLB arrangements: “They tend to get into supervision and management difficulties about getting cover
arranged” (SM:Male:Organisation C). In fact, this was the most common complaint the senior managers in the public service had received:

I have somebody who’s on parental leave one day a week but I just can’t fill it, I’ve tried a number of times and I just can’t recruit or attract someone to come and work in that location, so that person’s colleague is there 5 days a week and is carrying more of the trouble and stress than the other colleague (SM:Female:Organisation C).

People are starting to take parental leave on nights now and they used to not do that and I said to myself, ‘how could you really need to be a parent all night?’ You don’t, you sleep. I rang the Personnel dept and said this parental thing is getting a bit out of hand. Nights are harder to cover and in theory I suppose if you have a very bad week somebody will say I have 2 parental leaves. And then the other person will say I wish I was a parent I could do that (SM:Male:Organisation C).

These complications have led to managers refusing further requests, particularly in the health sector, with one reporting, “You have a line manager who has the attitude, ‘I’m not going to let this person improve their WLB because it’ll make work for me’” (SM:Male:Organisation C). Even where there may be managerial support, there is often a reported limitation of the amount of people who may avail in a particular department. This has consequently led to cases of animosity by those who might have to wait until another employee surrenders their reduced hours slot:

If 50% of staff are on reduced working hours arrangements in the unit and the other 50% are on full time working, for those who are on full time working and who want access to reduced working hours, they may have to wait and those individuals will inevitably build up resentment towards the others who have it and who are holding it on the first come, first served basis” (SM:Male:Organisation C).

Like employees in the other organisations, those unable to avail of a desired WLB arrangement were likely to report resentment and feelings of injustice. Within the public service, like the other two organisations, staff felt that those not availing were left with heavier workloads:

I think there is a perceived unfairness on those who aren’t accessing the reduced working hours and they feel they carry a heavier burden of responsibility (SM:Male:Organisation C).

Their perception is that the people on job sharing come and go without caring and rely on them to carry the continuity of care responsibility (SM:Male:Organisation C).
The public service interviews again confirmed the findings reported in organisations A and B in that the type and level of resentment was reflective of their respective WLB cultural perspectives. Where these are reactive, policies are applied unevenly and 'shrouded in secrecy'. This results in feelings of animosity toward those who are perceived as being given special treatment. Yet even where the WLB culture places a higher value on accommodating certain personal decisions, like seeking reduced hours for care-giving, staff reported animosity over the exclusivity and workload increase. In either case, managers felt as though they were the ones suffering by having to compensate for shortfalls and for dealing with increasingly complicated schedules.

This final section demonstrated how senior level leadership and peer perspectives influence organisational WLB cultures. Through the interviews, we saw how the senior level managers viewed WLB programmes and, more subtly, how they understood the ways in which the workplace was under constant examination and interpretation by their staff. This is critical in that, where WLB policies are available but perceived by lower levels as culturally unsupported, such programmes suffer from a lack of take up. Similarly, the way in which middle managers feel their senior level managers handle such situations provide cues for their own actions. This section also demonstrated how WLB programmes can be divisive and lead to resentment among staff. This is particularly salient in terms of those unable to avail of a desirable WLB support or for individuals who feel that their workloads have been increased or complicated by their colleague’s absence.

5.7 - Conclusion

Research Findings: In answering the research question, this chapter examined 'work-life balance culture' through five distinct elements (Figure 5.1): 'Managerial Support'; 'Organisational Time Expectations'; 'Career Consequences'; 'Gendered Perception of Policy use' and 'Peer Support.' Specifically, the chapter illustrated how respective cultural perspectives have both positive and negative consequences. In the reactive culture of
organisation A, employees reported feeling that is very little interest in individuals and co-workers therefore know very little about each other. Likewise, managers appeared to suffer from greater work-life imbalances alongside the perceived pressure to prioritise their work. This has resulted in reduced staff retention in the absence of a forum through which to discuss needed supports. In contrast, managers (particularly at senior levels) enjoy a high level of discretion and power in offering informal arrangements to reward good behaviour and encourage staff loyalty.

In contrast, managers at organisation B, which appears to operate with the goal of creating staff loyalty and reducing discrimination, reported a sense that the organisation supported their efforts to promote a healthy WLB. Within this culture, there is a high degree of socialisation among co-workers who know personal details about one another. However, while managers believed that the organisation maintains a strong commitment to supporting individuals in their care-giving roles, many (particularly middle managers) reported feeling a lack of control in their departments. In other words, they felt that this commitment had been taken too far, that the initiatives were increasingly difficult to manage and that workloads had not been concurrently reduced or properly staffed. Managers reported that this tends to over-burden both those in full-time traditional working arrangements and the managers themselves.

Research Conclusion: In answering the research question, this chapter combined the five distinct elements of WLB culture presented by Thompson et al. (1999) with an attempt to contextualise WLB management policies. This approach served as a powerful structure through which to examine each organisation in identifying how these cultures are not only influenced by, but also influential upon the management team.

In terms of identifying WLB cultural perspectives within the public organisations B, C and D, there were a large variety of supports though these were mostly aimed at women in care-giving roles. These characteristics suggest that the aim of their WLB policies is to either encourage high-commitment and/or use policy to reduce discrimination. In contrast,
organisation A’s culture is largely reactive in terms of WLB whereby programmes and policies emerge merely in response to internal and external pressures. This has resulted in a lack of organisation-wide policies consistent with management operating in response to normative pressures.

As can be seen from this chapter, managers maintain an understanding (if not necessarily consciously) of their organisation’s WLB culture and respond accordingly. Managers at organisation A, in keeping with the overall culture, remain basically passive to their staff’s WLB needs and offer only the minimum arrangements whereby even statutorily-required leave are both actively discouraged and stigmatised. Alternatively, organisations B, C and D proactively encourage WLB among their staff and managers feel organisational pressure to remain supportive.
Chapter 6 - Managerial Views and Definitions of WLB

6.1 - Introduction

Chapter background: In answering the research question, *In what ways and to what extent do managers understand the concept of work-life balance in their own lives?*, this chapter begins with what is presently known about managers. Prior research has shown that managers are not only mostly men, but also maintain the lowest levels of personal work-life balance (O'Connell et al. 2004; Drew and Murtagh 2005). Moreover, they consistently report the longest hours (Drew et al. 2003; DTI 2004) and highest stress levels (O'Connell et al. 2004). Yet despite their considerable differences from the rest of the workforce, rather than focusing on managers' personal WLB, previous studies have largely considered them as only a single facet of exploration. Given the unique composition and struggles of managers in relation to WLB, this approach has failed to fully capture their idiosyncratic nature — an oversight this thesis addresses by focusing specifically on managers within these Irish organisations.

Chapter Structure and Analysis techniques: This chapter begins by examining the basic demographic characteristics relevant in comparing participating managers with what is known about other Irish managers. It does this not to contribute to the fields understandings of the demographic make up of Irish managers but to illustrate the similarities and differences between these managers and those who participated in past research.

It then focuses on the theoretical contribution these interviews can add to our understandings of how managers relate to organisational culture and WLB specifically. To this end, it explores components that may mitigate feelings of work-life imbalance including: job quality and satisfaction; personal and work related support systems; and personal health and happiness levels. Based on these elements, the chapter will conclude with the reported personal WLB of the managers including: how they understand and define the term; what barriers they have encountered; and how much freedom they feel they have in pursuing WLB.
This chapter draws on the cultural differences in organisational WLB established in the previous chapter and examines how these differences play out in the specific demographics of the study’s participating managers. Methodologically speaking, the analysis used in this chapter is more sophisticated insofar as, while Chapter 5 focused on the interviews using contextualisation techniques, this chapter expands this through two additional levels of analysis. First, interviews were coded into quantitative variables which involved establishing dependent and independent parameters around the project’s themes and topics and then assigning participants scores for each. Second, advanced statistical analyses were run using the coded data for inferential tests in order to further validate the findings as well as highlight areas that may not have been evident though basic qualitative analysis.

It should be noted, however, that the examinations used in this thesis were not intended to offer 'proof' of the statistical relevance of the phenomenon tested but are simply a tool to clarify current findings while bringing possible new findings to light. This method of analysis aims to address the criticisms of qualitative data analysis in its overreliance on textual analysis. To this end, all data and findings are examined through multiple methods and inconsistencies are fully described. Due to the sample’s size and characteristics all test where run using non-parametric test, however, the results were additionally retested using parametric test in-line with standard techniques, when the results showed no differences the parametric test results are displayed. For analytical purposes, given the close relationship between public service organisations (C and D) and their small sample size (n=5), when applicable, they will be examined together.

6.2 - Family Structures
Managers are considerably different than the rest of the workforce in that they tend to have higher educational levels, higher salaries, different working conditions and are predominantly male. Yet with regards to this latter element, the demographic composition of female managers is even more unusual. Along with the increase of women in the labour force as a whole,
women are increasingly occupying professional and managerial jobs (Wajcman 1999). Despite this, men still predominate in top management jobs (Powell 1999). This presents certain statistical and methodological complications when comparing female managers to their male counterparts.

The hierarchal model of continuous service and regular promotions has been previously identified as specifically designed to suit the 'organisation man' (Kimmel 1993, Drew and Murtagh 2005, Wajcman, 1999). This structure negatively impacts women by penalising them for childbirth and their subsequent role as primary caregivers to children (Sinclair 1998; Drew and Murtagh 2005). Such a patriarchal structure has been employed to explain the highly gendered patterns of marital status and childlessness among management. Most studies comparing male and female managers find that men are older and much more likely to be married. Similarly, male managers are much more likely to have dependent children compared with their female counterparts (Drew et al. 2003; O'Connell et al. 2004; Drew and Murtagh 2005).

Even despite its non-representative sample, this study found similar trends. Women in this study are the minority representing only 34 per cent of the data set (n=12) and their characteristics are overwhelmingly distinctive when compared to their male counterparts. In particular, similar to both national and international findings, women in this study were less likely to climb to senior level positions with only two at senior levels and none at the level of HR executive (Figure 6.1).
This finding is even more remarkable when considering that the organisations had themselves selected this sample for the purpose of capturing the most cross-sectional view. In other words, in being asked to provide a sample of their best and worst WLB workers, women were still more highly represented overall than in the organisations' managerial structure. As the last section showed, since all of these organisations understand WLB in gendered terms, it stands to reason that more women would be selected to participate than if the sample has been chosen at random. Yet despite this, there are only two female senior managers (both in the public service) compared with 10 men. Within organisations A and B, there are seven and two female middle managers respectively and none at senior levels. These characteristics offer further evidence of the continued difficulty female managers have in climbing the corporate ladder. This is particularly salient considering that, as low as their numbers may be in this study, they are represented in a significantly larger proportion than in their respective organisation's management team.

Much like in previous studies, female managers were significantly less likely to have children than men. In fact, while 91 per cent of male managers had children (a total of 21), only half of the women managers did (a total of 6) (Figure 6.2).
Again, this finding is even more interesting against the background of the selection method. Even where women were purposely selected due in part to their family obligations and non-traditional working arrangements, their presence was still insufficient to mask the global difference in familial structures between male and female managers. This suggests that the actual percentage of women managers without children at these organisation may be significantly higher than fifty per cent and perhaps similar to the 2005 Irish research findings of Drew and Murtagh (2005) which found that 86 per cent of male managers in their study had dependent children compared to only 39 per cent of their female counterparts.

This lends further support to the perception that women must choose between family and career progression and that even those prioritising their careers remain hampered by paternalistic organisational structures. In this context, women are perceived mainly as housewives, regardless of their actual status or intent. This perception is referred to as 'sex roll spillover' and affects women regardless of their sexuality or whether or not they have children. In this regard, we can see that stereotypical attitudes structuring gender hierarchies remain pervasive (Guillaume and Pochic 2009).

Childcare arrangements by managers with children offered further evidence of this phenomenon. The majority of men reported that their children were minded by a stay at home partner (79%); an arrangement not shared by a single female manager (Figure 6.3). Those women who had children were
more likely to have either in-home private childcare or else private childcare in another home (50%) or to have their children minded by another family member – most commonly their mothers or sisters (33%).

Figure 6.3 - Childcare Arrangement used according to Sex (n=27)

Childcare arrangements were also examined by management level to determine if differences existed between those chosen by lower-level versus senior managers. While 73% of senior level managers relied upon stay at home partners for child support, middle managers reported a more diverse suite of arrangements (Figure 6.4).
However, it should be noted that this effect may be the result of a statistical multicollinearity error whereby the variance results from two highly-correlated variables – in this case, senior managers and men. This is understandable considering that the senior level grouping consisted almost entirely of men. As such, it cannot be determined solely from this data if senior level managers were more likely to use stay at home partners for childcare or if this was more likely simply for men as a group. Understandably, analytic validity at this level is not possible from a study of this type so, while there might be noteworthy findings, it is important to maintain perspective on possible errors and limitations.

In any case, managers were also asked to describe their partner’s employment levels (Figure 6.5). Unsurprisingly, this paralleled the above findings that 63% of men had full-time stay at home partners whereas no female managers enjoyed this same level of household support. Conversely, while one-third of the women remained single (3 in total) only 2 of the 23 men were, of those married, women were more likely to have full-time employed partners (78%) compare with their male colleagues (21%). This lends further support to the notion that there remains greater work-family conflict for female managers (Thompson et al. 1999).
The benefits that such men receive from domestic support affords them a greater availability to the organisation. Then again, women with children rely on the more rigorous structure of organised childcare which influences their availability; a schedule conflict that is made more pervasive in the event that their child becomes ill. As seen in the previous chapter, this lack of availability is often interpreted as a general lack of commitment. Yet within a culture where senior level managers emphasise self-sacrifice and being ‘on call’, this is only realistic to the extent that they enjoy the full-time support of a domestic partner.

Unsurprisingly, senior and middle managers also had differences between the employment levels of their partners. Senior managers in particular were less likely to have full-time employed partners. However, this did not hold true when the data was controlled for managers who were married with children. This suggests that this effect may be attributed to the likelihood that middle managers are younger and more likely to be either single or married without children. Moreover, when managers did not have children, they were more likely to have full-time employed partners. Thus age appeared to be a greater determinant of familial structure than management level.
Although these findings were largely consistent within organisations, they were significantly different between the organisations insofar as managers at organisation A were more likely to have stay at home partners (50%) and least likely to have full-time employed partners (20%). This effect can only be partly attributed to the increased number of female participants in organisation B’s sample (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6 - Percentage of Partner’s Employment Level according to Organisation (n=29)

![Chart showing employment levels by organization]

These findings contribute further evidence to the gendered foundation of career patterns which promote the breadwinner familial structure. While there is no evidence to conclude that the organisations were actively suppressing other sexualities or familial structures, their WLB cultures nevertheless at least tacitly serve to encourage married heterosexual couples operating under traditional gender roles. As the previous chapter illustrated, all organisations maintain these traditional patriarchal structures based on the assumption of full-time domestic support. While organisation A may exemplify this to a higher degree, these findings suggest that women continue to be penalised for having children insofar as they lack the full-time domestic counterparts their male co-workers enjoy.

6.3 - Working Patterns and Job Quality

A key motivation behind the creation of WLB supports is the increasing intensity and pressures workers are facing in the wake of changing structural
norms in Western society. As these pressures increase, contemporary research on WLB has focused on three labour market issues: how working times are organised; the level of work intensity and employee stress levels; and job satisfaction (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). These issues play a significant role in understanding how workers experience strain between their personal lives and work as well as their ability to pursue balance. This section will help establish a contextual understanding of how these three topics have affected WLB levels for the managers in this study.

6.3.1 - Working Hours and Stress Levels

Ireland is among the EU(27) member states with the highest statutory maximum work week of 48 hours (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). As of 2008, around 17 per cent of Irish men and over 3 per cent of women worked more than 45 hours each week (McCarthy and Grady 2008). The "standard week" varies greatly across occupations with total hours being generally higher for managers and getting longer.

The higher the level of responsibility one has in an organisation, the more likely they are to exceed their standard hours. In Ireland, research has found that an overwhelming majority of managers work beyond their contracted hours (Drew et al. 2003). Powel (1993) suggests that long hours in management positions are common because the difficulty in assessing the quality and productivity of managerial work leads to commitment being measured in terms of time spent on-site. Seron and Ferris (1995) similarly found that long hours can often become a sign of organisational status.

As long hours have been consistently linked to difficulties in balancing work and personal life, managers as a group face increasing WLB pressures (Fine-Davis et al. 2005). This trend held true in this study as well with senior managers in particular working significantly more than their contracted hours:

*The standard hours are, in theory, 39 and I'm supposed to get off on Friday at 4, though I never do. I used to probably work about 80 hours a week; I'd say I do about 50 to 60 now (SM:Male:Organisation C).*
In fact, all senior managers reported regularly exceeding their contracted hours. For example, a senior manager at organisation B explained that, while his workload varied dramatically, even on the best of weeks:

*I leave about half seven I get here half past eight. I leave here at a quarter past six and I'm home at a quarter past seven. That's my normal work week now within that normal work week I can have a whole lot of mess (SM:Male: Organisation B).*

He clarified that the types of ‘mess’ that could further add to these hours included dinners, events, travel, unscheduled emergencies and other things. Regardless, he admitted that there was always something that would take him beyond his ‘normal’ week. Above this, he also admitted to regularly working two or three hours on the weekend.

This senior manager’s case echoed that of the other participants and illustrated the long hours and sacrifices those in senior management often make. Yet this same manager claimed that he felt quite strongly that this schedule was a marked improvement over recent years with regards to maintaining a better balance. He felt that since he was older and at a more senior level, he had a bit of perspective and freedom in his life compared to when he was younger and felt more pressure to work longer hours:

*I think certainly three or four years ago there would of been a feeling that at senior management you had to be here and you had to be working all hours and had to be working right through your career on a continuous basis in order to make your way up the ladder and if you showed any weakness in that regard then you are off the rapids they would say.*

Moreover, he felt that despite his long hours, this new schedule had been a positive adjustment compared with his schedule in previous years:

*I was running on empty at that stage. But what I was probably trying to do was to run at 100 miles an hour here, and I was also running 100 miles an hour at home. I had a life-work balance, what I was doing was about 200 plus hours in 168 hour week so there just wasn't enough hours in the week, now I've changed a lot.*

Yet he still reported working twelve hours a day on a ‘good week’ in addition to travel, dinners and the few hours on the weekend.
Although all the senior managers reported exceeding 40 hours a week, they were not alone. In fact, most middle managers reported working similarly long hours:

*My day is a 12 hour day (MM:Female:Organisation A).*

*It would range from 40 a week in the summer to up to 65. It's a reasonably long day (SM:Male:Organisation A).*

*7:45 to 6:45 door to door, I'd work a day a weekend. I might every two weeks work a couple of late nights (MM:Male:Organisation B).*

*I leave home about 6:40AM and I either go home at 5PM and log back in again or I'll go home at 7pm and log back in again and work most evenings for 1 to 4 hrs and then at the weekends I'd spend 5 hrs working on Sunday (MM:Female:Organisation B).*

In reference to their increasingly long work weeks, these middle managers often highlighted the need to ‘get the job done’ at whatever cost with one noting that, “my own opinion is the job has to be done and if it goes into your social or after work life so be it” (MM:Male:Organisation A). Many others reported that it is their job to be on-call ‘24-7’. This time-consuming pattern revealed the ubiquitous perception that loyalty was critical and those who made it to senior levels did so by engaging in similarly long hours as the findings of previous studies (Drew and Murtagh 2005; Guillaume and Pochic 2009). In fact, as in other organisations, “those employed on a part-time basis have little or no chance of promotion to management positions as these are specified as full-time” (Blockbank and Traves 1996:85). One senior manager at organisation A commented on the hypothetical idea of a director reducing his hours to part-time due to a health issue:

*My personal view is I don't think he could do his job like that because we need a director here. My job and most directors jobs are seven days a week, you might not be present, seven days, but there is a requirement. I can't imagine having a director's position where they're not available for two days of the week say. I just can't imagine that! I just don't think it's going to work at that level (SM:Male:Organisation A)!*

In addition to their already long weeks, most managers reported having to contend with heavy traffic and long commute times: “*It takes half an hour to come in the 5 or 6 miles*” (MM:Male:Organisation A). On average, managers spent more than an hour each day getting to and from work in order to
maintain their schedules: “I only live 8 miles away and I am in the car from 6:30 to 7:30 to make sure I’m at work at 9” (MM:Female: Organisation A). This means that managers spend an additional 5 to 10 hours each week in commuting to work.

While long working weeks can erect significant barriers to balancing work and personal life, research suggests that the degree of freedom a person has in organising these hours may mitigate these difficulties (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). Indeed, among the managers interviewed, there was a perception that they are in charge of their own time. Most middle managers felt quite strongly that they had the freedom to arrange their work week. “I’m quite in control,” (MM:Male:Organisation B) declared one manager whose perception was based on the fact that he had the freedom to schedule a personal appointment without having to formally request the time off: “I’d fit the appointment around when I knew I was going to be not busy.” There was no recognition that this manager had little control over when these ‘busy times’ fell. Indeed, there were varying assessments of the freedom over time allocation with some recognising their scheduling limitations:

You’re not always in control, I had a phone call a few minutes ago I need to be somewhere else tomorrow. So you’re not always in control. I’d say I’m half in control. This is a 24/5 operation, if something goes wrong in the middle of the night we can get called back in (MM:Male:Organisation A).

I don’t seem to have very much control at all. (SM:Female:Organisation C).

While others felt strongly that they were in complete control:

I’m completely in control of my time. Now I am. It’s a function of responsibility and age and maturity; in seeing more through the trees. Seeing clearer what is important and what’s not (SM:Male:Organisation B).

I’m in control, it’s not that there are people putting pressure on me, there are things that you can decide needs to be done or don’t need to be done (SM:Male:Organisation C).

A few managers recognised that the nature of their business structure inherently restricted their ability to arrange their own schedules:
There's a growing tendency to manage time by meetings, if you follow that trail you think you're managing your time but really it's other people that are managing it because they keep putting the meetings in (SM:Male: Organisation B).

While most managers reported feeling in control of their schedule, upon further exploration, most also recognised that certain business necessities proved restrictive. The most frequently cited limitation was in regards to the number of meeting per week they were expected to attend where other managers mentioned common report deadlines, certain busy times of the year and other 'unexpected' problems.

Managers also frequently pointed to sporadic periods of increased stress spilling over into both their working lives and personal obligations. This increased time pressure also created conflict with their personal hobbies or interests and many managers who are involved in outside activities reported feeling overextended. When this happened, managers universally felt that they needed to give up demanding personal activities in order to achieve balance. Alternatively, there was no apparent consideration of whether the business was asking too much of them.

These managers' working norms support previous findings that the trend for long hours and increasing time pressures are becoming firmly entrenched in the Irish organisational culture (Drew and Murtagh 2005). These issues play a significant role in understanding how managers experience strain between their personal lives and work as well as their ability to pursue balance. While this research already supports the suggestion that managers face significant obstacles in achieving a healthy work-life balance, the following sub-section examines additional factors that can alternately mitigate or intensify these needs.

6.3.2 - Job Quality and Satisfaction

While the previous sub-section established that managers at all levels in these organisations reported working long and time-demanding weeks, there are certain factors that can either mitigate or intensify the effects on their WLB levels. As one manager explains:
I think it comes down to your own definition of WLB, there are people who would be aghast at the idea of logging on to the systems at 9PM, and their personal model of life is to put work away, it's never been mine. If I had to work Saturday or Sunday morning that's never particularly bothered me (SM:Male:Organisation B).

