Supporting family-friendly work practices: 
Cultural possibilities and limitations

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Dedications

In loving memory of my parents, Laurie and Janet, who encouraged me to seek new challenges and to strive earnestly towards my highest goals. They were a strong and positive influence in my life. They provided a great example of how parents could effectively manage both their work and family commitments.

I am grateful to my beautiful family. My husband, Terry, and my daughters, Jess and Lauren and our puppy dog, Max give me unconditional love. Together, they help to create a sense of balance in my life. Their devotion assisted me to stay committed to and focused on this thesis. They are all amazing and I am so lucky to have them in my life.
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Finally, I owe my sincere appreciation to the organisations that agreed to be part of this study and to all the participants who willingly provided valuable insights into their personal experiences of using family-friendly work practices at their organisations.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted the material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Joni Moore

.................................................................
Abstract

This is an human resource management (HRM) thesis which investigates a critical diversity management topic. Existing literature shows that the availability of family-friendly work practices (FFWPs) does not guarantee their usage often resulting in the inability to attain a suitable work and family balance. This issue is of rising importance due to the increasing numbers of parents in the workforce. The role played by family-friendly work culture (FFWC) in explaining the reluctance of employees to access family-friendly work practices (FFWPs) was investigated. This research problem is significant because it was found that only a few studies have highlighted the importance of FFWC. This indicated the gap in the current state of knowledge. McDonald, Brown and Bradley’s FFWC measure was utilised to confirm and develop the FFWC concept. A critical stance is taken to question whether culture has all the answers when investigating FFWPs. Therefore, the role played by job characteristics and the style of human resource management (HRM) is also investigated utilising the human resource architecture model and the soft and hard HRM model. This involves an assessment of the utility of these models for theory and practice.

The research questions prompted the use of a qualitative methodological approach. Preliminary interviews and case studies were an ideal choice of research methods based on the nature of FFWC being considered a medium and outcome of social practice. Being able to be present at the organisations as much as possible was an advantage in gaining insights into organisational members’ values, perceptions, feelings and thoughts. This enabled an understanding of the personal experiences of individuals regarding FFWPs. Phase one consisted of 16 pilot interviews at 16 organisations. These were conducted during 2007. The analysis from these interviews informed the second phase, the case studies. Data collection for phase two was conducted from 2010 to 2012 and consisted of documentary analysis and interviews. The case studies were based at two large private sector and two large public sector organisations located in Sydney. Five female and five male participants at each organisation from various job categories were selected.