In this manner, personal perspectives and expectations can also influence interpretations of demands and sacrifices. Similarly, job quality and overall satisfaction levels can play a major role in one's perception of work-life balance (Employment and Social Affairs 2003). In this context, job quality “means not only looking at or taking account of the existence of paid employment but also looking at the characteristics of that employment” (Employment and Social Policy 2001: 7). In determining job quality, it was found that not only wages, but also job satisfaction, security and work time arrangements as well as access to training and career development are crucial. In part, job satisfaction has been strongly linked to WLB levels. This sub-section therefore examines this topic as it relates to the participating managers.

Most managers reported a high degree of job satisfaction:

I find it very satisfying. I'm four years into it and I've never been as long as four years in any job ever before. So I'm four years plus here now, and I was only thinking there recently what am I going to do next? What goals have I got next? So I'm still excited by the challenge. There's still a lot to do (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Accordingly, managers were more likely to report satisfaction with their WLB when they found their work enjoyable and challenging: “I love my job I really do, I'm somewhat of an old-fashioned type in that I really take pride in my work” (MM:Male:Organisation B). When managers felt satisfied and challenged by their work, they did not find it burdensome or overly sacrificial to put in the long hours their job might dictate. In fact, there was uniformity among managers at all levels, in all four organisations, in reporting high job satisfaction:

Oh, very satisfying, very challenging, never boring (SM:Male:Organisation A).
I get a lot of satisfaction out of my work. The results at the end of the day matter ... It’s challenging, very challenging (SM:Male: Organisation B).

Yet, unlike the other organisations, a few managers at organisation B went on to admit that their jobs could occasionally feel tedious:

Generally challenging enough and sometimes boring (MM:Female: Organisation B).

Some aspects of the role might be a little boring, but I enjoy the role and it is quite challenging (SM:Male: Organisation B).

Elsewhere, prior research has found more workers in both Ireland and the EU(27) reporting significant increases in workplace intensity levels over recent years (EFILWC 2003). Work is being carried out faster and under tighter deadlines than ever and recent research has revealed no indication of this trend reversing. This increasing pressure has been strongly associated not just with poor general health but also with tensions in people’s personal lives (O'Connell et al. 2004).

To this end, managers were also asked whether they found their jobs intense or stressful and responses varied. Some senior managers reported feeling that their “work is very demanding; stress is the amount of work to get done if I’m not on top of the work load” (SM:Male:Organisation A). One manager recognised the physical manifestations this stress had had:

I don’t know if anyone else suffers with this but when I get really stressed I get signs of my body and at that stage I’ll take a couple of days off, or I’ll leave the problem and come back to it next week.” (SM:Male: Organisation A).

Alternatively, others reported less difficulty in dealing with the demands of their job:

It’s not stress free. It has its stresses. For me they’re manageable but some people think it’s a very stressful job and wouldn’t have it for love or money, but it’s familiar stuff to me so it’s not stressful for me (SM:Male: Organisation C).

It ebbs and flows, but I would overall say I can handle it okay. I would say it’s stressful, but I’m able to deal with it (SM:Male:Organisation B).
Elsewhere, other managers felt that the stress levels were basically low, at least for the moment:

*I don’t feel it’s highly stressful at the minute, maybe there can be some stressful situations from time to time but that’s part of any role. I don’t think I’m overstressed in terms of the huge volumes of work (SM: Male: Organisation B).

Not very stressful. It’s better than it was (SM: Male Organisation A).

Similar to what was reported in relation to scheduling freedom, managers pointed to various elements of their work that they found stressful. Most managers felt that stress levels varied throughout the year depending on what was going on in the workplace:

*It’s usually OK but there’s a slight demand now because of the project, and despite our best efforts we just have to manage it, it’s frenetic, but I’ll manage it (MM: Female: Organisation B).

It’s tough when the work’s stressful; I find some of the people stressful. I think the most important function I have here is to build a team and I find that stressful (MM: Male: Organisation A).

I like being able to help people, but when I can’t do it for various reasons that does create a bit of stress. Anything related to staff and customers I find more stressful (MM: Female: Organisation B).

Universally, managers recognised the tendency for job stress though coped with it to varying degrees of success. Senior managers were more likely to discuss stress levels on a macro level while middle managers tended to focus on situational stressors. This was perhaps due to experience and personal perceptions of management as a role. In other words, while all managers reported feeling stressed, senior managers seemed to have developed a greater capacity for projecting a sense of control while middle managers were more likely to discuss what they found stressful about their jobs.

High stress levels and demands on personal time have also been previously linked to difficulty maintaining physical health (O’Connell et al. 2004). Although middle managers were more likely to report feeling higher stress levels, senior managers were more likely to report unhappiness about their overall health levels:
I think I would like to exercise more and to eat less and to eat on a more structured basis or not to have to be rushing meals and things like that (SM:Female: Organisation C).

No, I've put on weight. I'm a little discontented about my exercise and eating habits. I would have done a lot of exercise because I refereed and I stopped 4 years ago and then I found I was putting on weight. I know I'm at a stage now where I have to stop putting on weight (SM:Male: Organisation C).

Though they conceded that it was possible that this had less to do with relative stress levels and more to do with age – “I'm just getting a bit old maybe” (SM:Male: Organisation C) – as one is more likely to be older before reaching a senior level.

In terms of the relationship between stress and health, opinions varied significantly. For example, as a group, middle managers were less likely to report being unhappy with their exercise levels but more likely to express concern on their eating habits:

Exercise: I'm happy because I get enough of that. But if I'm working late there is a canteen and the food is not great ... it's not ideal and that annoys me ... I am not an unhealthy eater, when I cook at home it's healthy and quick, I don't eat fast foods (MM:Female: Organisation A).

On the other hand, senior managers were likely to report the opposite, with one noting, “I'm happy with my eating habits but my exercise, I'm not happy with that” (SM:Male: Organisation A).

The most significant differences in this context were between organisations. For example, managers at organisation B almost universally reported being happy with their health in relation to both eating and exercising habits. Even those at senior levels, although at a similar age to the other senior managers in the wider study, seemed to be happy with their current health habits with one reporting, “yeah, yeah, I am happy, I swim and I play golf” (SM:Male:Organisation B). In fact, it was quite common for them to report combining exercise into their working schedule with one senior manager running during his lunch break while other managers visited a gym or pool directly before or after work.
Managers at organisation B were also happier with their eating habits: "I would actively make sure I eat fruit every day, salad, light lunches" (MM:F:Organisation B). There are of course exceptions with one claiming, "it's better than it was but at the same time I think it could be better" (MM:F:Organisation B). Yet there seemed to be a 'culture of health' at organisation B as managers also reported knowledge of their co-workers participation in regular exercise or sporting activities.

Alternatively, managers at organisation A expressed extreme difficulties maintaining the type of healthy life-style they would like. Most of the middle managers reported having difficulty scheduling the time to eat how they would like:

\[I\text{ think the job doesn't suit my eating habits in terms that the job does not encourage me to eat properly. As far as health goes, I eat a lot of rubbish, but when you're on the job and you're on the road a lot you tend to stop and get a sandwich and a mars bar and a drink, you're eating at irregular times, you're eating irregular meals}\ (MM:M:Organisation A).\]

In fact, almost all the managers at organisation A reported similar difficulties: "I find time to eat I just don't just eat the right food" (MM:M:Organisation A). This supports the idea that at organisation A, managers were expected to sacrifice personal time, including time for healthy habits, in order to prioritise business performance. Managers also reported greater fatigue and general energy problems: "I would be more tired in the evenings, sometimes you don't want to do anything" (MM:M:Organisation A). This fatigue kept some managers from participating in activities and the healthy eating habits they would have liked. As one manager explained, "when you have been busy all day it's easier to just grab a candy bar than worry about fixing a healthy dinner" (MM:M:organisation A).

Prior studies considering who encounters work-life conflicts have concluded that male employees experience greater levels of work pressure and stress and, despite the lower responsibility reported in caring / household work then women, the greater inflexibility of their jobs and longer hours of paid work leads to higher levels of work-life conflict for men (O'Connell et al. 2004).
They also found that work pressures increase with age, peaking among the 40-54 age group, contrasted by stress levels peaking among the 25-39 age group which is the period of key career development and family formation.

The managers in this study validated some of O'Connell et al.'s (2004) findings. Although there appeared to be no major difference between men and women in terms of stress levels or health habits, those at senior levels were more likely to report suffering difficulties maintaining a healthy life-style. Even though they were in some ways able to better deal with the increased pressures and stress levels at work than managers at lower levels, senior managers still work extremely long and demanding weeks which appear to be requiring increased time pressures and workload intensification in recent years.

Middle managers did not appear to fare much better. Although they generally reported happiness with their exercise levels, workplace commitments and time pressures made it difficult for them to maintain healthy diets. This was particularly true in organisation A where the lack of regular available time for meals resulted in a diet based predominantly on fast food alongside the lack of healthy options in the workplace canteen. Middle managers, like their senior level counterparts, were also working incredibly long and high-pressured work weeks in addition to commute times approaching 2 hours.

These working norms offer further support to claims that managers experience higher levels of work pressure and stress which result in a higher degree of work-life conflict. These issues significantly contribute to an understanding how these manager experience strain between their personal lives and work as well as their ability to balance. Yet it is also clear from these interviews is that managers enjoy their jobs and many of these negative traits are therefore mitigated, at least in part, by aspects of perceived job quality and satisfaction. Managers felt satisfied and challenged by their jobs and 'don't mind' making the personal sacrifices their positions might demand.
6.4 - Managers' Understandings of their Personal WLB

In continuing from the previous section, this section examines how managers perceive their own work-life balance levels by examining how managers conceptually define WLB followed by the way in which they describe their own. Of course, work-life balance is a terminological departure from previous terms which signified interest solely in the relationship between parenthood and work such as 'work-family' or 'family-friendly'. In contrast, WLB focuses on the ability of all workers, regardless of parental status and gender to achieve a balance between their personal lives and their paid work. Work-life balance has been terminologically well established in the Irish labour market and all managers in this study were familiar with the term. Yet despite this shift, most policies and programmes remain entrenched in the work-family rubric (Smithson and Stokoe 2005).

6.4.1 - Defining Work-Life balance

Managers' definitions of WLB varied though it was clear that most had not given much thought to what it meant personally. Despite the current cultural focus on work-life balance, many managers demonstrated this confusion in the form of: "now what do you mean by that?" when asked how they would define it. Managers expressed a range of responses from highly personal (such as 'happiness') to strictly pragmatic definitions 'work does not compete with personal time':

_Happiness ... I'm happier in my work, I feel like I'm working with in my own body clock, rather than against it ... When I'm off at five o'clock ... I know I can start winding down, look forward to the time I'm going home, and then I go home at that time, and I beat the traffic, and I come home and I'm easily relaxed and I'm not stressed out (SM:Male:Organisation A)._ 

A small number of managers expressed feelings that work-life balance is an abstract feeling or personal goal, something more akin to a state of mind than a set of policies:

... by and large, I would like to think that people should enjoy their work and really enjoy themselves and ... feel rewarded and feel self-satisfied and happy ... I think life and work shouldn't be classically defined as two separate things that you can only start enjoying yourself ... when 5
o'clock comes, in the evening or when Saturday comes ... I would like to make work as rewarding as possible ... That's what I would like to have - the life and work balance to me as HR Director if I was to look back on my time when I'm finished (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Other managers saw WLB as a more pragmatic balancing of needs and desires in that work-life balance would represent an attempt to carve out personal time while still getting the job done. Yet work remained the priority and this view did not necessarily extend to workplace adjustments. In this regard, 'carving out personal time' was more about fighting the feeling of being too tired after work to make time for themselves:

I think it's to find time for everything that we would like to do on a personal basis and that we don't have time to do and the other thing is maybe to go home in the evening and not to have to worry about something at work, or not to have to take work home, in other words that your work doesn't eat into your personal time, which it does quite a lot (SM:Male:Organisation C).

The majority of managers saw workplace policies aimed at WLB as firmly linked to parenting and family; a view that was largely compatible with the personal beliefs stated above. Often managers felt, for example, that in their own (almost exclusively male) lives, WLB simply meant not working in the evening. For others, WLB was merely a set of polices to allow women to pick up their children from the crèche or stay home when they are sick: "It's balancing family life with work life" (MM:Male: Organisation B). In this regard, most non-parents / carers prioritised money (e.g. as overtime or professional advancement) over personal time.

6.4.2 - Reported WLB

Among all managers, there appeared to be a significant disconnect in understanding WLB as a term or set of policies and how they reported their own balance. Since most managers understood WLB in terms of parenting obligations and specifically a woman's need for scheduling flexibility, it was unsurprising that managers frequently had a difficult time applying these terms to their own lives. Yet when managers were asked indirectly if they had enough time to pursue personal interests or if work ever conflicted with their personal lives, all managers were then able to discuss WLB more coherently.
As the previous section showed, long working weeks, high stress levels and workplace pressure were significant obstacles for these managers in achieving WLB. Yet surprisingly, almost half of the managers reported being happy with their current WLB. This lends further support to previous findings that job quality factors can mitigate perceptions of work-life conflict levels.

Within this sample, male workers were slightly more likely to report being happy with their WLB levels than their female colleagues (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7 - Reported WLB Level according to Sex (n=35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy with Balance</th>
<th>Not happy with Balance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Female managers in particular reported demanding workloads which limited their ability to achieve balance: "Work is more intrusive into my WLB than any other job I have ever had; I don't get time to relax" (MM:Female:Organisation A). They felt that their jobs demanded sacrifices and reported feeling increased self-pressure to not only prove themselves, but to also not to let down other women:

I work most evenings and a lot of weekends. It does take over your life ... I'm aware somewhere subconsciously of not letting my side down by not producing the stuff and being afraid to fail to meet a deadline ... I find I'm knackered in the evening ... I took something like 4 weekends off in the entire year. It does take its toll on you and you get exhausted (MM:Female:Organisation B).

They also widely reported having to lower their personal expectations for family life and surrender personal obligations in order to meet job demands:
The important thing for you to do is go home, put your feet up, relax, have a bit of ‘me’ time – leave the family issues, you can’t do both. And that’s how I would do it if I’m under severe pressure here I batten down the hatches, I get my work done, and say this is going to go on for the next 3 to 4 weeks, I make a decision to go with it, and then it’s over, but then I cancelled my holidays four times in October because we had no staff, so where do you draw the line (MM:Female:Organisation A)?

There was also a significant variance in WLB levels by management grades. Those with higher responsibility levels reported greater difficulty in balancing their work with their personal lives (Figure 6.8).

**Figure 6.8 - Reported WLB Level according to Management Level (n=35)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Middle manager</th>
<th>Exec/Senior Manager</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy with Balance</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not happy with Balance</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This, however, appeared to relate less to the increased workload in senior levels than with the personal perspective they had developed with age:

*I’m not happy with it I would like to switch off more when I’m off the job. It takes me two or three days to relax when I go on holiday ... Experience and looking at people who burnt the candle at both ends has given me a good perspective and now I find that I never get enough holidays (SM:Male:Organisation A).*

*I’m dissatisfied with my work-life balance but I would say a few years ago I went at everything with gusto except sleep, if you know what I mean and at that stage in my life and career there was maybe the realisation that I was trying to do too much (SM:Male:Organisation B).*

Many senior managers also expressed remorse for the amount of personal sacrifices they had made throughout their careers. Often they felt that they had missed out on important opportunities to be with their families and build
relationships with their children. One senior manager reported that this regret and perspective came to him in a conversation with his ten year old daughter:

_My last job was actually even harder in terms of work-life balance and my daughter, out of the blue she said, dad we wouldn’t mind if you took a lesser job, and she was right, so there you are my family would perceive me as working a lot of hours (SM:Male:Organisation A)._ 

This prompted him to make a better effort not to bring work home with him.

Alternatively, middle managers tended to report feeling obliged to make personal sacrifices and give up hobbies and activities they enjoyed outside of work when their jobs became too demanding:

_I’ve changed my life outside work, I spent a lot of my time up to about 18 months ago involved with juvenile football, administration and coaching and that. I found that a bit stressful and that combined with a change in the job I said I can’t do both (MM:Male:Organisation A). 

Leave the family issues – you can’t do both. That’s how I would do it if I’m under severe pressure here; I batten down the hatches, I get my work done. (MM:Female: Organisation A). 

Yet these managers were equally more likely to rationalise that they were not sacrificing, but simply shedding some optional commitments:

_Again, most of that is optional ... I’m involved in a number of issues outside work and that tends to cause more pressure on time than the work situation. There are other things I would like to do but I just don’t have the time (MM:Female:Organisation B). _

Of course, there was a widespread acknowledgment that this view did not hold true with regards to important family issues. Nevertheless, managers still reported feeling that the organisation’s needs took priority, even if they came at the expense of family time:

_Happy enough, yes, parts of the summertime are not too bad but in Nov, Dec – that’s rough. You don’t get much time to see the family (MM:Male: Organisation A). 

Yes, at times I do take it home which I shouldn’t (MM:Male: Organisation B). 

Although even where family time may have suffered, a couple of managers did recognise the importance of carving out some time for themselves during the week:
Yes, I definitely believe you need time to yourself, for me it's critical. I must have time, be it to go for a walk down the canal, a walk through the city centre, I need that time, and I make sure I get that time otherwise I'm crabby (MM:Male: Organisation B).

I get here early and at lunch time I like to be by myself, I need that time to switch off (SM:Male: Organisation A).

Yet most felt that, as a manager, one had to be prepared to make the sacrifices necessary to meet whatever demands the organisation asked: “The manager’s role is more demanding, you must be able to balance the stress and other problems that go with the job” (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Despite the fact that managers largely reported (albeit indirectly) dissatisfaction with their current WLB levels, very few of them would consider availing of WLB supports. In fact, many managers exuded a degree of pride in reporting that they had managed to avoid even taking a sick day by bringing work home when they were too ill to make it into the office. Others felt that managers had to choose between WLB and a career. At least one manager recognised how this perspective may have contradicted the positive views she expressed earlier in the interview:

I suppose, and it's probably contradicting what I said earlier, I'd feel I am having to stay on at least a par with my peers, that maybe by reducing my hours and therefore not being able to fulfil the role I'm in that I'm going to lose out a bit (MM:Female:Organisation B).

This manager went on to explain that if someone wants to have balance in their life, they have to sacrifice something at work:

If I want WLB, I think I need to let go of some of my career plans. I do think that and I'm not sure if that's true or not, but any time I think about it that's what comes to my mind (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Managers were asked if they had personally availed of any WLB supports of either a formal or informal nature. Interestingly, although they discussed WLB arrangements for their staff in terms of parental leave and flexible working arrangements, in their own jobs they often used this term to describe taking sick leave or a coming in late one morning. Yet even within this significantly broader definition, only 30% could report having availed of WLB arrangements. Of course, this does not imply that the other 70% had never
taken a sick day, but rather that they may interpret personal arrangements under a stricter or more formal definition. Whatever the rationale, the results are nevertheless intriguing:

Table 6.1 - Percentage of managers reporting having use formal or informal WLB arrangements (n=35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used WLB Arrangements</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle manager</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exec/Senior Manager</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also interesting that female managers were less likely to report availing of WLB arrangements than any other group. This was perhaps due to their perception of having to 'prove themselves' in male dominated spheres. On the other hand, it may be simply due to the fact that almost half were childless – a group least likely to avail of WLB arrangements in general. In other words, when there are no children, many see little need to avail of WLB arrangements and, even when children are present, there remains a perception for both men and women that they need to be a manager first and a parent second.

6.5 - Conclusions

Research Findings: There are similar demographic elements between the participants of this study and prior studies. Managers in this group similarly exhibited low levels of individual work-life balance (O'Connell et al. 2004; Drew and Murtagh 2005), reported long hours (Drew et al. 2003; DTI 2004) and high stress levels (O'Connell et al. 2004). Consistent with both national and international findings, the women in this study were less likely to have partners and children. Moreover, women in general were less likely to climb to senior level positions or have the same stay-at-home support enjoyed by the majority of their male colleagues.
In terms of defining work-life balance, managers expressed a range of responses from highly personal (such as 'happiness') to strictly pragmatic definitions (such as 'work does not compete with personal time'). Yet this chapter also revealed a schism between how managers understand WLB as a concept and how they report their own levels. Although almost half the managers interviewed were unhappy with their WLB, they remained largely unwilling or unable to avail of WLB supports.

The majority of managers felt that WLB supports are firmly linked with parenting and family and are therefore inapplicable to their own (almost exclusively male) lives. For some, WLB at work was a set of polices to allow women to pick up their children from the crèche or stay home when they are sick as exemplified by: "It's balancing family life with work life" (MM:Male: support of the B). Alternatively, these managers believed that for non-parents / carers, money (e.g. as overtime or professional advancement) was of more value than personal time.

**Research Conclusion:** In summary, managers exhibited low levels of individual work-life balance, worked long hours and reported high stress levels; all of which erected formidable obstacles towards achieving WLB. This was further complicated by the pressure managers felt to project their organisational commitment and loyalty by visibly prioritising work. Yet despite these negatives, managers also widely reported enjoying their jobs and feeling that this satisfaction somewhat mitigated their WLB sacrifices.

In this latter regard, this sense of sacrifice was stronger for certain (particularly female) groups. Women managers, for example, had been forced to make the most sacrifices in order to obtain their current level of management. Similarly, women were the least likely to have availed of WLB supports and the most likely to forgo families and personal relationships. Yet despite these sacrifices, women were also most likely to remain in middle management whereby their commitment and loyalty levels appeared to have not been rewarded to the same level as their male colleagues. After women, senior managers were the second most likely to express unhappiness with
their WLB levels. In all cases, this appeared to be directly correlated with their increased workplace responsibilities and pressures, though senior managers were also more likely to attribute this unhappiness to the perspective they have gained over time (regret) as well as an increased desire to connect (or reconnect) with their families.

Although managers understood WLB in often inclusive and broad terms, there was a disparity between these views and their ability to achieve balance in their own lives. Managers largely felt that personal sacrifice was required upon reaching managerial levels. These sacrifices included long hours on-site as well as being 'on call' to the organisation. Additionally, these working norms appear to be coupled with greater levels of work pressure and stress along with a sentiment that availing of WLB supports would not only have negative career consequences, but generally run counter to what was expected of their role.

These interviews provided further evidence that WLB supports continue to be viewed in gendered terms and specifically for female workers to facilitate their domestic responsibilities. In other words, while these organisations did not appear to be actively suppressing other sexualities or familial structures, the net effect remained an environment specifically designed around traditional gender roles. As such, organisational WLB remains built upon a presumption that the majority of their managers have full-time family supports to care for their domestic responsibilities. In the end, such structures penalise those lacking such supports and particularly women who are thereby forced to choose between a management career or a family.
Chapter 7 - Managerial Views of WLB

7.1 - Introduction

Chapter Background: Academic research is only beginning to understand the power of the manager in an organisation’s WLB. As discussed in the previous chapters, it is managerial decision-making that determines what supports are available, the modes of allocation and which employees may avail (McDonald et al. 2007). From this perspective it is critical to understand how managers conceptualise WLB. The previous chapter began this task by demonstrating how managers understand WLB in their own lives. While it established the complexity surrounding the issue, it did little to examine causal factors in these conceptual differences or how this disparity manifests.

This chapter expands the discussion by answering the research question, *In what ways and to what extent do respective perspectives of gender and justice influence how managers exercise their discretion in facilitating WLB in their staff?* The aim is to examine possible influences on how managers understand and confront authority on their staff’s WLB. To this end, organisational distributional justice and feminist literature can be helpful in showing how people can have different views of the same policies. While some may feel that certain policies do a good job of meeting their current or potential needs, others may feel that they unfairly advantage or penalise groups for life decisions or biological sex. In this regard, justice theory offers a framework through which to explain why people respond differently to the same policy. Similarly, feminist research is effective at highlighting areas of personal perspective that influence how individuals evaluate the need for intervention and the direction such policy should take.

The fact that these abilities have been completely absent from work-life research in Ireland represents a critical gap for the field. This chapter and the following represent the first combined application of gender and organisational justice theories to WLB in an Irish context as well as the first major creation and application of this ‘gender-justice’ theoretical approach to any WLB exploration.
Chapter Structure & Analysis Techniques: In addressing this gap, this chapter first establishes that the managers in this study have power to influence WLB in their respective departments and that they do so alongside their understanding of the organisation's WLB culture. Following this, the chapter explores how managers' personal understandings of gender roles in the workplace affect their interpretation of WLB supports while their perceptions of justice influence their mode of allocation.

Methodologically speaking, managerial perspectives are examined against two major social theories: feminist theories of gender and organisational justice theory. These theoretical foundations are discussed because: (i) they serve as a major thread throughout WLB research literature; (ii) they can offer a theoretical grounding to the analysis of managerial perspectives; and (iii) they have never been combined into a single theoretical model through which to examine WLB. As such, this chapter, and the next, presents a model for applying this 'gender-justice' fusion to WLB research.

To this end, this study used three data analysis techniques. First, the interviews were coded into quantitative variables related to gender and justice theory views. To this end, managers were asked a number of questions about each theory in order to gauge their perspectives. This included direct questions such as 'Do you think men and women work differently?' as well as more subtle, reactive questions such as, if a manager mentioned staff working long hours, for example, then they were asked if this held true for both men and women.

Based on these responses, managers were assigned into categories such as (in the above example) 'views women and men as the same or different' through which advanced statistical analyses could be run. This involved using the coded data in order to conduct non-parametric inferential tests through which to highlight themes and findings that may not have been evident though standard qualitative analyses. While results and p-values are listed it should be noted that due to the nature of non-parametric testing one would not except to see the same level of statistical significant achieved in parametric
examinations. This is not an indication that the findings are any less interesting simply that the testing method is more rigorous. Finally, the themes revealed within these tests were examined through general contextualisation techniques in order to further corroborate the findings as well as allow more insight and depth surrounding the themes. During this final step, the interviews were also examined contextually to allow additional themes to emerge that may not have arisen from the coded statistical examinations. From these steps, it becomes clear how managers use their understandings of both gender and justice when confronting the task of allocating WLB supports.

7.2 - How WLB Decisions are Made

This section explores the degree of authority participating managers have in making WLB decisions. In this context, decisions can come in a number of forms in that some organisations implement WLB programmes through extensive formal policies while others rely on a more informal negotiation process (Wood *et al.* 2003). Previous chapters have illustrated the power and influence a manager can have over their staff’s WLB levels to the extent that, if a manager perceives an employee to be dedicated, then they may be motivated to be more ‘proactive’ and flexible than they would with someone ‘putting in very little effort’ or ‘milking the system’. Managers also tend to have the power to offer informal supports to help employees balance their work and lives. When they do not feel the employee has earned this reward, they may be more inclined to fall back on the more formal systems.

Rather than being reductive, it is important to note that the manner in which managers make WLB allocations and decisions remains complex and involves a combination of organisational cultural influences, organisational policy and managerial support. As past chapters have shown, managers and organisations both play a strong role in determining the WLB culture and consequently the degree to which staff feel encouraged to pursue balance. To this end, employees are more likely to avail of WLB arrangements when they feel buffered by a supportive supervisor (Thompson *et al.* 1999; Wood *et al.* 2003; Drew and Murtagh 2005). Similarly, managers who feel that their own
superiors have no understanding of WLB needs are likely to feel no overwhelming organisational support or encouragement to maintain a personal WLB – a culturally-induced disdain they are likely to project onto their staff.

As such, it is important to view these issues in tandem with a broader understanding of organisational culture. To this end, this section briefly explores areas of the in-depth interviews as they relate to how WLB decisions are made. As this topic has been discussed in detail in previous chapters, this section’s focus will be limited to the views that managers expressed over how they personally reach decisions. Previous chapters have shown how managers must navigate a complicated system of formal and informal policies in addressing their staff’s WLB needs. The degree of concordance, use and support a manager has for these systems can vary both between and within organisations and departments. Some managers rely heavily on one type of system, such as formal programmes, while others use all available facilities in a continuum based on multiple rationales such as to reward good behaviour or for once-off occasions.

While organisation A of course offers all the statutorily required arrangements, there is no formal support system beyond these. The HR manager at organisation A described WLB programmes as resting at the “discretion of managers” in their departments but noted that “it wouldn’t be at the top of their agenda” (SM:Male:Organisation A). As such, employees suffered from greater imbalance amidst their perceived pressure to prioritise work. Managers, particularly at senior levels, enjoyed a high level of discretion and power over their department’s WLB and felt they had the freedom to informally reward desirable traits and encourage loyalty by offering occasional flexibilities.

Managers at organisation A reported making decisions on WLB arrangements based on two factors. The first factor was in relation to statutory rights whereby, though they remained obligated to offer such supports, managers used what limited discretion they have:
You have to fit it in with them, but you also have to try and make it work for others and take the impact off the other people. Being the department manager, you have to work out how it impacts on the department as well (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Such concerns had been addressed by enforcing the mode through which statutory leaves were taken. This typically involved restricting their use to one block of time despite request for other options.

The second basis managers discussed was the use of informal flexibilities in responding to WLB requests. Managers reported enjoying absolute discretion including the ability to determine flexibility around working hours, locations and the timing and length of annual leaves. Moreover, they frequently used this discretion to encourage loyalty and commitment among their staff as well as to support staff members they deemed to be in need of greater flexibility to meet domestic responsibilities.

Most managers reported being flexible with parents on their working times in order to allow them to attend to parenting duties. This most commonly consisted of allowing parents to adjust their schedules around their children’s school or crèche hours. A few also mentioned allowing their staff to work from home on occasions in which they were minding a sick child. However, the majority of managers at organisation A reported that, as their teams were comprised almost entirely of men, these occasions were rare and therefore easy to accommodate. The few managers who had mothers on their team did, however, mention trying to be more flexible with them.

In any case, there was a generally negative view of home-working though there were three occasions where managers of new or expecting mothers mentioned using this option to encourage them to work when they might not otherwise be able. Yet managers described other occasions where staff had requested scheduling adjustments such as shift changes or the ability to temporarily work from home which were denied out of concern that the manager would then have had to offer this to everyone. This suggests that these managers largely continue to view WLB programmes as geared towards aiding women with domestic responsibilities.
In areas where managers at organisation A were given freedom to accommodate WLB requests, they reported holding this power closely in order to ensure that their staff understood that it came directly from them. One manager reported giving his staff off a couple hours every few months to reward their work while another mentioned allowing his team to leave early one Friday a month. One of the senior managers discussed in greater detail how he uses this authority:

You might end up saying what do you really want it for, is it something you can do in an hour, can you swap a shift, you're not granting the full wish. You might be able to accommodate them but you're also making a statement, 'You are looked after when you really needed to be looked after and I don't view this circumstance as being a critical situation.' You get to know the people that really need it and the person that knows if they get away with it they will keep trying to get away with it (SM:Male: Organisation A).

This manager illustrated a few interesting and fundamental points. The first is that he appeared to have virtually sole discretion in determining whether or not to accommodate requests. Secondly, he noted that he generally tries not to grant the full request in order to demonstrate and reinforce his power. Finally, he relies on his subjective understanding of the employee's motivation in deciding how to react; in other words, if he personally feels the request is merited, then he is more likely to use his power to meet this need. This offers further support to the central hypothesis of this thesis that manager's perspectives play an integral part in their decisions related to WLB needs; in this example, the personal perceptions of what situations merit support and what type of support to offer.

Alternatively, managers at organisation B sensed that the organisation encouraged them and their staff to maintain a healthy WLB. Managers indicated that the organisation maintained a strong commitment to supporting individuals in their care-giving roles and, as such, reported being as flexible with carers as possible. However, it is important to note the manager's personal views of merit were similarly operative in that this level of support did not generally extend to those seeking the same flexibilities for other reasons:
In general, the policy of the organisation would be not to refuse people who were looking for reduced hours for family reasons, but if they wanted to work 3 days because they wanted to improve their golf or whatever we would take a different view (SM:Male:Organisation B).

It wouldn’t be down to the individuals ... if somebody was tied to home for a particular reason maybe, a very sick partner or something like that, you’d have to look at it from a human point of view, but if somebody else doesn’t feel like getting up an hour earlier to beat the traffic, there are different reasons (MM:Female:Organisation B).

However, many managers, particularly those at middle levels, reported lacking control with regards to WLB supports. Specifically, they felt that the commitments toward supporting carers through WLB initiatives had at times been taken too far and were becoming increasingly difficult to manage where workloads were not being reduced accordingly.

Despite this difficulty and lack of support, when it came to making WLB decisions, managers reported that if employees were seeking support for domestic responsibilities then they would feel obligated to oblige them. Managers mentioned using both formal and informal supports to achieve this. Yet, similar to organisation A, managers often used their power and discretion to offer the requested supports through informal channels:

Well, there’s quite a deal of discretion ... available to me as a manager in a micro kind of event. So, I can be flexible with my own staff without seeking any kind of formal approval. I think it works quite well when you’re pretty much on good relationships with people (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Managers used this discretion to meet the domestic needs of their staff. However, this also required them to be knowledgeable about their staff’s personal circumstances. In fact, every manager at organisation B mentioned feeling as though they needed to know the details surrounding the situation and the individual involved before granting the request:

Different circumstances give rise to different answers if people are looking for maybe part-time or short time ... I wouldn’t like to answer that without knowing more details and know where they are in their career patterns ... I’d be very loathe to not implement family-friendly policies. So my own personal meaning would probably be towards if a man or a woman needed time because of children or childrearing (SM:Male:Organisation B).
Thus, it may be inferred that managers at organisation B have less overall discretion to deal with WLB requests insofar as they come from those in caregiving positions. This requires them to know a greater degree of situational detail in addition to possessing a greater familiarity of the petitioning individual. Based on this subjective matrix, managers then apply their interpretation to determine whether the request has merit. In the event that they decide such supports are warranted, they have the power to use informal supports to achieve this; conversely, if they disagree, then they can deny the request and/or make the employee rely on a formal system. Most managers reported that the decision over which system to use was based on their perception of that employee's organisation commitment combined with their opinion of their motivational validity. In other words, if a manager felt that the reason for the request was compelling or that the employee deserved added supports, then they could be granted as an informal reward.

Organisations C and D exhibited similar patterns whereby employees' workplace flexibility requests would generally be granted unless they introduced staffing difficulties:

*The approval process is through the line manager, so whoever the direct manager is makes the decisions ... Generally what they'll have to keep in mind is their ability to continue to provide service but they will generally approve the request (SM: Male: Organisation C).*

However, as stated above, approval can be limited by the manager's ability to replace the worker. Accordingly, if the request came from someone in a remote location or a difficult position to replace, managers often maintained the discretion to deny the request. It should be noted, however, that this did not extend to statutorily required leaves:

*From a management point of view, even if you didn't have staff to cover them, you would have to give parental leave. You don't have to give the other leaves and the other types of flexibilities, even career breaks. I can say, 'sorry if you need this I really haven't anybody to do it or to cover you, I can't guarantee you leave of absence.' But if they resign then you can advertise the position (SM: Male: Organisation C).*

In other words, much like organisation B, these managers recognised their obligation to support individuals requesting statutory leave. Yet when
requests came from areas not covered by statute, these managers were more likely to judge the situation by factoring in the organisation’s needs as well. Consequently, if managers felt that the person’s absence could easily be covered, then the request was more likely to be granted.

In summary, managers appear to rely upon their subjective understanding of organisational culture in deciding who may avail of WLB arrangements. When the organisation’s culture leaves this discretion to the manager, they use their situational interpretation to determine what criteria should be taken into account. In this regard, there are actually two levels of subjectivity operative – situation and worth – whereby managers start with their own perceptions of what would constitute a valid need against which they evaluate their subjective understanding of the employee’s situation. The degree of concordance is proportional to the likelihood they will grant the request.

Of course, it should be reiterated that such managers also tend to use this power to ensure employee loyalty by emphasising their agency in approving the support. From this perspective, employees of whom they hold a favourable opinion are more likely to gain support insofar as the manager deems it likely to be returned in the form of loyalty. Alternatively, insofar as this subjectivity is diminished through formal policies, the more likely a manager is to use WLB supports that allow them to reinforce their authority.

7.3 - Understanding and Interpreting the WLB Culture

Senior managers’ personal perspectives in this research appeared to permeate every element and level of the workplace insofar as middle managers form a subjective understanding of their organisation’s WLB culture and respond accordingly to flexibility requests. As such, managers at organisation A tended to mirror their organisation’s culture by maintaining a high degree of passivity towards their staff’s WLB by doing only the bare minimum – even statutorily required arrangements may be actively discouraged and stigmatised. Although organisations B, C and D appeared to be far more proactive in encouraging WLB and managers reported feeling pressured to try to accommodate requests.
As established in Chapter 5, managers refer to their senior level managers in determining departmental and organisational norms. Middle managers at organisation A reported that WLB was not a priority among senior management and that, even if they themselves would be amenable to implementing various workplace flexibilities, they "would wait for the encouragement to come from the top" (MM:Female:Organisation A). In the absence of this support, managers were unwilling to risk going against the organisation's culture.

This section establishes two fundamental points: first, that managers are consciously aware of the nuances surrounding their respective WLB cultures; and second, that these understandings directly influence their own WLB interpretations which are then projected onto their staff. Based on the interviews, managerial perceptions of their respective organisation's WLB culture were categorised as either 'bad', 'ok' or 'good'. These scores were primarily based upon their response to questions such as, "how would you describe your organisation's attitude toward WLB?" and the results are presented below.

Views of organisational WLB culture were varied. Whereas 67% of managers in organisation A reported a 'bad WLB culture', not a single manager at organisation B agreed (Figure 7.1). In fact, 62% of managers at organisation B felt that their organisation had a 'good WLB culture'. Similarly, managers within the public services were more likely to report a healthy WLB culture.
The managers’ view of their respective organisation’s WLB culture did not, however, appear to have any meaningful correlation with WLB take-up levels by the managers themselves. This result was surprising given the expectation that one who viewed the WLB culture positively might be more apt to avail of supports. This most likely is explained by a closer examination of the varying definitions regarding what constitutes a WLB programme. For example, some managers reported availing of such programmes by using their schedule flexibility to leave early on a Friday while others felt that ‘take-up’ was defined as having availed of a more formal initiative such as a (semi-)permanent reduction in working hours.

This interpretation would explain the high positive response rate within organisation A (which relies on informal supports) compared to the lower positive responses from organisation B (which offers more formal programmes). Thus, only 17% of managers at organisation B claimed to have availed of formal WLB initiatives whereas 36% of managers at organisation A had used informal supports such as working from home one day a week or starting early to avoid high traffic times (Figure 7.2).
There was also an interesting relationship between manager's personal WLB levels and their views about the organisation's WLB culture. At organisation A, for example, 50% of managers reported dissatisfaction with their personal WLB levels and, likewise, 67% reported a bad organisational WLB culture. Alternatively, 62% of managers at organisation B reported a good WLB culture while 69% were happy with their personal WLB levels. This suggests that a parallel may indeed exist between organisational WLB culture and managers' personal levels (Figure 7.3).
In this manner, one may conclude that, if managers feel that the organisation has a positive culture, they are more likely to be happy with their own WLB by finding supports when needed. However, this effect is difficult to fully quantify in this study due to the small sample size and lack of specificity on this topic. Additional research is needed to confirm these findings and offer further detail regarding the link between the perceived quality of WLB culture and one’s personal WLB levels.

Indeed, it appears that this link is drawn into question by the findings presented in organisations C & D which appear somewhat anomalous in that 80% agreed that the organisation has a good WLB culture yet 100% were dissatisfied with their own levels. Yet as the inclusion of organisations C and D in this thesis serve to methodologically increase our knowledge regarding the senior level team, it is possible that this difference may be due to the unique difficulties facing senior managers who were demographically the most likely to report being unhappy with their personal WLB levels (as seen in Chapter 6). Indeed, in this study, 67% of senior managers reported being dissatisfied with
their personal WLB levels compared with only 39% of middle managers (Figure 7.4).

Despite the differences between management levels in terms of personal WLB levels, there appears to be basic parity with regards to perceptions of their organisation's WLB culture. Approximately 50% of all managers reported that their organisation operated under a good WLB culture – a trend only somewhat stronger for senior managers. Conversely, middle managers were slightly more likely to report that their organisation had a bad WLB culture despite enjoying a moderately elevated perception of their own levels (Figure 7.5). In the context of Figure 7.4, this suggests that while senior managers may have a more direct role in creating the WLB culture, they are also the least likely to be directly influenced by it.
Based on these results, it is reasonable to conclude that managers operate through a detailed yet subjective understanding about their organisation’s WLB culture and that these views influence their own levels. Middle managers with positive organisational views were more likely to report satisfaction with their own WLB levels. However, this correlation is weaker in relation to those at senior levels who may still report unhealthy personal WLB levels despite describing their organisational WLB culture in positive terms. Moreover, while middle managers were more likely than senior managers to feel the positive effects of a good WLB culture, they continue to look to them when making WLB decisions. As such, the WLB culture remains highly influenced by the working norms set by upper management even though they themselves may not be able or willing to benefit.

7.4 - Views of Gender Roles and Gendered Working Patterns

The previous sections established the power managers have in making WLB decision as well as how this authority is influenced by their understanding of the organisation’s WLB culture. The remainder of this chapter explores two social perspectives with an aim towards evaluating their ability to illuminate managers’ decision process in terms of their department’s WLB supports.

Feminist discourse highlights how gender and patriarchy play an integral role in work-life balance. As this thesis has demonstrated, managers have considerable discretion over the allocation of WLB supports. Even though an
organisation can offer a diverse suite of programmes, their success relies on employees being able to avail and it is ultimately up to their managers to determine who qualifies. In this regard, we have seen how managers combine their personal and subjective perspectives of WLB needs with their understanding of the organisation’s WLB culture in order to establish the criteria against which to make these decisions.

The question of why different managers interpret these needs in different ways can be further illuminated through the lens of feminist epistemology. In fact, the general need and overall effectiveness of work-life policies have previously been identified as being viewed through what Greenstein (1996) describes as a ‘gender ideology’ lens. These gender-role attitudes serve to filter personal views of the world and, in particular, subjective understandings of inequality (Howard and Hollander 1997). This section explores how gender theory shapes views and understandings of work-life balance and how these debates inform personal perspectives in making decisions on allocation, interpretation and policy creation.

In pursuit of this exploration, the following sub-section applies current feminist debates to managerial perspectives in order to help illuminate their understandings of work-life balance. It begins by examining the views managers hold about gendered working habits, or whether men and women are essentially the same or different, and how this manifests in the workplace. The second sub-section analyses how managers understand gender roles and the social construction of workplace patriarchy and how these perceptions influence the way they view their role in allocating work-life balance supports.

7.4.1 - Views of Men’s and Women’s Work Habits

The sameness / difference debate introduced previously is constructed around two distinct perspectives: (i) that men and women are essentially the same and should be treated the same in the workplace, or (ii) that men and women are fundamentally different; a position most commonly constructed around women’s biological difference attributed to childbirth and the corresponding importance of maternity rights (Bryson 1992; Hare-Mustin and J 1994).
Feminists argue that this binary is operative on a subconscious level in every person, state and institution and institutional interventions are therefore built upon these assumptions (Walby 1986; Leira 1992; Lewis 1992). Although this may operate on a subconscious level, managerial views of how men and women relate influences how individuals and organisations view work-life balance. Based on the data collected for this exploration, this sub-section offers a general description of how these managers appear to view men and women in the workplace and how such perspectives may influence their views of work-life balance. In a more specific sense, this latter analysis focuses heavily upon their understanding of why WLB policies exist and subsequently how they should interpreted and allocated.

Managers were asked a number of questions in order to gauge their perspective on the sameness / difference dichotomy. This included direct questions such as, "Do you think men and women work differently?" as well as more subtle or reactionary questions such as asking a manager who mentioned staff working long hours if this held true for both men and women. Based on these responses, managers were categorised as either 'same' or 'different' and these groupings were used in the analysis below.

The majority of managers reported perceiving men and women as essentially different. These differences were most commonly related to aspects of domestic responsibilities in that "woman take the load of the family responsibilities - that's the way that it is, for right or wrong" (SM:Male:Organisation B). These differences were recognised in all four organisations in relation to couples who had children:

The gender breakdown in my department is about 99% men since there is legislation that females could not be forced to lift as much as men. I believe that females take their domestic life differently, saying 'we work nine to five and the males work longer hours'. Females have more of a domestic role than the husband (SM:Male:Organisation A).

I have 2 guys on my team and I dealt with them exactly the same as I would have the others, but they didn't have the same difficulties. Both have children and wives at home who are fulltime housewives, so they didn't have the needs that the people who had to rush off and collect children have (MM:Male:Organisation B).
Clearly there are different needs. I think women have paid a very high price to work outside the home in a lot of instances – very unusual for a woman to get the balance right (SM:Female:Organisation C).

I think, even though we might choose to ignore this, yes, they do have. I think that it's generally the female teacher who take the children to the doctor and is expected to take time off and all that sort of thing, so it is the mother generally who's left with the responsibility for caring (SM:Female:Organisation D).

Likewise, managers in all organisations recognised the difficulty parents had in reconciling work with domestic obligations though this was perceived uniquely as a female issue. As the senior managers at two of the organisations explained, "women have paid a very high price to work outside the home" (SM:Female:Organisation C) and this price was unique to women because "females have more of a domestic role than the husband" (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Such responses lend further evidence that despite attempts by academics and practitioners to transcend family-friendly conventions, managers continue to view the aim of these policies as a form of caregiver reconciliation. Even alongside the recent terminological transition towards WLB and flexible working, managers appear unable to separate their gendered preconceptions from their broader interpretations of WLB. In this context, recent explorations have attempted to argued that:

... flexible working arrangements are not a 'women's issue', they are a 'people issue' and all employees, irrespective of their family situations or personal responsibilities, need and want to have greater balance between their lives inside and outside of work (Drew et al. 2003:28).

Yet managers continue to presume that women take on traditional caregiver roles and must subsequently adjust their working patterns.

In a deeper sense, it may be argued that managers interpret WLB needs from within a gendered ideology lens through which they filter their workplace observations. Insofar as they see that women alone are adjusting their working patterns, it becomes difficult to view WLB and non-traditional working arrangements outside gendered terms. To the extent that managers continue to deem those who avail as being less serious about their careers, it is
understandable how they may conclude that women prioritise their domestic roles. As managers are armed with the task of allocating WLB programmes within their departments, it becomes clear why feminist theories are particularly relevant.

In the interviews, it emerged that managers noticed additional differences between men and women in the workplace beyond their familial roles with one noting that “women in a manufacturing environment are always neater and tidier and they always seem to have a calming influence” (MM:Male:Organisation A). Moreover, managers at organisation A were more likely to discuss women in terms of a greater propensity for being emotional. A few managers mentioned the need to allow women some added space in order to deal with these emotions: “sometimes you need to say, 'why don't you just go get a cup of tea and take a break’ – they can get worked up over a problem” (MM:Male:Organisation A). One manager attributed this to a biological difference between sexes:

*We're built differently in that men have an easier life than women in a medical way – in the sense that women have a time of the month. So there is time that their hormones can be off-the-stray. That's an awful thing, you know it cannot be easy for them ... [but] my feeling is that they should be the same every day when really they might be in the straights that day*(MM:Male:Organisation A).

This particular manager highlighted menstruation as a challenge for women to overcome. In this context, such differences can manifest through emotional or erratic behaviour resulting from hormonal imbalances or in rendering them generally less capable of maintaining control in high-pressure situations with regards to their parental roles:

*A mother is a closer person for a child than the father is ... they would worry about their children more than I worry about them ... if I got a call in a panicking [about my child being in an accident] I would think, 'well I got to go home and deal with that.' But for a mother, it would hit them straight away and there would be a fury of things ... She would be more emotional [whereas] I would have to behave like a man ... where I think that some females would think 'oh my God', and nearly be crying* (MM:Male:Organisation A).

From this perspective, such differences are intrinsically linked to deeply ingrained notions of what it means to be a man or a woman. As such, it is
understandable how this perspective holds significant implications for the way in which he would run his department. With regards to staffing, for example, as the manager of a warehouse, he described having a large team reporting to him. Although mostly men, he did note that he had about 7 to 10 women on his team, though unsurprisingly, none had ever reached a supervisory level.

One of the two participating female middle managers recognised this problem within the organisation and noted that, "it depends on who you're dealing with but there are some men in general that would prefer not to have women in more senior roles" (MM:Female:Organisation A). Insofar as a manager may believe that women have a tenuous relationship with the labour market, combined with a delicate and emotional nature, it is easy to see why organisation A does not have a greater female permeation in upper management.

Alternatively, no manager at organisation B described women in emotional terms; in fact, as a group they were more hesitant to offer generalisations:

> You can't really generalise because the same woman who has 6 children at home would actually want to pursue their career while I've a woman who has one child at home and wants to treasure the time with her family - but is quite happy to spend 2 days at work and fully committed to that (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Yet when the managers did mention differences between the sexes, they tended to focus mostly on working patterns:

> Men by their nature hate to ask for anything and hate to ask for help (MM:Male:Organisation B),

> The guys talk a lot more about what they do while the women probably work more silently (MM:Male:Organisation B).

> The men seem to be very conscious of career progression and career plans, whereas the women are much more, 'I want to do a good job' ... it's different motivation." (MM:Female:Organisation B).

> In my experience, the men that are working with me, there's not one of them on reduced hours. There's obviously different habits, men and women rarely have the same sort of regimes ... WLB for a man often means that they have the ability to stay on longer hours, they don't have the commitment to be home at whatever time, it might be unpolitical to say this but I can see when deadlines hit my area, when
long hours have to be done, the men are able to do them and they will do them (MM:Female:Organisation B).

So whereas the managers at organisation B noted differences in working patterns, these differences would not innately preclude one sex from upper management.

Again, while managers viewed the difference between men and women in different terms, 67% reported seeing some difference while only 33% felt that they were basically the same (Figure 7.6).

*Figure 7.6 - Percentage of Managers according to How They View Gender at Work (n=35)*

In examining these views against the manager’s sex, male managers were slightly more likely to report seeing men and women as being different than female managers. Yet with a small sample size, the margin of error would easily negate this small difference. As such, there appears to be no major difference between manager’s perceptions of gender working habits by sex (Figure 7.7).
There did, however, appear to be a difference between managers with and without children whereby those with children were much more likely to see women and men as different (71%) than those without (57%). This finding may be understood to the extent that managers view gender differences in relation to parenting. In another sense, research has suggested that, once couples have children, they are more likely to ascribe to more traditional gender roles (West and Zimmerman 1987; Hochschild 1989) which may make them more likely to presume inherent differences between men and women. As such, managers with children may become aware of these differences more acutely through their experiences surrounding parenting. Alternatively, when managers themselves had not experienced parenthood, they may be less likely to formulate perceptions of difference (Figure 7.8).
Senior managers were also more likely to perceive differences in that three-fourths reported feeling that men and women were different compared to two-thirds of middle managers (Figure 7.9). This difference is most likely explained by the fact that senior managers are older and subsequently more likely to hold to traditional views of gender than middle managers (established in the following section). Yet this is nevertheless significant in that we have previously seen how middle managers take WLB cues from those in upper management.
Managers at organisation A were the least likely to report seeing men and women as different (Figure 7.10). While this may seem contradictory to the views expressed by managers above, it illustrates that organisation A understands men and women in the workplace as having essentially the same workplace needs. This is further supported by the fact that organisation A also reported the least amount of WLB supports and that manager at senior levels were more likely to describe women in terms of their parental roles.
This offers further support to the value that a feminist perspective can offer in furthering our understanding of WLB cultures in these organisations. WLB programmes were described by all the organisations as a way to help women combine the pressures of reconciling their paid work with family obligations. Since organisations B, C and D interpreted women and men as having different workplace needs, they have created policies to address these differences. In contrast, organisation A felt men and women were essentially the same and therefore lacked motivation to construct supports which they believe are inherently geared towards women.

This disparity between organisational perspectives can be further understood through the views of the two executive HR managers. Both reported seeing differences between men and women arise in the wake of childbirth. When asked if these differences were true of all parents or just mothers, they both reported that the difference was largely unique to mothers:

*I think the way that the balance is, most women do, unfortunately, take on the home duty themselves. You know, men don't do their part, a lot of women just won't subcontract and they won't subcontract to their husbands. It's as simple as that and it's maternal instinct and their ferocious-like about it, but they do their maternal job and they want it to be their job (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A).*
The executive HR managers at both organisation A and B felt that women take on the bulk of the family responsibilities. In organisation B, he felt that this was reflected in their working patterns:

*Without doubt, the woman takes the load of the family responsibilities, that's the way it is for right or wrong. We have senior women on short time, holding down big jobs here, and I would suspect trying to cram a full job until half week. In all those incidents, the husbands have big jobs as well no bigger now than they have but when it came to the choice it was always the women who took the time off* (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B).

Both HR executives felt that, 'right or wrong', it was women with children who were most affected by child-raising and consequently more in need of scheduling adjustments. Organisation A’s executive felt that this desire was innate to a mother’s biological drive while the executive at organisation B tied this trend more to historically traditional societal roles.

The differences between these perspectives permeate policy and, as those in the position to create organisational initiatives, these managers have responded to their subjective perceptions of need. Managers at organisation B recognised that there were at least some biological differences between men and women: "biologically their different. So, women have children, without doubt there are times in women's lives, where inevitably they must be missing" (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B). From a practical point of view, the organisation recognises how these biological differences create specific needs for mother:

*Recognising that, we should, as an organisation, try and make it as easy as possible for women to continue and work, if that's what they want to do, in a seamless away as possible and in whatever time frame they feel is appropriate to them. So we have things here like a breast-feeding room, and you know if a woman wants to work right up to the time of her birth and want to get back to work quickly than that can be done. We also facilitate more time off, if that's needed* (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B)

By understanding that female workers have specific needs surrounding childbirth, organisation B created supports to mitigate foreseeable difficulties. In this manner, policy and programmes were deemed necessary to level the playing field rather than a form of benefit.
In contrast, organisation A lacked similar supports. While the HR executive manager recognised differences between men and women, they were deemed to be at such a fundamental level that no amount of workplace support could eliminate them or replace the ingrained desire and need for mothers to be home with their children. To this end, he offered a number of examples where he felt that no workplace arrangements would mitigate the fact that mothers “just want to be home with the kids” and therefore reconciled the increasing number of women in the workplace primarily in terms of basic economic demands inherent in modern families. In recognition of these facts, he conceded the need to offer at least minimal flexibilities for working mothers:

You’re going to have to work around that, most people recognise that. I think what I say to most parents is, ‘do your best.’ But if you’re in need, we will try to help you out. So I don’t want to hear every second day I have to go here, have to go there, but I don’t mind occasionally when people say, look, my husband let me down, he can’t make the pickup today (ExecHR: Male: Organisation A).

Liff and Cameron (1997) have previously argued that viewing men and women in this way creates gender-neutral initiatives that fail to get to the root of gender equality. In other words, by simply allowing women to mould themselves to male working patterns rather than addressing the gendered nature of the practices themselves, such policies merely perpetuate existing patriarchal frameworks.

Organisation A feels that women naturally want to stay at home but, when they cannot, they self-select jobs with sufficient flexibility. Consequently, it is not incumbent upon the employer to offer significant WLB supports. As such, these organisations tend to uphold the hierarchical and competitive basis of existing organisational paradigms. Lewis (2001) also demonstrated that, by emphasising ‘sameness’, such policies come to be seen as favours rather than entitlements. Accordingly, this has been linked with a peer backlash based on views that this is ‘unfair’ for those unable to avail (Young 1999; DFEE 2000; Sinclair 2000; Liff and Ward 2001).
7.4.2 - Gender Role Ideologies

While the previous sub-section examined managerial views of gendered working patterns, this section explores their conceptions of gender roles themselves. In this context, feminist literature defines gender in terms of one's socialised sex based on what it means to be a man or a woman in a specific culture and time rather than inherent biological differences. To date, the general need and overall effectiveness of work-life policies have therefore been largely viewed through what Greenstein (1996) describes as a gender ideology lens and these gender-role attitudes serve to filter personal views of the world (Howard and Hollander 1997). This sub-section explores how gender theory can help explain managerial views of WLB allocation, interpretation and policy formation.

From a feminist perspective, it has been argued that WLB policies must be understood in terms of gender-role attitudes or how a person identifies themselves in terms of marital and family roles traditionally linked to gender (Hegtvedt et al. 2002). From this perspective, these views are inseparable from how managers understand and apply WLB programmes insofar as those holding traditional beliefs are likely to perceive parental leave as unfair (Grover 1991) compared to those with liberal views in that:

> Individuals with liberal gender role beliefs may view the benefits ensured by work-family policies not as 'extra' but simply as part of what is necessary to support women's participation in the workplace - if the benefits are not 'extra', no inequality is created (Hegtvedt et al. 2002:389).

In other words, differences in gender role beliefs influence an individual's perceptions of WLB (Greenstein 1996; Greenstein 1996; Kroska 1997; Nomaguchi et al. 2005). This sub-section focuses on what gender ideologies these managers exhibited and how this influenced their views.

The first element involved establishing managers' own views of gender roles or what they personally believe about themselves and others in relation to marital and familial roles traditionally linked to gender. In answering this question, gender ideology theory offers a stronger foundation than gender
attitudes (Kroska 1997) in that the latter is a belief system while the former is more concerned with an ingrained personal self-identity. Using this approach, the applicable focus remains on what an individual believes are appropriate behaviours for men and women (gender attitudes) while also using gender ideology based on the foundation of identity to acknowledge that inconsistencies can exist between these actual beliefs and what they espouse.

These gender ideologies do not proceed, for the most part, on a conscious level and Berk (1985:207) noted that they operate "without much notice being taken." Moreover, ideologies are often fractured and incoherent with abundant contradictions between what people say and what they actually feel (Hochschild 1989). In other words, particularly in Western society, individuals are so bombarded with different gender ideological attitudes that they may espouse identification with a politically correct view rather than what may reflect their actual beliefs.

Using this idea of gender ideology based upon the deeper sense of gender identity therefore helps to compensate for this discrepancy by encouraging analytical awareness of its possibility and thereby promoting a deeper exploration. Gender ideology can thus serve as a lens through which to illuminate how events and inequalities are examined on a subconscious level, how understandings of gender dictate work distribution and how one understands WLB needs.

To establish the distinction between a manager's gender ideology and attitude, a significant portion of the interview was devoted to queries from various angles. In order to establish their gender attitudes, they were asked directly:

Where would you say you fall on a scale in terms of gender roles – 1 being equalitarian whereby couples should split everything down the middle to 5 –traditional –whereby you feel it is best if women stay-at-home and raise the children while men support the family?

Yet they were also asked a number of indirect questions in order to tease out their gender ideology including:
• Do you think it’s more important for one sex to have a career over the other?
• Do you think that men and women work differently?
• Why do you think more men rise to higher positions in organisations than women?
• What do you think is the best childcare method for pre-school aged children?

Questions also probed their personal life choices such as their current and preferred childcare arrangements and their partners employment situation. Based on their responses, each manager was assigned a gender ideology score based on a corresponding five-point scale which was compared to their self-assigned attitude score. In this manner, the analysis was able to compensate for the potential that they might self-identify in politically correct terms rather than based on their actual beliefs. In other words, this technique was designed to reveal the degree of ‘fracture’ in their gender role perspectives whereby they may espouse membership to a more progressive gender role perspective than they actually hold.

Gender research has found links between perspectives and life choices whereby individuals who maintain traditional gender role beliefs are more likely to occupy breadwinner familial structures and believe that a full-time stay-at-home mother is optimal for child development. Thus, while this would not be the only significant metric, it would nevertheless be an example of a contributory factor in that those who were more traditional would be more likely to have stay-at-home wives. To help establish the validity of the gender role measures used in this research, managers’ gender role perspectives were therefore compared to a number of demographic aspects. In this regard, a number of such links emerged in the analysis. For example, those that labelled themselves as traditional were most likely to have stay-at-home partners followed by partners employed part-time (Figure 7.11).
Moreover, 82% of those demonstrating traditional attitudes reported that their children were minded full-time by a partner compared to only 33% of those with more liberal gender role beliefs.

Conversely, while less than 10% of managers with traditional views used external childcare facilities, this was the most commonly cited childcare arrangement reported by 'equalitarian' managers (or those who hold more liberal views of gender as opposed to the more 'traditional' belief that women should priorities the private-sphere) (Figure 7.12). These findings are in accordance with prior feminist research and offer further validation for this study's measures.
There was also considerable difference in gender roles beliefs between men and women. Female managers, for example, unanimously reported holding equalitarian gender role beliefs compared with only 44% of their male counterparts. Moreover, almost as many men espoused traditional gender role beliefs as equalitarian ones (Figure 7.13). As the women in this sample had already reached management positions, it is fairly unsurprising that they would not see themselves in terms of traditional gender roles and it is therefore understandable that they would believe that men and women should split workplace and domestic responsibilities equally. However, gender role beliefs appeared to be unrelated to management level for men whose gender views would be more likely to affect their partner's working patterns rather than their own.
Figure 7.13 - Gender Ideology according to Manager's Sex (n=35)

Between organisations, managers at B were more likely to express liberal gender role beliefs (75%) than those at organisation A (40%) who were more likely to be traditional (Figure 7.14). This makes sense in the context of previous findings in this thesis that organisation A has adopted more traditional work structures and is only paternalistically concerned with WLB. This also confirms Hegtvedt et al.'s (2002) link between gender role views and the perceived benefits of WLB whereby those with more liberal beliefs, akin to those at organisation B, are more likely to understand such supports as a necessary component of women’s workplace participation.
Also similar to prior research, managers without children were more likely to hold liberal gender views (Berk 1985). In this sample, only 55% of managers with children held equalitarian beliefs compared to every childless manager (Figure 7.15). This corroborates previous findings suggesting that belief systems can change or shift in the wake of childbirth.

There was another interesting link between managers' gender views and their personal WLB. Managers in all four organisations who were dissatisfied with
their WLB were more likely to hold progressive gender role beliefs (Figure 7.16). This link is likely due to the fact that managers with equalitarian views were less likely to have stay-at-home partners. Consequently, their increased domestic demands might make it more difficult to achieve a healthy WLB than those with full-time stay-at-home partners.

Figure 7.16 – Gender Ideology according to Managers with Poor Reported WLB Levels (n=16)

The fact that these findings were largely in accordance with prior research suggests a degree of validation for this coding to determine personal views of gender roles. Moreover, they further corroborated the findings of previous chapters whereby managerial perspectives were seen to impact organisational policy and culture. Along these lines, insofar as organisation A’s managers held traditional beliefs, these were reflected in the lack of WLB prioritisation. In contrast, within organisations B, C and D where abundant WLB policies exist, managers were significantly more likely to express liberal views of gender roles. This lends further evidence to the link between managers’ gender views and the organisation’s broader WLB culture.

The analysis also focused on whether managers were operating under a fractured gender role perspective; in other words, whether they espoused affinity with a perspective contrary to their own. Given the cultural emphasis on gender equality, it is unsurprising that 61% of managers described
themselves as equalitarian (Figure 7.17). Yet it is also not surprising that almost half of those identifying as equalitarian did not appear to hold the expected corresponding attitudes and characteristics. This lends further support to the contention that managers can operate under fractured gender role views in preferring to see themselves in terms inconsistent with their beliefs and actions.

Figure 7.17 - Managers Gender Ideology compared to their Gender Attitudes (n=35)

In evaluating whether managers held fractured gender views, their self-assigned score was compared with the score they were assigned based on their responses. In this manner, the degree of variance was proportional to the degree to which their gender role perspective could be considered fractured. Through this, it was discovered that 47% of managers operated under a fractured gender role perspective. Within this group, only 22% were more equalitarian than they claimed while over 78% were less. As stated earlier, this finding makes sense in light of the rising cultural emphasis on gender equality against which such managers may feel a degree of embarrassment in expressing traditional views.

When comparing managers, we can see in Table 7.1 how the largest group holding fractured gender views were managers who claimed to be equalitarian. Although 63% of managers labelled themselves in the manner, only 33% appeared to have the corresponding attitudes and demographic make-up.
(such as a full-time employed spouse). In contrast only 3% of managers who labelled themselves traditional demonstrated attitudes suggesting they are slightly more equalitarian. These findings further illustrate that managers were more likely to label themselves in equalitarian terms while seemingly operating under more traditional views of gender.

Table 7.1 - Managers’ Fractured Gender Role Views (n=35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Gender Ideology</th>
<th>Self-Assigned Gender Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Between</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalitarian</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.4.3 - Comparing Means

This sub-section outlines the findings of a variety of means tests. The data were analysed in terms of management level, gender and whether or not the managers had children which were then compared with their self-assigned gender attitude, assigned gender ideology and the presence of fractured gender role perspectives.

While this sub-section presents some interesting findings in traditional t-test tables, it should be strongly emphasised that these results require validation through further research. This data set was collected through qualitative interviews with a small and non-random sample in pursuit of a case study. As such, however interesting the results may be, it would be disingenuous to overstate their statistical significance and, at best, the results may be said to highlight areas worthy of future research. To help mitigate possible errors to the highest possible degree, parametric and non-parametric means tests were run and the results compared. Insofar as there was no significant variation, the results of the parametric t-tests are presented below.

When gender role perspectives were examined by management level, it was discovered that senior managers were more likely to have fractured gender role perspectives than middle managers (Table 7.2).
Table 7.2 - T-Test Gender Role according to Management Level (n=35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender ideology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assigned Gender attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.585</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fracture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>3.082</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 7.2, senior managers were more likely to hold traditional gender role beliefs despite personally feeling more liberal. In fact, 67% of senior managers labelled themselves in equalitarian terms while only 42% of managers had the expected corresponding attitudes. In terms of these attitudes, half of senior managers held traditional views of gender though only a quarter labelled themselves as such (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 - Senior Managers Self-Assigned Gender attitudes and Assigned Gender Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Managers</th>
<th>Gender Attitudes</th>
<th>Gender Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Between</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalitarian</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, middle managers were less likely to view themselves in traditional terms, though those that did were less likely to be fractured. The biggest fracture came from those self-identifying as equalitarian. Among all managers with fractured views, middle managers were more likely to fall between traditional and equalitarian whereas senior managers were more likely to be traditional.

Table 7.4 - Middle Managers Self-Assigned Gender Attitude and Assigned Gender Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle Managers</th>
<th>Gender Attitude</th>
<th>Gender Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Between</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalitarian</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When gender role perspectives were examined by sex, it was discovered that men were more likely to correctly identify themselves as traditional than their female counterparts. Yet men were also slightly more likely to hold fractured gender role perspectives than women, as seen in Table 7.5. This finding again suggests that being a female manager may be correlated with non-traditional gender views. In other words, since female managers are by definition not stay-at-home mothers – the most likely work pattern associated with holding traditional views – then it is logical that they would hold an alternative view of gender.

Table 7.5 – T-Test Gender Role according to Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Attitude</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Assigned</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>8.988</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Ideology</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fracture</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As parenthood has been previously linked with the increased likelihood of individuals holding traditional views of gender, means test were also run between managers with and without children. Although there were only eight managers in this sample without children, they nevertheless held congruent gender views whereas those with children varied dramatically (Table 7.6). When managers did not have children, they also did not operate under a fractured gender perspective with every non-parent identifying as equalitarian and all of them expressed equalitarian beliefs (although two could be considered more in-between).
Table 7.6 - T-Test Gender Role according to Parental Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Assigned Gender Attitude</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Ideology</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.579</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fracture</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.57735</td>
<td>7.59</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>1.23945</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a group, parents were most likely to self-label as traditional (30%) and also most likely to hold traditional ideologies (48%). They were conversely the least likely to be equalitarian despite the fact that over half of managers with children saw themselves in these terms. Of those that labelled themselves as equalitarian (52%), only 22% had the expected corresponding gender views while the remaining 30% were more traditional than they suggested (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7 - Gender Attitudes and Ideology according to Managers with Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Ideology</th>
<th>Gender Attitudes</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>In Between</th>
<th>Equalitarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Between</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalitarian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feminists have often linked gender views with how one relates to parental roles. This suggests that parenthood may be the strongest factor in determining whether a manager maintains traditional gender views. Childless managers universally espoused liberal gender views and seemed to have the corresponding attitudes. However, managers with children had greater difficulties in maintaining this cohesion and children appeared to be the source of this fracture.
This section explored how gender theory shapes views and understandings of WLB and how such beliefs can influence allocation, interpretation and policy creation. Feminist epistemologies can be helpful in illuminating why managers interpret these needs differently as evidenced by the plurality of views among managers in this study. Prior research has shown these views influencing how managers understand the general need and overall effectiveness of WLB policies through what Greenstein (1996) describes as a gender ideology lens. These gender-role attitudes serve to filter personal views of the world and, in particular, understandings of inequality (Howard and Hollander 1997). Yet it would be reductive to posit that gender alone influences policy. Rather, the following section explores views of organisational justice as an additional critical dimension.

**7.5 - Views of Organisational Justice**

The previous section used feminist theories of gender to illustrate how managers can maintain vastly different perspectives in forming an understanding of WLB. As the earlier sections established, this is important to the degree that managers have considerable power in allocating and interpreting work-life balance arrangements. This section examines another perspective that can be helpful in illuminating what tools and perspectives a manager relies on in wielding this power.

Grover (1991) suggests that organisational justice theory can provide a useful framework for categorising the underlying principles informing WLB practises. Theorists have delineated distributive justice, which refers to “the fairness of outcomes received in a given transaction” (Byrne and Cropanzano 2001:4), as the most applicable to understanding the implications pertaining to employees’ perceived inequality in accessing work-life balance arrangements. Particularly in situations where policies do not apply to all employees (such as flexi-time or home-working) managers must decide who get access based on their own perspective of fairness (Appelbaum and Golden 2002; Swanberg et al. 2005). In this regard, justice theory can be helpful in illuminating how individuals view work-life balance arrangements and how these judgements are operative within the managerial decision-making process.

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Research suggests that employees’ perceptions of how WLB and other resources are distributed affects their loyalty (Schaubroeck et al. 1994), commitment (Folger and Konovsky 1989) and role behaviour (Moorman 1991). Moreover, if employees’ desired benefits are perceived to be allocated unfairly, they are likely to exhibit counterproductive behaviours like displaying negative attitudes or withdrawing (Colquitt et al. 2001; Grandey and Cordeiron 2003). Therefore, although WLB supports have been associated with positive outcomes, Grandey and Cordeiron posited that the perceived fairness of distribution may influence utilisation and effectiveness.

This thesis has previously shown that managers have the power to allocate WLB programmes in a number of ways based on their perceptions of gender roles and broader understandings of organisational culture. This section expands this matrix by exploring the second component of the proposed gender-justice matrix – organisational justice theory. To this end, manager’s views of organisational justice theory are examined in two ways; first, by exploring how managers decide who may access scarce resources; and secondly, by examining their preferred method (formal or informal) of allocation.

7.5.1 - Allocating Scarce Resources: Need, Reward or First-Come

Within the domain of distributive justice, three principles of fairness have been identified as informing perceptions (Deutsch 1975; 1985): equality, equity and need. These principles can be useful in understanding managerial decisions on how to allocate non-statutory work-life balance supports. Though to a lesser degree than gender, these principles operate largely on a tacit level and people are typically unaware that their perceptions affect basic assumptions of fairness (i.e. justice). They are also unlikely to be aware that such perceptions may not be shared universally.

The first principle (equity) is based on the assumption that rewards and resources should be allocated based on merit. In essence, this implies that the distribution of WLB arrangements should be in direct proportion to an employee’s organisational contribution. In contrast, the equality principle holds that everyone should receive the same access without regard for
performance or other contingencies. Specifically, Grandey (2001:155) suggests that according to the equality principle, "work/family policies can be considered fair when the policies are available to everyone." This can be applied to WLB supports in two ways: either everyone gets the same benefit or everyone gets no benefit at all (Young, 1999). Finally, the need principle calls for an allocation strictly on the basis of individual circumstances. This principle suggests that those in the most need of a resource should receive it, regardless of input or output (Schwinger 1986; Stone 1988). In this case, allocating work-life balance arrangements is considered fair when the employees in the most need are able to avail (Figure 7.18).

Figure 7.18 - Deciding how to Allocate WLB supports- Organisation Justice Principles

Depending on the organisation's purpose in instituting work-life balance arrangements, any or all of these three principles may be applied in the programmes allocation (Stone 1988). For instance, if an organisation uses home-working as a benefit for performance, it may be said that the equity principle is operative whereby top performers would theoretically have greater access to working from home (Grandey & Cordeiron 2003). However, access to work-life balance arrangements may only be relevant to employees who
need them. If, for example, the same organisation wanted to start an on-site crèche, then allocating spaces based on performance would only be relevant to the extent that high performers had children of the appropriate age. In this manner, Grandey (2001:156) suggests that "family-friendly policies are typically need-based allocations ... designed to respond to employees' needs." However, it should be clarified that these frameworks are subjective. In other words, while reliance on the need principle may at times be logical, to some employees it could also appear to violate the equity and equality principles and therefore be interpreted as an unjust practise (Grandey 2001).

Past research on organisational justice theory has largely failed to adequately assess how these factors temper their studies' patterns. One project attempted to remedy this by examining the theoretical and empirical impact of justice, gender-role attitudes and workplace contexts, but ultimately failed to focus on either policy allocation or the effect of managers' personal perspectives (Hegtvedt et al. 2002). This thesis takes Hegtvedt et al.'s (2002) model a step further by identifying how organisational justice theory can offer insight into managerial WLB decisions.

In pursuit of this, this section examines managerial perspectives of justice in determining how to fairly allocate WLB in their departments. Managers were asked a number of questions which included a direct question - "With these non-traditional work options, who do you think should have first choice of them?" as well as indirect questions which probed whether they believed programmes could be inherently unfair or if there were certain people they felt should have primacy. From their responses, managers were categorised according to need, equity or equality. It should be noted that managers were often reluctant to offer generalities without knowing specific situational details. However, this may also be a form of support in that this was most common among those invoking the need principle as this perspective dictates that managers understand the individual circumstance before making a decision.

In terms of distribution, over half of the managers felt that need was the most appropriate basis with the remaining split between equity and equality (Figure 7.19). This suggests that a plurality of managers in this study still understand
WLB as designed to help individuals meet their needs rather than the more inclusive definition of WLB as a way to balance work and personal desires.

There was also some interesting variance between the organisations. Within B, C and D, for example, managers felt that 'need' was the most germane principle in allocating initiatives. In particular, managers in organisation B used this principle almost exclusively:

*I'd look at the reasons and how strong that reason was. If they wanted to stay at home for a day I'd say no. If they had an elderly parent or a child to look after I think I'd be obliged to do something for them (MM:Male:Organisation B).*

Reliance on this principle offers further support for interpreting organisation B as operating under an equality-based culture. As managers understand WLB programmes to be a means for the organisation to help balance domestic responsibilities with work, managers therefore allocated initiatives to those with the greatest need: "*to my mind, the collective ethos of the organisation would be the priority around family issues, like child minding*" (MM:Female:Organisation B).

In contrast, the equality principle (whereby policies are allocated on a first-come basis) was cited by some managers at both organisations A and B but
none in C or D. Yet other managers at organisation B reported not seeing this as a useful technique when allocating WLB. At organisation A, however, managers frequently cited this principle with one claiming that if he could not offer something to everyone on his team then he would not offer it to anyone:

*I’d say no, I have to have the same standards. I’ve had a worker say I’m having a problem at home can I move to days and I have to draw the line there because if I do it for one I won’t have anyone working nights* (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Even in the event that a particular team member might be experiencing exceptional need, this manager felt that, in supporting them, he would be forced to support everyone which he felt was largely impractical. Therefore, in rejecting the need principle, this manager invokes equality in avoiding the appearance of being unfair.

Other managers invoked this principle in slightly different ways. For example, one suggested a lottery approach:

*Put the names in a hat – assuming that they’re doing the same job at the same level why should one be given priority over the other – try to be as fair as possible* (SM:Male:Organisation A).

Alternatively, another suggested setting up a rotary: "I would give it to them all together. We’d see if we could rotate it – you do it for 4 weeks, you do it for 4 weeks – or we would say we can’t do it" (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Finally, about a third of managers within organisations A, C and D highlighted equity in feeling that WLB programmes should be used as a reward for behaviour and commitment compared to less than 10% of managers at organisation B. Using this principle, managers felt that flexibilities should only be offered to people they felt were deserving and could be trusted not to abuse them: "I think it should be made for people who are in the position to be trusted to do their job" (MM:Male:Organisation A). Other managers mentioned allocating based on tenure or job performance.
Within organisations B, C & D, there was a good deal of agreement among managers on which principle to use. Organisation A, however, had the most interesting distribution in that an almost equal number of managers used each of allocation principle, with 36% using either the equality or need principle and 27% using equity. This finding is in stark contrast to the 69% of managers at organisation B and 60% of managers at organisations C and D who used the need principle. Once again, these findings support previous claims of cultural influence on WLB in that, to the extent that organisation A relies on a *laissez-faire* approach, the lack of collective ethos is unsurprising.

Managers who relied on the equality or equity principle were often defensive of their viewpoint. As one manager at organisation C pointed out, parents already had guaranteed access to statutory leave, so he felt a bit of pressure to be more obliging with requests from his non-parents:

> Basically you’re saying you give more credence to people who have children ... if you say some groups or some leaves are more important than others, you’re going to get yourself into a bother (SM:Male:Organisation C).

In summary, the principle that managers invoke when deciding who may avail of WLB supports is related to their broader organisational cultures. In other words, when organisations widely communicate their WLB values, then managers are more likely to allocate based on the same principles. In
contrast, when organisations avoid these issues and lack formal policies, managers are left to use other determinants. This was particularly salient in organisation B where there is formal communication regarding how WLB requests should be handled and, consequently, there is a higher degree of concordance over what principle to use.

7.5.2 - The Formal and Informal Continuum in WLB Allocation

In addition to these principles, managerial perspectives also lead to differences in their preferred method of allocating WLB arrangements. As established in previous sections, in addition to formal organisational policies, managers also have a great deal of leeway to informally address their staff's WLB requests. Conversely, managers also have the authority to deny this flexibility and require that staff therefore pursue WLB through formal organisational channels alone. Managers tended to invoke principles of organisational justice in deciding which method to use in a given situation.

Some of the motivations for a manager to grant informal support with one employee while requiring another to rely on more restrictive formal channels can be illuminated through their situational understandings of the request in tandem with their assessment of the petitioner. In this context, managers reported being more likely to support requests when they felt the individual's organisational commitment merited reward (equity) and/or when the request was for something the manager deemed both significant and worthwhile (need).

In determining this, managers were scored on their responses to a number of questions. Again some were direct: "Do you prefer formal and informal methods in terms of allocating WLB programmes?" and some were indirect in relation to how they operated programmes in their respective departments, how they were written up and what degree of formality they preferred. When managers were asked which method of allocating WLB programmes they preferred, there was almost a 50-50 split (Figure 7.21).
There seemed to be greater probability of preferring a certain allocation method based on organisation. For example, organisation A’s managers preferred to operate on an informal basis while managers at organisations C and D preferred a higher degree of formality. Within organisation B, managers were evenly split (Figure 7.22). These percentages related directly to the previous sub-section’s findings on which principle they used to determine allocation.
There was also an interesting correlation between the preferred allocation method and the manager’s sex with female managers preferring to rely on formal methods more often than their male counterparts (Figure 7.23). As women are often disadvantaged within patriarchal workplace structures, it stands to reason that they would prefer to rely on a more transparent procedure. In contrast, as chapter 5 illustrated, these organisations value the traditionally male ability to meet the high sacrifices these organisations demand. As such, men would stand to benefit from supports based on reward (equity) which are typically distributed through informal channels.

Figure 7.23 – Managers Preferred Method of Policy Allocation according to Sex (n=35)

There was also a noteworthy link between allocation methods and perceptions of organisational WLB culture. Managers who felt that their organisation had bad WLB culture were more likely to rely on informal channels whereas those perceiving a good level preferred more formal channels (Figure 7.24). This might be explained by managers offering informal supports insofar as they felt that the organisation lacked sufficient formal programmes.
There was also an interesting link between which justice principle managers invoked. In this context, managers who highlighted the equality principle preferred formal channels in contrast to the informal preferences of those invoking the equity principle. Elsewhere, managers who relied on the need principle were evenly divided (Figure 7.25).

As the equality principle relies on an ‘all or nothing’ approach, it makes sense that this would be best achieved through formal processes. The equity
principle, however, operates as a reward for behaviour; as such managers reward the employee with informal supports and flexibilities through which they can more easily claim credit. As one senior manager said, from his personal experience, once a flexibility was formalised it lacked the inherent reward and freedom needed rendering it useless for him.

The finding that managers preferring the need principle were evenly split highlights an additional point of interest. While managers at organisation B reported that the organisational culture would encourage them to support those seeking WLB for family reasons, they used the formal-informal continuum to supplement their situational preference for equity principle. As one manager illustrated, he used informal supports to meet a need-based request because he “felt that her contribution over the years have been such that it would have been mean to put her on a formal arrangement” (SM:Male:organisation B). Thus, we can see that it is possible for managers to evoke more than one principle in a given situation. Even when culture and policy dictate a certain approach, the formal-informal continuum can be useful in reconciling any inherent injustices they may perceive in either organisational policy or the specific circumstances surrounding the request itself.

This section showed that managers confront WLB decisions in complex ways. After accounting for the influence of governmental statutes and formal organisational policies, they must then decide how to allocate supports based on their own understandings of need and justice. Managers try to look at both the supports and requests in determining the affects they will have on their respective departments. In this study, some felt that their team would understand and support decisions that helped meet their colleagues’ domestic needs while others felt that everyone should have equal access in order to avoid resentment.

Moreover, managers also utilised the formal-informal continuum as a method of both manifesting and supplementing these principles. This was particularly true when managers felt that the organisational ethos dictated applying the need principle in determining who may avail. In these cases, managers employed their own views of organisational justice principles in determining
the logistics of how these supports were to be meet (i.e. informally or formally).

7.6 - Conclusion

**Research Findings:** This chapter demonstrated that managerial perspectives play an integral role in meeting their staff’s WLB needs. While managers at organisation B had less overall power to negotiate WLB requests, the organisation still relied heavily on their situational interpretations surrounding requests. When such requests came from those in care-giving positions, managers reported feeling obliged by their organisation’s WLB ethos to support them. This required managers to examine situational details and then apply their interpretations in determining whether such requests met the necessary criteria.

Managers at organisation A relied on a similar system of first interpreting the reason for the request and then deciding if it merited support. Yet managers at organisation A seemed to have almost absolute power in choosing whether or not to grant such requests and, if so, what form they would take. When negotiating such requests, some managers reported strategically not acceding to the full request in order to demonstrate and reinforce their own power.

This chapter also illustrated the power of both organisational justice theory and feminist theories of gender in explaining how managers wield this power. In terms of conceptualising gender, the majority of managers viewed men in women in terms of differences (66%) rather than similarities (33%), yet there was variance in how this impacted policy and culture. Organisation B recognised that these differences were biological and based on childbirth and that, from a practical point of view, “there are times in women’s lives, where inevitably they must be missing” (SM:Male:Organisation B). In contrast, organisation A related this difference to an innate desire in mothers which was in constant conflict with their workplace participation insofar as they “just want to be home with the kids” (SM:Male:Organisation A). When creating organisational initiatives, such perspectives can significantly impact the type and aim of formal supports.
All female managers in this sample described themselves as holding liberal gender views compared with only 44% of men. Similarly, 39% of men held ‘traditional’ views of gender while 17% fell in-between the two perspectives. In terms of the differences between men, the presence of children appeared to be the strongest factor in determining whether a manager maintained traditional gender views. Managers who were not parents universally espoused liberal views in accordance with their actual gender ideologies whereas managers with children were more likely to be fractured in reporting more equalitarian beliefs than they actually held.

Managers also varied in the degree of preferred formality apropos WLB supports which had a direct linkage with the principle they evoked. Managers who used the equality principle preferred that they be allocated through formal channels compared with the informal preferences of equity-principled managers. Elsewhere, managers who invoked the need principle were evenly split depending on the situation.

**Research Conclusion:** In summary, these findings lend further support to the claim that managers hold a great deal of influence in their departments' WLB. As such, it remains incumbent for researchers to form a greater understanding of how they wield this power. This chapter helped demonstrate the power of feminist theories of gender and organisational justice theory to illuminate how WLB operates within organisations. These frameworks help inform a stronger understanding of how such managerial perspectives influence their department’s WLB levels specifically and their organisation’s WLB culture in general.

In a narrower sense, these perspectives allow for a stronger understanding of how managers decide what supports and flexibilities are warranted in different situations. From the interviews, it was clear that most of these decisions were based on their perception of the petitioner’s organisational commitment as well as their own interpretational validity of their motivation. Thus, if a manager felt that the request was compelling and/or that the employee deserved a reward, then they could use their power to be informally flexible.
In terms of organisational justice theory, this chapter showed how the principle that managers invoke to decide who may avail of WLB supports is related to their organisation's wider culture. When organisations adequately communicate their WLB goals, then managers are more likely to invoke the same principles. In contrast, when organisations lack formal policies, managers are left to rely on their own subjective determinants. This was particularly salient in organisation B where there was an abundance of formal communication compared with the general lack of clarity in organisation A.

Further illustrating the power of these theories was the discovery that these managers invoked more than one principle in a given situation. Even when culture and policy dictated a certain approach, managers held the power to reconcile any perceived injustices they by deciding what method to use in their allocation. This was best observed in organisation B where managers used the formal-informal continuum to additionally apply the equity principle to a situation that the organisational culture would define through need.

In answering the research question, this chapter showed that managerial perspectives of gender and fairness have considerable influence on how managers use their authority in allocating WLB supports as well as the method of distribution. While this chapter established how powerful these theoretical perspectives are individually, the following chapter will examine the interplay between them in determining whether there is sufficient support for combining the theories into a unified gender-justice matrix for future WLB studies.
Chapter 8 - WLB Allocation – ‘Gender-Justice’

8.1 - Introduction

Chapter Background: Thus far, this thesis has demonstrated the role that an organisation’s WLB culture plays in the allocation of policy (chapter 5) as well as the pivotal functions of justice and feminist theories in how a manager interprets WLB policies (Chapter 7). In this manner, it has been seen that, although arrangements may be available within an organisation, they are disseminated and interpreted through the wider WLB culture and the manager’s personal perspectives before ultimately reaching workers. This process holds the potential to dilute the programme’s original aim which becomes redirected to reflect these organisational elements. By looking at policy in this way, it becomes clear that policies specifically and WLB in general cannot be understood without recognising the role and power of these components.

The previous chapter demonstrated how organisational distributional justice and feminist gender theories can help explain these differences. While some may feel that certain policies do a good job of meeting their current or potential needs, others may feel that such policies unfairly advantage or penalise groups for their life decisions or biological sex. Similarly, people may disagree over the best operational form for different programmes in order to avoid creating resentment within their department. Both organisational distributional justice and feminist theories individually offer a strong grounding to interpret and explain these differences.

This chapter seeks to answer the research question, *In what ways are gender and justice linked in determining a manager’s interpretation and allocation of work-life balance supports?* This further illuminates the power of these perspectives by introducing a combined gender-justice framework for WLB analyses by arguing that gendered worldviews so deeply permeate managers’ WLB understandings that it is not possible to disaggregate them from their supposedly subjective perceptions of justice. In other words, this thesis has shown that managers process decisions through an active contextual interpretation in which largely invisible and unconscious gender assumptions overwhelmingly steer what managers believe to be a deliberative process. For
example, in order to allocate based on 'need' or 'equality', a manager must define what constitutes need and therefore worthy of prioritisation, or alternatively decide that no valid circumstances exist through which to justify unequal distribution. Likewise, allocating by equity requires determining which traits are worthy of reward and encouragement.

In all cases, we can see that the identification of needs or desirable workplace traits rely on fairly abstract ideals through which, although there may be vast potential interpretation, there also remains a great deal of pre-defined socio-cultural inertia. A manager may be guided on a conscious level by a sense of justice, but remains largely ignorant to the underlying gendered assumptions through which their interpretations are narrowed. As such, it is unlikely that managers are able to reach decisions on how to allocate fairly without first filtering these subjective criteria through their own reflexive presumptions of gender.

**Chapter Structure and methodology:** In answering the research question, this chapter establishes that managers understand and apply justice principles based on their underlying gendered assumptions. These assumptions may operate on a subconscious level yet serve to filter managers' subjective view of the criteria through which they reach decisions of fairness. To this end, this chapter begins by again contextualising managers in relation to departmental WLB through an examination of how they confront their own role in their staff's WLB as well as their understandings of the different needs between various groups. The goal of these sections is to illustrate how managers undertake these issues from within these subjective perspectives.

The chapter then turns to the overriding goal of this thesis in establishing the methodological imperative for researchers to link the two perspectives in future WLB inquiries. To this end, this chapter demonstrates the connection between how managers' feel WLB supports should be allocated and their views of gender. For example, managers with traditional gender role beliefs are more likely to feel that WLB supports should be offered as a reward through informal processes.
To achieve this, the analysis draws upon the gender and justice variables established in chapter 7 in positing that the degree to which they are linked is proportional to the degree of correlation between managers' views of gender and how they feel WLB supports should be allocated. In other words, it is argued here that if gender and justice are indeed independent variables then there should be no correlation between the two insofar as WLB supports are interpreted and allocated. Alternatively, to the extent that they are intertwined, it may be argued that subjective perspectives of justice and ingrained gender beliefs are mutually dependant and therefore must be approached in tandem. To achieve this the coded variables are used in a number of non-parametric test and again while results and p-values are listed it should be noted that due to the more rigorous nature of non-parametric testing one would not expect to see the same level of statistical significant achieved in parametric examinations.

The subsequent section illustrates the power of the gender-justice model by applying it to how managers implement arrangements that are not in alignment with their personal views. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of the responses from the employee questionnaire in determining with greater specificity how employees understand WLB programmes and whether such programmes are divisive followed by an examination of how employees would prefer to see them allocated.

8.2 - The Role of Managers in the WLB of their Staff

This chapter begins by returning to how managers confront their authority in meeting their staff's WLB needs. It begins by contextualising this power and examining what managers feel their role is in their staff's work-life balance as well as when and in what form they should intervene.

Most managers recognised that they had some role in their staff's WLB levels but how this manifested and its subsequent consequences varied. Managers at organisations C and D had the clearest and most unified understanding of their obligations:

*I think it's my role to be able to assess the needs and to try and have an equilibrium between the needs of the student, the needs of the institution and the needs of the employees (SM:Male:Organisation D).*
These managers also had the most proactive view of their role with one indicating that:

*In the public sector, there is no reward structure and I think it's very important to retaining good staff that their workplaces are stress free, and maybe that they feel that if the need a bit of slack, it will be given to them (SM:Female:Organisation C).*

In this context, public service managers seemed to understand their role in two ways. The first was in terms of employee retention whereby they repeatedly highlighted difficulties in staffing their departments and, to this end, recognised the benefits of supporting a healthy WLB. Secondly, managers saw their role in terms of a legal obligation to their staff's personal well-being:

*If I see people being overworked or under pressure I would say to them, do you want to take Friday off or I might suggest taking a long weekend or things like that, because I think that there's a duty on managers now to intervene if they see that staff are being stressed, under Health and Safety legislation we've got a clear duty of care (SM:Female:Organisation C).*

These managers reported proactively encouraging their staff to take time off or to consider availing of a formal WLB support:

*As I see it I have a duty of care to the staff, and I discharge that duty of care if I become aware of an issue in terms of their life outside their work. If they do need time off or should take time off, I would see myself as being obligated to point them towards the policy, and say there's the policy maybe you should consider taking it off, or have you considered it? (SM:Male:Organisation C).*

The public service managers felt that helping their staff maintain a healthy WLB was part of their duties. To achieve this, they were quick to offer flexibilities including options that may have caused the managers to suffer the loss of some staff hours. Yet in the end, they felt that the long-term benefit was increased retention.

Managers at both organisations A and B saw their role in different terms. Neither institution exhibited the same level of concern for staff retention, nor did they place similar emphasis on maintaining a stress free workplace. Managers at organisation B thought about WLB in terms of workload and therefore tried to be conscious of stress levels:
I would be conscious of unduly burdening people, putting them under stress. The finance area tends to be quite deadline driven, so there can be periods when people are working weekends or late nights ... compromises have to be made and we would try to negotiate compromises, we'll deliver A B and C today but X and Y can wait 'til tomorrow (SM:Male:Organisation B).

When discussing their role in staff WLB levels, most middle managers understood this duty in similar terms:

You're looking for people under stress (SM:Male:Organisation B).

To be aware of their work pressures, and just making sure they are not overly burdened, are not working huge hours (MM:Female:Organisation B).

Yet at least one manager at organisation B felt that his responsibility went beyond this to include an awareness of what individual pressures their staff might be experiencing beyond the workplace:

I suppose your role is to know your staff: ... where your staff are, particularly in family positions, ... when your staff is ill, ... if some of your staff are going through a hard time. That is part of your job, and your role then is to be proactive unquestionably in terms of offering greater balance (SM:Male:Organisation B).

However, this manager was unique in that proactively offering greater balance was not the prevailing organisational norm. As other senior managers illustrated:

I would be slow to intervene (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Truthfully I'd probably wait. I'd be unlikely to initiate something for people. It would be more likely to come from the other way (SM:Male:Organisation B).

Unlike organisations C and D, managers at organisation B, in trying not to over burden people, were not proactive in encouraging them to avail of WLB supports. The importance they placed on this was evident in that, when discussing interventions, almost all managers focused on ways to reduce or redistribute workloads or else offer specialised training to help them to cope better.

Alternatively, managers at organisation A highlighted a third approach in viewing WLB difficulties as having arisen from the personal side and therefore as impeding on productivity. In this regard, support was mostly seen in terms of being there for their team when they needed someone to talk to:
The balance has to be right because a lot of people don’t bear personal problems. I’d say, ‘are you okay?’ and they say, ‘yes I have a few personal problems.’ I’d leave it at that, I say, ‘well look, if you need anything let me know.’ (MM:Male:Organisation A).

If he's under pressure, if he's struggling, if he has problems at home, they usually talk to me about it, and I can take steps to alleviate that pressure. You can have weeks where you have several problems, the wife could be sick etc., and you've got to be flexible with the guys who have to deal with that (MM:Male:Organisation A).

In this manner, the managers' understanding their role in staff WLB was reflected in terms of their wider organisational obligation. In other words, if their staff had an unhealthy balance, then they exhibited negative workplace traits: "If the WLB thing isn't right then absenteeism begins to show its head because people are either drinking or illness beings to show up" (MM:Male:Organisation A). Managers thus felt as though they needed to understand how an imbalance could ultimately impact their bottom line:

One of the things you'd see is staff retention and you've got to look at it as a bigger picture if their WLB is off. I've seen people who go off the rails on the WLB thing and you can see that happening with people as well. There are guys who work all the hours they're given and you know that things going on outside work are in a mess ... one of the reasons this person never goes home is because there's an issue outside of work that isn't being dealt with ... my role then is to be able to anticipate if we leave this continue on as it is it's only going to end in tears (SM:Male:Organisation A).

As such, managers saw their goal in WLB intervention in terms of anticipating productivity problems stemming from personal issues:

I've had guys under pressure, a lot of the guys have young kids, and their mind is somewhere else, so we give them time to get home early in the evening, we give them a bit of leverage that they could balance their life, get home and look after the family (MM:Male:Organisation A).

By offering employees a bit of flexibility or simply listening to personal problems and encouraging them to deal with their life outside of work, managers felt that they could maintain higher productivity levels and reduce absenteeism: "At the end of the day it's keeping them motivated, keeping them happy and on the road" (MM:Male:Organisation A).

In exploring this aspect in greater detail, it was revealed that managers at organisations C and D were motivated by a sense of duty to help staff maintain a healthy balance so they would be happier and therefore more likely
to remain with the organisation. On the other hand, organisation A was motivated by productivity levels and therefore more likely to discuss supporting the 'life-side' of imbalance while managers at organisation B were more likely to focus on the 'work-side' by addressing workloads and stress levels. Yet in each case, the support appeared conflicted with the aim. In other words, organisation A was concerned about productivity so gave time off (which meant no production) in the hopes that it would normalise. Yet while B was more concerned about workplace stress, they nevertheless implemented policies aiming to help workers maximise productivity instead of time to decompress.

In summary, the interviews revealed the importance of contextualising the authority that managers have in confronting WLB needs. This is done, not universally, but dependent on subjective views of: (i) why they should worry about WLB in their staff (e.g. duty of care or increase productivity); (ii) how they should offer the supports (e.g. life-side or work-side); and (iii) the goal and aim of such supports (e.g. allow staff to decompress or establish time management skills).

8.3 - WLB Needs across Different Categories of Employees

This section further establishes how managers apply their subjective understandings in determining WLB needs. This is achieved by exploring whether managers felt that certain groups have different WLB needs over others and how these differences influence their allocation.

While a few managers at organisation A reported that there should not be differences between individuals in terms of WLB needs, particularly from a policy point of view, most managers nevertheless recognised that there were: "I don't think it should be different, I think it should be consistent policy regardless of where you are at throughout the organization so it should be the same" (MM:Female:Organisation A). Organisation A was the only one where managers felt that there should be no differences among employees:

I have to have same standards, I've had a worker say I'm having a problem at home can I move to days, I have to draw the line there because if I do it for one I won't have anyone working nights (MM:Male:Organisation A).
Yet the managers nevertheless discussed situations that they felt justified 'extra' supports without any apparent recognition of the contradiction. As such, we may say that these managers acted on their own perception of equality and fairness rather than seeing how their additional support to certain individuals may have been perceived as inequality by other staff.

8.3.1 - WLB Needs for Managers versus Staff

This sub-section further establishes how managers apply subjective understandings in determining WLB needs. This is achieved by exploring specifically if managers felt that certain groups had different WLB needs. When asked specifically about any perceived difference in WLB needs for managers versus staff, managers largely indicated a difference:

It's to do with the choice that managers have made in terms of commitment to career progression, so I think their need is less because, in a lot of instances, they have organised their lives such that the commitments is to their work, more so than other people do ... it's a question of staying on top of the job, and I suppose it's the control element of management of being in control of the particular job and what's going on in their job, so they tend to commit more time to it (SM:Male:Organisation B).

There was a perception that managers were required to be more committed to the job: "I think managers are expected to put in longer hours. There is a lot of presenteeism, being in early, letting everyone know you're in early, working late" (MM:Male:Organisation B). Yet there were a few individuals at organisation B who understood this to imply that managers actually had less need for formal WLB supports: "I think managers very often have greater flexibility to do it themselves" (SM:Male:Organisation B) or at least that they had no greater need: "No, it's individual preferences. People are people, whether you're managers or staff" (MM:Female:Organisation B).

At Organisation A, there was an awareness that managers collectively suffered worse WLB than staff: "There's a difference- the balance isn't right for a lot of managers" (MM:Male:Organisation A). From this perspective, staff had a better chance of maintaining this balance because they carried fewer responsibilities:

It's easier for a staff member to walk out at 5 pm and not worry about the consequences. I've had a girl that just didn't turn up and had a
phone call at 11 am, but if she was a manager of a department she couldn't have done that ... [a manager] would think longer and harder about being out sick ...and you think if I'm not in and so-and-so's not in, we can't manage, so you do take more on board, because you're responsible for those people (MM:Female:Organisation A).

In other words, managers felt as though they were responsible for making sure the business was running regardless of what this might entail:

Managers have more pressures and it reduces the opportunity for them to have a better WLB, but they get paid extra for doing that, and maybe you lose a bit of your WLB ... When we have to be here 24 hrs, we're here 24hrs (MM:Male:Organisation A).

This was also recognised in organisations C and D:

Yes, the professional staff have a greater sense of responsibility to the clients and would feel stress of not being able to see those people if they're not there, more so than the support staff (SM:Male:Organisation C).

As a result, being a manager at any of these organisations involved carrying greater stress and concern for the organisation's operations. This implied the need to sacrifice WLB in demonstrating commitment and validating their higher compensation.

Responses to a specific question about the take up of parental leave also illustrated how managers regarded themselves as 'different' despite tending to suffer worse WLB levels and serving as role models for staff. While most managers acknowledged that parental leave was now a normal practice: "Oh, there's good take up of parental leave" (SM:Male:Organisation C), when asked whether managers also availed, the response was largely negative and often bordering on incredulous: "Amongst managers? Some ... I can't say that I've seen a lot of managers looking for parental leave, no" (SM:Male:organisation C).

Generally speaking, managers had greater need of WLB supports and appeared to understand that they set the cultural WLB tone for their department. Yet despite a few managers who tried to assert a lack of differences between individuals, the majority of managers understood that WLB facilitation was available uniquely to non-managerial staff. Few appeared to recognise the contradiction involved in this perception.
8.3.2 - WLB needs for Carers versus Non-Carers

When WLB policies are associated specifically with the needs of carers (and by implication for women rather than men) then understandings of gender become intrinsically linked. Accordingly, managers were asked if they felt there were differences between the needs of parents and non-parents or carers and non-carers. These questions attempted to establish if WLB measures continued to be understood in gendered terms. The responses confirmed the expectation that despite terminological transformations to the contrary, these managers viewed WLB as primarily centred around care-giving roles:

"I think the non-carers and the non-parents don't draw down on WLB policies the same way as the parents and the carers do. I suppose it's just a need, their needs may not be the same, so yes, I do see them as seeing themselves as having a different need" (SM: Male: Organisation C).

"Carers or parents obviously would have - I suppose we shouldn't really be making assumptions [yet] we do make assumptions that because somebody's a parent, we tend to recognise that parents have issues and need time out. It's informal [but] it has always happened this way" (SM: Female: Organisation C).

So as mentioned above, managers often reported making assumptions that parents would need additional flexibilities of which other workers would not have equal need. This presumption was equally present in all organisations though, while parents were the most highly recognised group, other carers were also mentioned: “Yes, you have people who have elderly parents, you have families, partners or children” (MM: Female: Organisation A).

These personal responsibilities lead to different work patterns and arrangements of which managers felt they needed to be aware:

"Kids place obligations and duties and restrictions and there's no doubt that, being a parent, you're going to have to work around that. Most people recognise that. I think what to say to most parents is, 'do your best'" (SM: Male: Organisation A).

While there was considerable understanding of these needs in terms of women's domestic role, there was also a recognition of how children could create WLB needs for other groups:

"There would be a different need, especially young fellas who are trying to pay mortgages, there's more and more two partners working families..."
now ... we have a holiday list, we had a fella who had 3 kids and his wife could only get 2 weeks off and there was a single fella looking for those weeks, we'd automatically give it to the wife and kids (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Or different needs based on the age of the children:

My needs wouldn't be as good, my children are grown. If you have major family issues with them, I give more to the life, I have a wife at home so I don't have to worry and then I have my work and I can put more into my work (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Managers also recognised that needs could vary between familial structures, life courses and domestic responsibilities. Yet how these needs were addressed remained divisive. As one childless manager pointed out:

I have parents and non parents in the office ... but I think sometimes managers give too much, you can allow too much for the fact that a person is a parent, there has to be a balance (MM:Female:Organisation A).

This concern of giving 'too much' support to one particular group by prioritising a certain WLB need has previously been blamed for the emergence / reinforcement of a 'family-friendly backlash' from childless employees who feel penalised (Young 1999). Accordingly, a senior manager at organisation A expressed his concern over the risk of treating parents and non-parents differently:

The question would be how would you differentiate. You'd have to be very careful from a discrimination point of view ... [if I said], 'sorry I'm actually going to do this for the parents' ... I think I'd be lynched and you'd say maybe quite rightly. You get into issues then, maybe people trying to have kids and can't, they get this thing in the back of their heads, there's an opportunity to have a nicer life at work and it doesn't happen because I don't have kids (SM:Male:Organisation A).

There was also evidence of this 'family-friendly backlash' from childless managers at organisation B:

Definitely non parents do feel slightly discriminated against and would have up to now because we're not focused on child rearing. WLB is available to everybody but parents would feel a need to avail of WLB arrangements far more than non parents (MM:Female:Organisation B).

In terms of recognising this backlash, female managers without children were the most likely to express feelings of discrimination or that too much support was allotted to those with parental obligations.
Yet despite this backlash, managers continue to recognise WLB arrangements in family centric terms: "Predominantly the people who are on reduced hours or flexible working arrangements, 80% of them are family related" (MM:Female:Organisation B) while failing to see the application of WLB beyond familial contexts: "I don't tend to think about WLB as relating to single people" (SM:Male:Organisation B). So despite the terminological shift to 'work-life balance' over 'family-friendly', managers still conceptualised WLB in terms of domestic obligations:

I think people with children, whether they're managers or team members or leaders or whatever, it's generally either elderly parents or dependents, people in those situations need to be minded more than the likes of myself - I don't think it's a gender thing (MM:Male:Organisation B).

Based on these interviews, it appeared that the managers had not yet transcended family-friendly conceptions of WLB though they did appear to have somewhat expanded the domestic sphere to included the needs of both men and women. This further suggests that personal perspectives of gender may be deeply ingrained in understandings of WLB. The following sub-section examines this issue in greater detail by exploring how managers understand the WLB needs between men and women and whether they perceive there to be gendered divisions of domestic responsibilities.

8.3.3 - WLB Needs of Men versus Women

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the participating managers predominantly view men and women as different in the workplace. Senior managers at organisation A largely saw women's relationship to the labour market as secondary to their domestic roles. Managers at the other organisations, while possibly having slightly less rigid views of women, nevertheless felt that women were the ones primarily making adjustments to their working patterns when domestic responsibilities arose. Yet the question remains over how these differences play out in terms of WLB allocation and supports.

In seeking to answer this question, managers were asked whether WLB was equally appropriate for men and women. Their responses indicated deeply held beliefs about societal gender roles that spilled over into their workplace
and suggested that women needed to be treated differently when it came to WLB:

I think there are different needs ... I think that [women] wear their hearts on their sleeves in relation to their personal circumstances (SM:Male:Organisation A).

We're built differently in that men have an easier life I would think than women in a medical way, in the sense that women have a time of the month (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Managers at all organisations saw differences between men and women in the workplace although managers at organisation A were more likely to view these differences as deeply ingrained whereby mothers have an intrinsically greater need to serve as the primary caregiver:

Yes, I think there are differences ... The mother is the one who needs to get the kids into the crèche or stay-at-home and telework, whatever might be needed” (ExecHR:Male:Organisation A)

Yet men were generally seen as exempt from these pressures:

Male workers do not say, 'I have to go home to collect the kids from school' and things like that. Where you talk to a woman and she will talk about her children and picking them up from school and they generally have more pressure. They have to leave work at a certain time and be home at a certain time - just more pressure (MM:Female:Organisation A).

There was also a significant degree of recognition that these differences were reflected in WLB policies:

I think the legislation on work life balance is very much on the side of women. I don't mean that in a negative or derogatory way, because of the family situation and maternity leave. I do think that males and females are different (MM: Female:Organisation A).

Partly related to the view that additional supports are already present in the statutory system, managers at organisation A, in contrast to views expressed in the others, felt that these differences should not translate into differentiation of organisational supports or policies:

You will find women will be more aware of parenthood than men, it's human nature, women will be more aware of parenthood, planning holidays and time off but I don't think there's a different need for men and women, I think it's the same need across the board (MM:Male:Organisation A).

Outside the maternity, [No], it should be the same for both men and women (SM:Male:Organisation A).
In other words, although managers at organisation A saw men and women as having different needs in the workplace, the general consensus was that these differences should be treated the same in terms of policy and supports. This perspective was strikingly different than that held by the HR executive at organisation B. While organisation B also understood men and women as having different needs, this appeared to have translated into a different outcome:

*Biologically [women] are different. So, women have children, without doubt. There are times ... where inevitably they must be missing. So ... the organisation should try and make it as easy as possible for women to continue to work, if that's what they want to do, in as seamless a way as possible and in whatever time they feel is appropriate ... we have things here like breast-feeding room, and you know, if a woman wants to work right up to the time of her [baby's] birth and wants to get back to work quickly, that can be done. We facilitate more time, if that's needed, in the crèche (ExecHR:Male:Organisation B).*

So the views held by managers at organisation B have translated into additional supports in the workplace insofar as managers felt that, "without doubt, the woman takes the load of the family responsibilities, that's the way that it is, for right or wrong" (SM:Male:Organisation B). Equally, managers felt that this responsibility did not affect men in the same way:

*In my experience, the men that are working with me, there's not one of them on reduced hours ... it might be unpolitical to say this but I can see when deadlines hit my area, when long hours have to be done the men are able to do them (MM:Female:Organisation B).*

Thus the organisation has responded to this perception and created WLB policies aimed uniquely at addressing women's need to combine their domestic and work responsibilities. Insofar as these policies are aimed at women, they are unsurprisingly also primarily availed of by women: "Yes, there's always going to be a gender issue - women avail more of WLB more than men" (MM:Female:Organisation B). Consequently, in a self-reinforcing cycle, the current WLB practises at organisation B are created in family centric terms, understood in gendered terms and accessible primarily to women in caregiving roles.

In summary, within all the participating organisations, managers perceived different groups as having different WLB needs. Regarding their own WLB, they uniformly felt that WLB supports were available uniquely to staff. Yet

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even with regards to staff, support availability was narrowed by managers’ use of a family-friendly rubric. This gives further support to this thesis’ contention that WLB decisions are made through an active interpretation of context in which largely invisible and unconscious gender assumptions steer what managers believe to be a conscious and deliberative process.

8.4 - The Role of Personal Beliefs in Allocating

The previous section illustrated how, rather than being a unified need for all workers, managers view WLB as a complex and contextually-bound concept. From the managers’ point of view, one’s need for WLB is related to their family status and structure, age and gender as well as their location and level within the organisation. From these interviews, it was clear that managers evaluated WLB requests (as well as their own awareness of departmental needs) through a complex matrix of perspectives and beliefs. The previous chapter highlighted the means through which organisational distributional justice and feminist literature on gender hold a degree of explanatory power regarding these managers’ respective worldviews.

In terms of their power in interpreting and meeting the WLB needs of their staff, the previous chapter also highlighted some specific areas in which managerial perspectives played an integral role in their decision-making process. With regard to managers at organisation A, we saw how the informal WLB framework allows virtually unrestricted freedom in choosing whether to accommodate requests as well as in determining their ultimate form. These decisions were based on their perception of employee commitment as well as filtered through their own interpretation of the request’s motivational validity. Managers at organisation B had less overall power to discriminate between WLB requests when they came from those in care-giving positions, though they still relied heavily on their situational interpretation in determining whether the employee met the criteria.

In the wake of statutory and cultural influences, distributional justice and feminist perspectives of gender therefore allow for a greater understanding of how managers decide what supports may be warranted and in what form they should come. This thesis has thus far demonstrated that managers have
considerable influence in allocating WLB arrangements and use these personal perspectives of needs, combined with their understanding of the organisation's WLB culture, in deciding how individual's requests should be addressed. This section provides further support for the final element of the research questions by analysing the effects of personal perspectives on managerial interpretation and allocation of WLB programmes.

The first element examined was the effect that understandings of gendered working patterns had on how managers allocated WLB programmes. These measures were established by asking if managers saw any differences between men and women in the workplace. This was compared to previous responses about their preferred method of allocating programmes including how they feel programmes should be distributed (e.g. 'need', 'equity' or 'equality') as well as whether they prefer to use formal or informal methods.

Figure 8.1 - Views of Gendered Work Patterns according to How to Distribute WLB Supports (n=35)

Table 8.1 T-test Results between Gendered Working Patterns and Distributed WLB Supports

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The majority of managers felt that the need principle was the most useful method of determining who could avail of WLB programmes (Figure 8.1). Yet those who reported not seeing any difference between how men and women work were considerably more likely to invoke this principle than those who saw gendered differences in working patterns. Only 11% of managers who saw men and women as the same preferred either the ‘equality’ or ‘equity’ principle compared with 30% and 25% respectively of managers who saw a gendered distinction. Accounting for this disparity, managers who saw a difference associated this with women’s greater share of domestic responsibilities as a workplace ‘spill-over’ that resulted in a greater need for WLB supports.

Accordingly, these managers felt that, by allocating WLB supports in terms of need, they were inherently fostering workplace inequality. As a senior manager at organisation A pointed out, despite the recognisable differences, there was a second aspect of WLB issues in finding ways to avoid being seen as discriminatory:

*You get into issues then, maybe people trying to have kids and can’t, they get this thing in the back of their heads, there's an opportunity to have a nicer life at work and it doesn't happen because I don't have kids (SM:Male: Organisation A).*

Moreover, managers who felt that there was a difference were more likely to invoke a principle they felt would alleviate this intrinsic ‘weakness’ in the need principle. By allocating desirable WLB supports as either a reward for workplace performance (equity) or on a transparent equality basis (first-come / all-or-nothing) they hoped to avoid backlash. Yet managers who felt that men and women were the same would see women having no greater ‘need’ of WLB supports resulting in the principle being apply equally.

Managers’ views on gendered working habits were also examined by whether they preferred formal or informal channels in WLB allocation. In this regard, there appeared to be no significant difference between the organisations although slightly more managers who viewed men and women as the same preferred to use informal channels (Table 8.2). Nevertheless, with such a small sample, this difference would need to be validated by further research.
Manager’s personal views of gender roles were also examined in this same method and with similar results. Those who held traditional gender roles beliefs were less likely to invoke the ‘need’ principle when deciding how to allocate WLB initiatives. While 67% of managers who espoused ‘equalitarian’ gender roles use need as a basis for allocation, only 45% of ‘traditional’ managers did (Figure 8.2). This finding follows a similar logic whereby traditional gender roles were based on a division of labour in which women were believed to prioritise family while men prioritised paid work outside the home. As a result, managers who held traditional views were themselves least likely to avail of WLB supports allocated by need in that they were more likely to have the support of a stay-at-home partner while being the most likely to have their workloads adversely effected by those on reduced hours. As such, if they allocated based on the ‘need’ principle, they would be acutely aware of how such an allocation process would effectively exclude groups, including themselves, from being able to avail while at the same time increasing departmental pressure for the rest of their staff.
Additionally, those who held traditional views of gender tended to see women's position in the workplace as secondary to their domestic roles. Accordingly, WLB programmes designed around minimising work-family conflict appeared to create an unfair work distribution for those dealing with her departmental absence. As a result, these managers viewed policies not as a way to minimise gender equality in the workplace but as a vehicle for creating it in the form of men having to do an unequal distribution of the workload. Conversely, managers who held 'equalitarian' views of gender saw these workplace supports not as 'extra' benefits but as necessary to support the individuals and offer families the flexibilities they needed. This finding offers further support for results in prior research (Young 1999; Hegtvedt et al. 2002).

Managers' views on gender roles were also examined by preferred channel in allocating WLB programmes (Figure 8.3). Interestingly, managers who espoused more traditional views of gender preferred to allocate programmes on an informal basis (73%) compared to managers holding more liberal views of gender who preferred formal methods (58%).
In terms of allocating by formal or informal channels, previous chapters demonstrated two relevant findings: first, managers used informal channels to reward behaviour and loyalty; and second, formal channels were considered more transparent and only used when there was not a worry about setting precedence. For the 54% of ‘traditional’ managers who employed the equality or equity principle to distribute WLB programmes, informal channels were the most logical method. On the other hand, managers who held more equalitarian beliefs were more likely to feel that a formal delivery method offered results that were more fair.

Managers who held equalitarian beliefs would be aware that they represented a minority in their organisations. They did not conform to the patriarchal status-quo of their peer managers who benefited from stay-at-home partners. Consequently, in an organisational culture where job performance and loyalty are measured by long-hours and availability, managers who did not enjoy the benefits of a ‘housewife’ suffered. Based on the added pressure of additional domestic responsibilities, they were consequently the least likely to benefit through the reward-based ‘equity’ principle while conversely being the most
likely to qualify on the basis of 'need'. Managers who viewed gender roles in 'equalitarian' terms also felt that WLB programmes were necessary in helping individuals balance their personal and workplace responsibilities. As a result, these managers would be more likely to welcome formal structures without necessarily worrying about 'opening the floodgates'.

In conclusion, the way that managers understand gender and gendered working patterns appears to have influenced how they felt WLB supports should be allocated. In other words, these managers process decisions through an active interpretation of context in which largely invisible and unconscious gender assumptions narrow their available options in determining how to allocate WLB supports. This offers further support for the assertion that a combined gender-justice framework is critical for future WLB analyses. The following section examines the impact this finding has on the field's understanding of WLB as well as how managers reconciled divergences between their personal beliefs and perceptions of a programme's goal.

8.5 - How Managers Reconcile Differences

The previous section illustrated that, by neglecting to evaluate managerial decisions against a gender-justice matrix, WLB research has failed to explain the full complexity operative in organisational initiatives. We have seen how there is a relationship between how managers understand gender and gendered working patterns and the way they feel WLB supports should be allocated. As such, this thesis has argued that WLB research can be enhanced through this gender-justice model by not simply examining macro-level policies, but also the mode by which the individual managers charged with allocation understand them.

The managers in this study who saw men and women in terms of difference in the workplace felt that certain policies unfairly advantaged or penalised groups for their biological sex. Accordingly, such managers chose to allocate these programmes by selecting an organisational justice theory principle that they felt would mitigate this injustice. Similarly managers who held 'traditional' views of gender felt that WLB programmes unfairly advantaged or penalised groups for their life decisions while managers who held more liberal views of
gender saw the unequal distribution as necessary to support families in balancing their workplace and domestic pressures. Accordingly, these supports were not seen as 'extra' or 'benefits', but rather vital to maintaining employment levels.

While these programmes may be created to achieve a certain aim, such intent may be less relevant than the mode through which managers interpret them. As argued in this thesis, although arrangements may be available within an organisation, before being availed of, they are filtered through the WLB culture and interpreted by the managers' gender and justice lenses. In the process, the programmes' original aims can become diluted and redirected to reflect these elements.

Looking at policy in this way, we can see that programmes cannot be fully understood through a macro-level examination as this fails to account for the role and power of these components in the policy's actualisation. In particular, when policies are created with an agenda that conflicts with a manager's personal beliefs, previous sections have illustrated how they use their power and discretion to navigate the system in reconciliation. In the event that managers have absolute discretion to allocate programmes, they similarly rely on their views of gender to decide which organisational justice principle would be the most fair. Accordingly 'traditionally' gendered managers will more likely make WLB supports available as a reward or on a first-come basis regardless of the initiative's authorial intent.

Alternatively, when managers feel restricted in deciding who should gain access, such as organisation B where managers felt compelled to allocate on the basis of care-giving, they can reconcile personal conflicts through the formal-informal continuum. In this manner, even where these managers feel obliged to allow access to WLB supports, they may nevertheless recover a degree of influence by deciding whether to meet these supports either informally or through more arduous and diminutive formal channels.

Finally, when managers feel legally obligated to offer supports, such as statutory leaves, they still enjoy a degree of influence in restricting how these leaves can be taken (e.g. in one lump sum or divided out). In this manner,
they retain the power to manifest their views of justice and gender despite any legal or organisational obligations. When managers feel that this time off is necessary to allow the employee to reduce their work-family conflict (equalitarian), they are more likely to offer the leave in whatever form the individual requests. Yet for those who believe this leave is a benefit offered exclusively to parents and therefore likely to create resentment (traditional), they can reconcile this conflict by not meeting the employee’s full request. In this manner, WLB supports are filtered through a manager’s largely unconscious gender preconceptions and then evaluated against their personal sense of fairness before actually reaching the employee.

Accordingly, to fully grasp how WLB supports operate within an organisation, they must be examined from within a combination of both feminist and organisational justice lenses. Therefore, WLB researchers must expand their understanding of these components in order to more fully understand organisational WLB. This is particularly evident insofar as the continued neglect of these twin areas of inquiry have resulted in an inadequate understanding of the relationship between managerial perceptions and the implementation of WLB supports. The following section briefly examines the findings of the questionnaires distributed to employees at organisations A and B.

8.6 - How Staff Would Like WLB Programmes to be Allocated

Thus far, this research has primarily focused on managerial influence on organisational WLB based on the in-depth interviews. However, as part of the 360° approach, a brief questionnaire was also designed and distributed to middle managers’ staff in order to explore individual WLB levels. In particular, this survey was set against the background of their views of workplace policies, organisational culture and management styles.

While the survey’s results are briefly highlighted in this section, it should be noted that the data set has inherent limitations. This is particularly salient insofar as the questionnaire was designed to serve as a corroborating source rather than a data set from which to draw independent conclusions. In other words, as a tool for methodological validation aimed at providing support for
(or contradiction of) the qualitative findings, it was hoped that that survey results would help further illuminate new avenues for future research projects based on this gender-justice matrix.

However, to clarify the specifics of this caveat, it should be noted that the power and significance of this data was further compromised through managerial agency in determining staff participation. Although all of them had originally accepted, many of them, particularly in organisation A, had later changed their minds. In subsequently discussing this phenomenon with a senior manager at organisation A, it was disclosed that many of the managers declined upon seeing the questionnaire (attached in Appendix C) out of fear that it would generate staff awareness of WLB programmes not currently offered and therefore ‘open the flood-gates’ of staff seeking to avail.

Of course, this phenomenon in itself offers further support to the central conclusions of this thesis that managers actualise their gender and justice perspectives, albeit subconsciously, through WLB management. If managers, like those at organisation B, understand WLB programmes as the organisation’s attempt to meet a perceived necessity, then there should be no fear of ‘opening the flood gates’. On the other hand, managers who understand these programmes as an additional or optional benefit may experience concern that highlighting these programmes through the questionnaire would risk staff discontent. This resulted in only 4 out of 12 of the middle managers at organisation A allowing their staff to participate (a total of 40 responses). In contrast, all middle managers at organisation B allowed their staff to be surveyed though only 8 out of the 11 resulted in responses (for a total of 42).

Despite the difficulties and limitations associated with the survey, there were nevertheless some interesting findings. As previous research has shown, managers set tone for their department’s WLB and, as such, the level of organisational support may be irrelevant if employees do not see their managers leading by example. To this end, participants were asked if their managers served as role models in maintaining good personal WLB. Surprisingly, although from the interviews it appears that managers had the
worst WLB, the majority of staff respondents described their managers as good WLB examples (Figure 8.4).

Of course, this is consistent with the fact that managers who prioritise WLB would have been more likely to allow their staff to participate. As such, it must be assumed that these results are from managers who may be considered the best case scenarios for their organisations. Again, despite this limitation, there were some interesting differences between those who viewed their managers as good WLB role models. As would be expected, those at organisation B reported a much higher perception of their managers being good role models (81%) than those from organisation A (60%).

Figure 8.4 - Percentage of Staff Reporting that their Manager was a Good WLB Example (n=82)

As seen in Figure 8.4, responses were also compared in terms of sex and familial structure. While there was little difference in terms of having children, there was a significant disparity between men and women. Over 80% of women felt that their managers were good WLB role models compared to only 62% of men. As these organisations operate within an industry traditionally considered masculine, this difference may be explained in that female staff were more likely to be concentrated in a particular organisational section.

Employees were also asked how they would prefer certain WLB arrangements to be allocated in the absence of universal availability. Their preferred method
of allocation was then compared against a number of demographic elements (Figure 8.5). In comparing responses between staff at organisations A and B a number of notable distinctions emerged. With regards to career breaks, about 35% of staff at both organisations felt that it should be allocated by 'need' though the remaining 65% varied greatly between the two organisations with 90% of those at organisation B preferring equal distribution while only 10% felt that it should be allocated as a reward. Within organisation A, there was a more even division among the remaining group with only 40% preferring equal allocation. In fact, at organisation A, there was a near even split between those who believed that career breaks should be allocated as a reward as those espousing a need-based allocation.

As seen in Figure 8.5, flexi-time and home-working were also compared in this same fashion. The difference between the organisations suggests that staff maintain a complicated understanding about how and when WLB programmes of this nature should be allocated with no discernable pattern between organisations. Rather, staff evaluated each arrangement individually and suggested different methods of allocation for each. For example, within organisation B, 63% of respondents felt that home-working was best allocated by need and similarly 56% suggested the same criteria for flexi-time. However, only 33% felt that career breaks should be allocated on this basis and nobody in either organisation suggested that home-working should be offered as a reward although 38% of organisation A's respondents felt that career breaks should be used in this way.
Once again, these findings suggest that respondents maintain a complicated view of WLB policies and the means through which they should be allocated. As previous research has suggested, when staff feel that policies are allocated in a manner that differs from their own preference they are more likely to look upon these programmes with resentment and display undesirable workplace traits like absenteeism, bullying or theft (Young 1999).

Employees' desired allocation method was also examined in terms of familial structure and whether they had children. Those that had children were, perhaps unsurprisingly, more likely to suggest that home-working and flexitime be allocated by need while about 70% of staff without children preferred that different set of criteria be used (Figure 8.6). This offers further evidence that, by restricting WLB programmes to family-friendly initiatives aimed exclusively at those who 'need' them for care-giving terms, organisations further risk alienating staff and increasing workplace resentment and inequality.
The final element examined here was WLB programme allocation by sex. The most striking finding was that the majority of men invoked the 'need' principle which was the least desirable principle for women. This is interesting in that, although a strong majority of men felt that home-working, compressed work weeks and flexitime should all be allocated based on need (73%, 82%, and 82% respectably), only 36% felt this method would suit the distribution of career breaks. In this latter area, 50% of male respondents felt that they should be made available to everyone equally (Figure 8.7). This suggests that men might understand home-working, compressed work weeks and flexitime as arrangements specifically aimed at women while career breaks were seen as more universally desirable and therefore should offered either equally or as a reward.
On the other hand, women saw these supports in a much broader spectrum though a slim majority agreed that they should be allocated based on the equality principle. However, the remaining female respondents often vacillated between need and equity perspectives suggesting that there was considerably less agreement between women than between men.

The differences between responses suggest that staff differed in how they understood WLB programmes as well as how and when they felt they should be allocated. Within individual organisations, there was no discernable pattern with respondents evaluating arrangements individually. This further suggests that these employees maintain a diverse understanding of WLB and, as previous research has suggested, when staff feel that policies are allocated in a manner different from their own preference, they are more likely to look upon these programmes with resentment (Young 1999). As such, efforts to minimise unintended consequences of WLB must contend with complex and varied viewpoints.

Respondents with children were more likely to suggest allocating programmes in ways that gave them first priority while an overwhelming majority of staff without children felt that 'need' should not be used. In this regard, most favoured allocating programmes through methods that would allow all workers...
a chance to avail, regardless of familial status. This offers further evidence that, by restricting WLB programmes to family-friendly initiatives aimed exclusively at those who 'need' them for care-giving, organisations run further risks of alienating staff and increasing workplace resentment and inequality. Furthermore, these results illustrate the importance for organisations to understand the complexities involved in WLB initiatives to the extent that these programmes can have unintended consequences.

8.7 - Conclusion

Research Findings: In answering the research question, this chapter established that participating managers felt some degree of obligation to maintain awareness of their staff's WLB levels though they may take strikingly different approaches. Managers at organisations C and D felt that they were legally compelled to insure their staff maintained a healthy balance. Managers at organisation B, on the other hand, did not appear to hold this same sense of obligation but nevertheless reported trying to remain aware of stress levels and ensure a fair work distribution. Managers at organisation A took a third view in being aware of their team members' personal lives and encouraging them to take care of personal matters so that outside problems did not intrude on productivity.

Managers also understood the need for WLB differently across various categories by differentiating between an individual's needs based on their post and location within the organisation as well as their age, familial structure, position and department. Managers did not appear to understand WLB supports as something that should be available for everyone, but rather as something aimed mostly at female staff to aid in care-giving roles.

In terms of applying organisational distributional justice and feminist literature on gender, this thesis found that managers who saw men and women in terms of difference generally chose to allocate programmes through the principle they felt most appropriate in mitigating the injustice these differences may cause. Similarly managers who held 'traditional' views of gender felt that WLB programmes unfairly advantaged or penalised groups for their life decisions while managers who held more liberal views of gender saw the unequal
distribution as a necessary consequence of helping families balance their workplace and domestic pressures.

In organisation B, where managers felt compelled by formal policy to allocate on the basis of care-giving needs in contrast to their personal beliefs, they often reconciled this conflict under the cover of the formal-informal continuum. Similarly, when managers at organisation A felt compelled to offer supports, such as statutory leave, they used their power to restrict how these leaves could be taken which allowed them to manifest their views of justice and gender despite their obligations.

While this chapter showed how managers use a complicated matrix through which to evaluate and deliver WLB supports, the employee questionnaires, though not statistically rigorous, nevertheless suggested that this was not unique to managers. In fact, although they exhibited no discernable pattern on how they felt WLB programmes should be allocated, respondents instead evaluated individual arrangements and suggested a diversity of methods for each. These preferences were similarly based on personal circumstances which had led them to feel they would be more or less likely to qualify for a desired support. This was perhaps most clear with regards to career breaks where employee responses suggested a high degree of desirability which consequently led them to select an allocation method of which they would be most likely to avail.

**Research Conclusion:** In conclusion, managers retain considerable influence on their staff's WLB levels and use their views of gender and fairness in deciding how and when to reconcile these needs. By neglecting to account for these combined factors, WLB research has thus far largely failed to illuminate the full complexity operative in organisational WLB. This chapter showed there was a direct and strong relationship between how managers understood gender and gendered working patterns and their opinions on how WLB supports should be allocated.

These views manifested in how managers interpreted WLB needs across multiple categories. For the most part, managers did not understand WLB supports as available for everyone, but rather as being aimed at female staff
in care-giving roles. Supports and perspectives have therefore not yet caught up with the terminological departure from 'family-friendly' at any of the organisations. Rather, managers appeared to continue differentiating needs based on an individual's post and location within the organisation as well as their age, familial structure and position. From within this framework, it became clear that managers evaluated requests, as well as their own awareness of WLB needs in their departments, from within a more complex and somewhat subconscious matrix than previous research has indicated.

In this manner, we have seen how combining organisational distributional justice and feminist literature on gender can serve as a powerful model though which to more fully examine this complexity. Moreover, while many organisations create WLB supports, they rely on their managers to distribute and facilitate these programmes throughout their respective departments. In this manner, even where programmes have been created with a certain aim or through a particular perspective of gender, it is ultimately the mode through which managers interpret them that determines how they are actualised. As such, the central point of this thesis is that authorial intent can become both diluted and redirected once these policies are disseminated through the organisational WLB culture and managerial perspectives.

Finally, given the complicated system through which employees may evaluate WLB supports and their modes of dissemination suggests that unintended consequences can result in alienation, resentment and inequality. This offers further evidence that, by restricting WLB programmes to family-friendly initiatives aimed exclusively at those who 'need' them for care-giving, organisations must contend with a high degree of complexity with regards to their staff's WLB.

In conclusion, this chapter illustrated that existing macro-level research on WLB remains incomplete and future explorations must therefore scrutinise WLB through a theoretical basis that is more inclusive of managerial perceptions of gender when examining justice. In particular, WLB research must encompass how individual managers charged with allocation personally interpret these programmes and how they use their discretion to reconcile perceived inequalities. In a broader sense, it must be understood that
research failing to examine WLB from within this ‘gender-justice’ framework is largely incapable of sufficiently accounting for the operative complexities regarding organisational and managerial power over WLB.
Chapter 9 - Discussion and Conclusions

Although the role of managers in WLB has drawn increasing attention from scholars and practitioners, there remains a dearth of critical inquiry into the complexities underlying their decision-making processes. Given the considerable influence over their staff’s ability to balance work and personal lives, this remains a critical gap in the field. In particular, by placing undue emphasis on macro-level policies, most prior studies are incomplete insofar as they ignore the fact that authorial intent can become both diluted and redirected after being disseminated through the organisational culture and managerial perspectives. As such, this thesis explored how managers used their own perspectives of gender and fairness in facilitating work-life balance allocation.

To this end, this study expands the field’s understanding by combining the theoretical frameworks of gender and organisational social justice as a means of gaining phenomenological insight. The data provides a clearer understanding of how managers understand WLB in their personal lives, interpret their staff’s needs and understand their role in helping employees achieve this balance. The findings suggest that perspectives of gender and organisational justice are integral to understanding organisational WLB culture as well as how these policies are both created and actualised.

The emergent gender-justice model expands on the Hegtvedt et al.’s (2002) WLB justice model by assessing the relative effect of these theories to explain WLB implementation. This chapter examines this thesis’ major findings insofar as they relate to three main topics: how organisations conceptualise WLB through their respective cultures; how the managers individually understand WLB; and how personal perspectives of gender and justice can be used to offer further illuminate organisational WLB studies.

9.1 - Organisational Concepts of Work-life Balance

With regards to work-life balance implementation, the results presented in this thesis suggest that strong links exist between organisational culture and managerial interpretation. Although the four participating organisations
appeared to have distinct WLB cultures, there was nevertheless strong managerial agreement over the type of culture that was operative in their respective organisations. Despite the fact that researchers are beginning to recognise the role of organisational culture in either encouraging or discouraging WLB programmes, very few studies have yet explored these dimensions directly (McDonald et al. 2007).

To date, the strongest theoretical framework for evaluating an organisation's WLB culture is provided by Thompson et al. (1999) and expanded by McDonald et al. (McDonald et al. 2007) and this thesis borrowed heavily from their five-tiered cultural typology. This approach proved a useful examination tool in both bringing WLB cultural elements to the forefront as well as facilitating a framework through which to examine how such cultures are both influential on as well as influenced by the management team. Based on this framework, this thesis was able to further the field's understanding of how these elements form a significant part of the framework within which managers base the decision-making process.

With regards to this relationship, the results presented in this exploration add further support to previous studies suggesting that organisational WLB culture can be fundamental in understanding why and how WLB supports may be under-utilised (Starrels 1992; Sherer and Coakley 1999; Thompson et al. 1999; Campbell 2001; McDonald et al. 2007). In the specific context of the research participants, it was apparent that managers formed their understanding of this culture by taking cues from senior management. The analysis also revealed a positive correlation between managerial perceptions of organisational culture and the extent to which they encouraged WLB among their staff. These findings underscore the importance of cultural perspectives in WLB research to the extent that managers who perceive a lack of organisational support were less likely to report a healthy personal WLB or encourage one in their staff.

Similarly, this study suggests that the simple availability of WLB supports may be insufficient insofar as employees interpret there to be negative cultural ramifications. In other words, if employees believe that a given support is linked with career costs, the policy is likely to suffer from under-utilisation.
Consequently, staff awareness of the organisation’s cultural influences and managerial interpretations of WLB supports play a critical role in their take-up decisions.

9.2 - Personal Understandings of Work-life Balance

There was significant variance in the modes through which participating managers conceptualised WLB ranging from highly personal (such as ‘happiness’) to strictly pragmatic definitions (‘work does not compete with personal time’). Yet regardless of how they defined it, none of the managers in this study describe having a healthy personal work-life balance; rather, all reported that long hours and high stress levels were endemic to their professions. These findings confirm the results of previous studies on managerial WLB levels in Ireland (DTI 2004; O’Connell et al. 2004; Drew and Murtagh 2005).

Similarly, Seron and Ferris (1995) likewise found that managers often associated long hours with organisational status. This surfaced in this study as well insofar as managers frequently avoided WLB programme take-up out of fear that to do so would hamper their careers by being perceived as lacking organisational commitment (also seen in Thesing 1998; Drew and Murtagh 2005). Yet despite these negative assessments of personal WLB, participating managers also state that their job satisfaction largely mitigated their WLB sacrifices.

However, the push to sacrifice WLB was distributed unevenly by gender with female managers in particular making the most sacrifices in order to reach management. Yet despite the fact that WLB continues to be viewed as a female issue, women with managerial ambitions were actually the least likely to avail of WLB supports and the most likely to forgo families and personal relationships at a level not required of their male counterparts. Yet the rewards for such sacrifices may be uneven in that none of the women in this study had ascended beyond middle management. This trend has been widely documented in previous studies suggesting that women in management face promotional limitations within corporate hierarchies before encountering a ‘glass ceiling’ that prevents or reduces the likelihood of reaching top
management or executive status (Powell 1993; Dreher 2003; Drew and Murtagh 2005).

Even in the conceptual sense, this study supports previous findings that managerial careers are expressed in highly gendered terms whereby the hierarchal model of continuous service and regular promotions is both designed and developed to suit the 'organisation man' (Whyte 1956; Kimmel 1993; Wajcman 1999). This suggests that management careers remain built around the 'male-breadwinner' assumption insofar as they both demand and reward the time commitment and personal sacrifices only made possible by the support of a domestic partner. This structure penalises women for childbirth and their role as primary caregivers to children (similar to findings in Sinclair 1998; Drew 2008) and is consistent with findings that participating women were more frequently childless and single than their male counterparts (also found in Bacik et al. 2003; O'Connell et al. 2004; Drew and Murtagh 2005).

Of course, it would be reductive to draw conclusions based solely on this data; indeed there are many potential reasons that women in this study had not reached upper management. Yet caveats aside, even though it may be argued that these women were emulating their male colleagues' working patterns, it appeared that cultural norms continue to restrict their levels within the organisation. These patriarchal systems appeared to be stronger within the private organisation A where all but one male managers had a stay-at-home partner, while, unsurprisingly, the two female managers did not. Although these findings were not replicated to the same extreme in the remaining organisations, similar trends nevertheless emerged.

After women, senior managers were the most likely to express unhappiness with their personal WLB levels with those at organisations A, C and D expressing the highest dissatisfaction with their exercise and eating habits. In a practical sense, this may be related to their increased workplace responsibilities and the pressures associated with senior level positions. Yet curiously, it emerged that the senior managers felt this was actually based to a greater degree not on the workload, but rather to the personal perspective
they had gained with age which had lead to an increased desire to connect (or reconnect) with their families.

Yet despite their increased desire for greater personal WLB, the majority of managers in all organisations continued to view such policies as firmly linked to parenting and family life. Accordingly, managers felt that in their own (almost exclusively male) lives, WLB concerns were not directly applicable. Rather, WLB was seen as a set of policies through which to facilitate women who had to pick up their children from the crèche or stay home when they were ill. The majority of managers felt that for non-parents / carers, money (e.g. overtime or professional advancement) was more important than time away from the office.

In answering the questions posed by this thesis, these findings play a vital role in clarifying how these managers experience strain between their personal lives and work. Likewise, this study discerned the same negative patterns of prior explorations calling for more work-life balance programmes. Yet the contention of this thesis is that, based on the issues highlighted by the gender-justice approach, it is not that more WLB supports are needed, but rather that there is a need for better ones that are inclusive of cultural and managerial considerations.

This study further illustrated how complex WLB issues can be for managers – a finding that has been lost or ignored in prior research which has focused only on quantifying their personal uptake or their attitudinal relationship with cost-benefit continuums (O'Connell et al. 2004; Drew and Murtagh 2005). As such, the merit of such findings remains significantly limited by their respective methodological deficiencies. Yet while the case study approach in this thesis allows for a more extensive phenomenological understanding, it must also be noted that case studies can make no claims of universality. Consequently, rather than seeking to replace existing methodological paradigms, this thesis aims to posit a complementary theoretical framework rather than an inclusive approach.
9.3 - In support of a 'Gender-Justice Model' for WLB Research

While both the gender and justice perspectives examined in this thesis appear to independently serve as powerful descriptors of behaviour, in tandem they offer phenomenological insight that might otherwise be absent or unexplainable. This study established that managers' personal perspectives played an integral role in their interpretation and implementation of WLB supports. Even in cases where the organisation's WLB culture sought to minimise this discretion through formal policy, they remained dependent upon managers to interpret the situational details surrounding requests (figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1 - Filtration of WLB Supports within Organisations

This insight has been absent from conventional WLB research - a point this thesis contends requires the field to restructure its theoretical framework toward a more complex model like the one that emerged from this research. As seen in Figure 9.2, managers are required to examine a WLB request against their personal understanding in determining whether the necessary criteria had been met:
Thus, when confronted with WLB decisions, managers must balance their notions of fairness, understanding of the organisation's WLB culture and personal assessment of the petitioner's merit. Underlying this evaluation, they further rely on their often subconscious views of gender to decide whether the employee is in sufficient need. When evaluating the process of WLB supports, it appears that such issues are mutually-interactive. In other words, rather than existing in a vacuum, these subjective beliefs form an integrated matrix which act in tandem to guide a manager's understanding of organisational WLB practises.

This thesis contends that while a manager may be guided on a conscious level by a sense of justice, they are unlikely to reach decisions on how to allocate fairly without first filtering these subjective criteria through their own reflexive presumptions. This model serves to expand that offered by Hegtvedt et al. (2002) whose theoretical conceptualisation was a departure from the conventional models yet remained methodologically unable to illuminate the various convolutions and contradictions of this process. As such, this thesis has revealed a more complex praxis of gender and justice perspectives operative in informing how managers influence WLB take-up.

The new model that emerges from this research further illustrates the deficiencies in the field's conventional theoretical understandings. By its continued reliance on a simplistic cause and effect structure - in this case availability and take-up - the field has neither fully accounted for the
emergent patterns nor has it sufficiently posed the necessary questions. Basic models (as illustrated in figure 9.3) often focus on simple supply and demand chains to the exclusion of the 'human' elements in policy creation and allocation and more specifically the profound effect the senior manager team, the organisation's culture and one's supervising manager has on the process of WLB allocation.

Figure 9.3 - Conventional Supply Chain Research Model

In occupying this space between statute and take-up, managers have considerable influence on their staff's WLB levels. Yet given the dearth of inquiries in this area, the field has not yet formed a complete understanding of the operative mechanics behind this. Indeed, there is much work to be done in explaining why managers hold diverse views of the same WLB policies but until the conventional theoretically model is expanded, the field will continue to lack comprehensive understanding of how WLB supports operate within organisations.
In the specific context of these interviews, it emerged that the identification of WLB needs or desirable workplace traits relied on fairly abstract ideals through which, although there may have been vast potential interpretation, there also remained a great deal of pre-defined social inertia. These elements directly influenced managerial determinations of both when supports were needed and what form they should ultimately take. In this way, managers differentiated employee needs differently across categories based on their post and location within the organisation as well as their age, familial structure and position.

Similarly, it emerged that gender views were also related to which organisational justice principle managers felt was most appropriate as well as the degree of formality to be employed in implementation. Managers who felt that male and female employees were different were more likely to express concern that certain policies unfairly advantaged or penalised groups for their biological sex – a perspective that would directly impact how these managers reached WLB decisions. Where managers saw the potential for inequality they either discouraged WLB supports or else restricted their implementation (and thereby their overall usefulness) in the hope of reducing the perceived injustice. Equally, managers holding ‘traditional’ gender views were more likely to feel that WLB programmes unfairly advantaged or penalised groups for their life decisions in contrast with liberal managers who were more likely to view unequal distribution as a necessity to help families balance their workplace and domestic pressures which resulted in proactive supports through friendly flexible methods.

These subjective beliefs form an integrated matrix which act in tandem to guide a manager’s understanding of organisational WLB practises. Managers’ gender-justice matrix plays an integral part in organisational WLB – a point highlighted through the application of this ‘gender-justice’ model. When juxtaposed with the conventional theoretical model, one can see how such a complex and convoluted phenomenon will likely remain hidden in other research until it establishes a stronger theoretical methodological foundation.

In further illustration of the power this gender-justice model offers is the discovery that managers invoked more than one principle in a given situation. Even when organisational culture and policies dictated a certain approach,
managers retained the power to reconcile any perceived injustices by influencing their mode of allocation. This was best observed in organisation B where managers felt compelled to allocate on the basis of care-giving need. In this regard, justice conflicts were often reconciled by manipulating the formal-informal continuum. Similarly, when managers in organisation A felt compelled to offer statutory supports, they were able to impose modal restrictions (e.g. may be taken in one lump of time or divided out). Finally, when managers felt that time off was necessary in reducing work-family conflict (equalitarian), they were more likely to offer the leave in requested form while those who viewed leave as a parental benefit likely to create departmental resentment (traditional) reconciled this conflict by not meeting the full request.

Based on these observations, this thesis offers strong support to claims that future WLB inquiries should incorporate the gender-justice model. Yet while this thesis showed how managers use a complicated praxis through which to evaluate and deliver WLB supports, the employee questionnaires, while statistically indeterminate, nevertheless suggest that this is not unique to managers. For example, it was found that staff participants exhibited no discernable pattern on how they felt WLB programmes should be allocated, instead evaluating each arrangement independently. In suggesting which organisational justice principle was relevant, these preferences revealed themselves to be based on personal circumstances through which they would be more likely to avail of the support they deemed desirable. These findings suggest that future research should focus on how the gender-justice model could be applied at a staff level to help discern these patterns.

Turning back to the managers in a more general sense, all reported feeling obliged to maintain a certain awareness of their staff’s WLB levels though there was wide variance between organisations over how this was manifested. For example, managers at organisations C and D spoke in terms of a legal obligation to ensure their staff maintained a healthy balance while managers at organisations A and B expressed less formal degrees of responsibility. In exploring this aspect in greater detail, it was revealed that managers at organisation A were motivated by productivity levels and therefore more likely
to discuss supporting the 'life-side' of imbalance. This would entail encouraging the employee to discuss the issue and, based on this fact finding mission, proactively suggest supports which were often in the form of time off or emotional support. Managers at organisation A often highlighted the importance of this method in reinforcing loyalty while maximising productivity.

Managers at organisation B were more likely to focus WLB supports on the 'work-side' in addressing workloads and stress levels. As such, they were more likely to wait for an employee to request support rather than proactively intervening. When supports were offered, they tended to involve work-based measures such as workload redistributions or training courses on time management. This interesting trichotomy merits further focused investigation, as each organisation approached WLB through vastly different goals and means.

It is the strength of the gender-justice model that it can allow for such nuanced differences to be observed between how organisations and individual confront WLB. Yet while the in-depth case study approach of this thesis allowed these systems to manifest in a way previously invisible to WLB research, the effect, cause and consequence of these findings remain indeterminable through this dataset alone and would therefore benefit from a complementary examination.

9.4 - The Application of a 'Gender-Justice Model' for WLB Research

While the previous section displayed the power of the gender-justice model when juxtaposed to conventional theoretical groundings, this section describes why, and more importantly how, such a model could be applied to future WLB research and policy creation. Research that has relied on conventional supply chain frameworks tends to examine policies' availability and take-up as well as establish recommendations for future supports while encouraging state and EU directives to address identified needs. Framed in this way, research offers 'conclusions' on how to address the disconnect between employee WLB needs and supply and take-up of supports (Figure 9.4).
Yet as seen in the previous section, and indeed this thesis as a whole, this structure fails to ask the right questions. While there may be a greater need of certain supports typically this level of inquiry is not what is needed to address WLB realities in the labour market to the extent that policy has a very limited ability to permeate the 'human' element of allocating WLB supports. In other words, organisations must ultimately rely on managers to regulate WLB supports including its availability and take-up. Consequently it is the role of managers that must be examined and understood before positive changes can be expected in terms of either policy or the wider WLB culture.

To achieve this, WLB researchers must re-evaluate their epistemological understanding of the topic and shift from a policy view to a 'human' view. This is the basis for what I have termed the gender-justice model. It is personal perspectives such as views of gender and social justice that form an integrated matrix in determining how people approach WLB and must therefore become a more prominent focus in future WLB research. This is particularly salient in that these perspectives operate in tandem to influence
people's understanding of WLB in their own and others lives. Additionally these perceptions play the underlining role in developing an organisation's wider WLB culture (Figure 9.5).

*Figure 9.5 - Framing the 'Gender-Justice' model*

When applied to research, this model expands the focus away from policy to what I argue is the more important element – the dissemination of policy. In this light, it becomes clear that there can exist a multitude of outcomes to what may otherwise appear to be a simple WLB availability/take-up structure. Figure 9.6 illustrates the complexity of this process: where an employee desires a WLB support, their decision to pursue it directly relates to their understanding of the WLB culture. Even when request are actually made, the outcome is also not very clear in that such requests are then filtered through multiple complex 'human' levels before a decision is reached. Integral to this process is the main actors' respective understandings of justice and gender roles – thus forming the basis of the gender-justice model.
Figure 9.6 - The Application of the 'Gender-Justice' Theoretical Model

Employee desires WLB support

Employee perceived WLB culture as supportive

No Request Made - Potential Employee Loss

Although manager may not be fully opposed to request they may feel that by offering it they would be 'rocking the boat' as they are not encouraged to be proactive in this regard

Seek support from manager

May be possible

Is the support in conflict with how the managers views what's appropriate for men and women or/and would it lead to conflict in the department?

Yes

Manager generally unsupportive

Does the organisation's WLB culture encourage such supports?

No

Manager feels obligated to support request

Is the support a legal entitlement?

No

Manager is opposed to support - No support offered!

Potential Employee Loss

Would the senior manager team support such a request?

Yes

Manager fully supports request and additionally feels that the organisation and the senior team would encourage proactiveness - Full support offered in as flexible a manner as possible

No

Manager generally opposed to the support and feels, often subconsciously that the support may not truly be needed or may exhibits a lack of commitment to the job despite this manager feels obligated to offer support - Some degree of support is offered though maybe not all or not in the form requested.

Would the senior manager team support such a request?

Yes

Manager is opposed to support but feels some obligation (often legal) to offer the support- support offered in the most limiting formal method possible in hopes to reduce the impact on their department

No

Manager is opposed to support but feels that honoring the full request would be risky as their boss would not support it - offers a support as required by law but tries not be seen as proactive

No

Is the support a legal entitlement?

Yes

Is the support in conflict with how the managers views what's appropriate for men and women or/and would it lead to conflict in the department?
By re-focusing the foundation of WLB research toward a gender-justice model, the field may begin to understand more of the complexities surrounding these issues which may lead toward stronger policy and organisational recommendations. Yet until research begins to examine the 'human' element of policy and understand the role gender-justice perspectives play, the field will likely remain mired in pursuit of the wrong questions.

9.5 - Limitations

As discussed in the previous section, this thesis illustrates the degree of complexity involved in a manager's personal WLB as well as the scope of considerations and effect they have on their staff. These findings have been largely missing from previous research whose methodologies focused uniquely on managerial take-up levels and attitudinal data related to the cost and benefits of WLB supports. In pursuing a case study approach, this exploration allowed for a more extensive phenomenological understanding and laid the foundation for future studies.

Yet by definition, case studies are incapable of claiming universality insofar as there is no method of empirically determining the extent to which these managers are similar or different from their peers throughout Ireland. Furthermore, because this study's sample was both small and idiosyncratic, and because the resulting data is predominantly non-numerical, there is no way to establish the degree to which the data is representative. Therefore, it is important to note that this study does not intend to posit generalities regarding how managers understand and relate to WLB, but rather aims to generate new thinking surrounding the concepts of WLB and managerial influence. In this regard, it is hoped that future studies may subsequently be influenced to follow a similar path in contributing to a broader and more complex understanding.

It is likewise important to note that this study's analytical value does not depend entirely upon the cases from which it is drawn. In this sense, we may argue that the gender-justice model still establishes a provisional truth despite thus far being supported only through a limited data set. Likewise, until such time as contradictory findings or a more comprehensive theory emerge, it
remains the most inclusive model to date through which WLB researchers may account for the disparities between how WLB supports are conceptualised and ultimately disseminated.

9.6 - Future Research and Implications for Practise and Research

Rather than forming prescriptive claims, the primary aim of this thesis was to posit a new theoretical model through which to evaluate WLB within organisations. Yet these findings can nevertheless offer a degree of insight into both policy creation and future research. In terms of the former, this research suggests that there is not a particular need for more organisational WLB supports but instead a need for better supports. To this end, practitioners should focus on creating policies and initiatives that account for the full influence of organisational culture as well as the impact and authority of management.

From this perspective, there are three main areas on which practitioners may wish to focus. In terms of informal supports, it would be helpful to educate managers about the organisation’s WLB ‘ethos.’ In this manner, if a manager fully understands the aim of WLB programmes, they may be more likely to facilitate them (as illustrated by organisation B). Secondly, as managers can use their authority to thwart WLB supports that do not agree with their personal views, organisations may wish to create stronger formal systems. While this may reduce managerial discretion, it cannot eliminate their influence or the organisation’s cultural effects. This leads to the final suggestion that initiatives must recognise that such cultures have significant normative effects on employee WLB. The findings of this study suggest that senior managers have the largest influences on creating and reinforcing these norms. As such, initiatives aimed at senior managers will likely be the most effective at changing the WLB culture.

In terms of future research, this thesis’ strongest conclusion is that WLB inquiries must reconceptualise the use of gender to include a more in-depth understanding of how gender views operate in individuals and their influence on how they confront WLB. Secondly, this thesis argues that research focusing on justice should employ the stronger theoretical framework of
gender-justice. Indeed, this thesis has uncovered evidence to suggest that not only are managerial concerns valid, but that they may even highlight a critical flaw in WLB supports in their present form. For example, participating managers complained that, whereas organisations used to redistribute workloads in an employee’s absence, the present lack of such concessions leaves little recourse through which to avoid resentments. Finally, this framework’s usefulness may not be limited to studies of justice, but could also suit other avenues of WLB research. As such, WLB scholars may wish to reconsider their understanding of WLB complexities by re-examining the policy-creation process as well as what previously unexamined elements (such as gender) may prove relevant to their actualisation.

9.7 Conclusion

In combining organisational distributional justice with feminist literature on gender, the resulting gender-justice model serves to illuminate a greater degree of complexity in organisational WLB concepts than previous inquiries. The ability for this model to offer a greater depth of analysis is critical to the extent that, regardless of authorial intent in developing policy, WLB programmes are ultimately filtered through an organisations’ culture and then re-interpreted by the manager’s perspectives of gender and fairness. In the end, this study suggests that WLB cannot be sufficiently understood through macro-level methodological paradigms alone. Rather, researchers are likely to uncover a greater breadth of detail through which to inform discussions by incorporating the gender-justice model for future WLB inquiries.
Appendix A

Trinity College Dublin

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECT

Allocating Work-Life Balance

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to identify how managers negotiate and understand work-life balance, to examine what role formal and informal policies play in work-life balance, and to explore the role of managers in facilitating work-life balance within an organisation.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are at least 16 years of age and are in employment with an eligible company.

Number of Participants and Time Commitment

This study will include approximately 35 subjects and will involve approximately one hour of your time.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur: You will complete a one-on-one interview about your views on work-life balance.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study may include new understandings of your personal work-life balance levels. Otherwise, you will not directly benefit from participation in this study.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
Participation is voluntary; you may freely choose not to participate without suffering any consequences.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Compensation for Participation

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed at the end of data collection.

Data Storage

- All research data will be stored electronically on a secure network with password protection.
- The audio recordings will also be stored in a secure location then transcribed and erased at the end of the study.

Data Access

The research team and authorized TCD personnel may have access to your study records to protect your safety and welfare. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed by these entities without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Research records provided to authorized, non-TCD entities will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed at the top of this form.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with TCD. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.
Appendix B

Interview protocol

Topics:

- Work-life balance
- Questions to elicit your point of view
- Mainly interested in Experiences and opinions
- Think of things please Share even if seemingly off topic

Section 1 - WLB at work - 15min

Okay, I would like to start with some questions about your workplace.

How would you describe Company X’s workplace attitudes toward WLB? Any examples to illustrate this? What do you base this on?

How would you describe Company X’s workplace attitudes toward those that use WLB accommodations such as parental leave? What about flexi-time or tele-working?

Is there a stigma or is it encouraged?

Do you feel that there is an opportunity cost for taking advantage?

Is this the same for upper verses lower level posts? Or any other group?

Is this different for men and women?

(If not Clear) How would you define work-life balance? What does the term mean to you?

How would you describe the work-life balance levels/ philosophy of those who are above you?

Is there anyone in your office that might be considered a WLB role model? Someone who appears to have a successful balance between work and home? If so please describe how.

Do your superiors encourage you to have work-life balance?

In regards to your own wlb, do you feel like you are going with or against the flow in the company?

Section 2 - Allocating (30 mins)

Formal: 15 mins

Can you describe how formal WLB policies are communicated within the company? Where do you find out about what is available?

In general, what’s your opinion of formalized policies? Are they good,
Does your department offer many formal programs like flexi-time/teleworking or other non-traditional working arrangement? What's your opinion of these programs? How do you think the company should decide who gets access to these options?

Do you think that any of them are unfair to the others who aren't using them?

- Is there an unfair work distribution?
- Do they lead to resentment in the department?

With these non-traditional options, who do you think should have first choice of them? If for example, you can select only a few in your area to work under these, how would you decide who gets to use them?

Do you think that women and men work differently in the workplace? Do they have different priorities?

Informal: 15 mins

Does your department rely on more formal policies or do you find that it tends to be more informal, an understanding between managers and staff? Any examples of this?

Do you prefer formal or informal policies? Why? Same efficiency?

Does the company encourage you to offer WLB to your staff, through either formal or informal measures?

What do you feel is your role as a manager in your staffs' work-life balance? Do you tend to be aware of people's stress levels or working hours?

When do you feel a manager should intervene in others work-life balance? Should they suggest time management courses or suggest that someone change their working hours, telecommute, things like that.

When do you feel non-traditional work arrangements should be used? When should someone be able to work from home or on a compressed week?

Do you feel that there is a difference in WLB needs for different groups:

- managers vs. staff,
- Staff that deal with customers vs. support staff
- parents vs. non,
- men vs women, etc?

If so, please describe why and what differences you see? Ex. why one group may be different and what an employer should do to address them.

In your experience, do you think that men and women have different needs in the workplace?
Why do you think more men than women typically rise to the higher positions?

Section 3- Individual Information and WLB

WLB: (15mins)

How would you describe your personal work-life balance level? Are you happy with it?

What barriers have you encountered in establishing WLB?

To what extent do you feel in control of the way you allocate your time?

Demo info: (10mins)

Can you describe your family situation? - partner, married, age of kids, partners employment, other care responsibilities.

What is your current childcare method? What is your preferred method?

What would you describe as the ideal role for parents? What should each parent be responsible for?

What type of care do you think is best for pre-school aged children? Do you think that one parent is better suited to be the full-time caregiver, which?

Can you describe your normal work week;

   How many hours do you work?

   How stressful is your work?

   How satisfying is your work, do you find it challenging or ever feel it’s boring?

Have you ever utilized any formal or informal work arrangements? If you needed to would you consider using them or would you explore your other options first?

What about your life outside of work? What do you do with your free time?

   Do you find time to engage in your interest/hobbies?

   Do you ever find that work and home compete with each other- energy or time for example?

Are you generally happy with your exercise and eating habits? Do you find time to be healthy or do you ever find that work gets in the way?

In regards to life choices, do you think that it is typically more important for one sex to have professional careers?

If you have two applicants one man, one woman otherwise equal, How do you decide between them? Do you think that one should be given priority over the other? Why or why not?
How would you describe yourself in relation to gender roles? Traditional verses equalitarian.

Conclusion-

I've finished with my questions now. Before we end, is there anything else you think it would be useful to know? Thanks you
Appendix C

Work-Life Balance Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. As outlined in the email you received, this survey is being conducted among staff at four organizations and is being undertaken by the Industrial Statistics Unit, Trinity College Dublin. The aim of this survey is to examine the role of policies and managers in facilitating work-life balance among staff and seeks to identify any blockages that may exist for staff in achieving work-life balance. Interviews have been completed with various personnel in your department and, as such, you have been selected to participate in this survey and we greatly appreciate your assistance. The data will be analysed externally, within Trinity College, and all returns will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. No individual member of staff will be known or identifiable. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Gwen Daverth at daverthj@tcd.ie. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please be sure to complete the survey in full. If you prefer to fill out the survey in paper form you may request a copy from the address above.

1. Do you work?
   o Full-time
   o Reduced Hours (including part-time, job sharing)

2. Do your current working arrangements suit your family/personal commitments?
   o Yes
   o No
   o Don't Know
If no, please elaborate.

3. Have you availed of any of the following arrangements while working at this organisation?
   • Flexi-time (including compressed week, core hours)
   • Reduced Hours (including part-time, job sharing)
   • Term-Time Working
   • Working from Home
   • Career breaks for travel or study
   • Career breaks for caregiving reasons
   • Parental leave (paid or unpaid)
   • Maternity leave (paid)
   • Childcare support measures (e.g. company based crèche)
   • Paternity leave

4. Does your organisation have policies that outline work-life balance and non-traditional working arrangements that may be available to you?
   o Yes
   o No
If yes, where would you obtain this information? Please check all that apply:
   o Ask my manager
5. In your company, to what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please tick one of the 4 boxes for each statement - if you have no views please leave boxes blank).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career advancement is based on outputs not the time spent in the office</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organisation recognises that staffs needs may change over their life cycle</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working reduced hours jeopardise one career progression</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance is actively promoted within the organisation</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting in long hours helps your career prospects</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The predominant management style reflects respect for work-life balance</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How would you describe your current degree of work-life balance? (defined as the ability to have the life you want both at work and in your personal life)

7. Have you requested any of the following working arrangements? Please select all that apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Arrangement</th>
<th>Applied for</th>
<th>Obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced hours/job-share/part-time</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible (full-time) working hours</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compressed week</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working from home</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare support measures (e.g. subsidised places, on-sight crèche)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term time working</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career breaks for travel or study</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career breaks for caregiving reasons</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you were unsuccessful in the request(s), please give details of arrangement sought and the response(s) you received.

7. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements? (If you have no views please leave boxes blank)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My work schedule never conflicts with my family life</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I'd like to do</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job makes it easy to be the kind of partner that I'd like to be</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The demands of my family never interfere with job-related activities</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as accomplishing daily tasks and working overtime</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. In your company, to what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements? (If you have no views please leave boxes blank)

| Employees with children carry less of the workload than their counterparts without children | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| Non-parents are unfairly disadvantaged in accessing flexible working arrangements | □ | □ | □ | □ |
| Parents should have greater access to reduced workloads, flexible working, and leave arrangements than non-parents | □ | □ | □ | □ |

9. Is your current manager a good role model in their own life for work-life balance?
   - Yes
   - No
   - If no, please elaborate.

10. How open and accommodating is your manager when you need to deal with life/family events that conflict with work? (e.g. sick child, medical appointment)

11. Do you feel that your current manager is more willing to provide flexibility and workplace supports to any of the following: (Tick all that apply)
   - Mothers
   - Fathers
   - Those with other care responsibilities (e.g. adult with disability, elderly parents)
   - Those in higher education
   - Irish workers
   - Foreign workers
   - Other _______________________________________________________________________

Are there circumstances when this is unfair or unreasonable?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Maybe Please elaborate:

12. When the following work arrangements cannot be offered to all employees, how would you like to see them allocated among staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Needed (e.g. parents)</th>
<th>As a Reward (e.g. length of service)</th>
<th>First Come (e.g. available to all)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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13. Are you?
   - Male
   - Female

14. If you are living with a spouse/ life partner, is your partner?
   - In part-time employment
   - Working full-time in the home/ not in paid employment
   - In full-time employment

15. How old are you?
   - 18-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60-65
   - over 65

16. Please indicate your highest educational qualification you have gained:
   - Junior certificate
   - Leaving certificate
   - Undergraduate certificate/diploma
   - Degree
   - Postgraduate diploma/degree
   - Other qualification

17. Are you currently pursing an educational qualification?
   - Yes
   - No
   - If yes, what is it? ________________________________

18. Do you have children?
   - Yes
   - No

If yes, how many children of the following age groups live with you? Under 5 years, 6 - 12 years, 13 - 16 years, 17 - 21 years

19. Where relevant, please specify your current childcare arrangements (Please tick each that apply)
   - Cared for in working hours by partner
   - Cared for in working hours by childminder
   - After school care in school

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- Cared for in working hours by other relative
- Cared for in private crèche
- After school care by childminder

20. Have you any other care responsibilities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care Responsibility</th>
<th>Resident with you</th>
<th>Not resident with you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elderly person e.g. a relative</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult with disability / illness</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child with disability / illness</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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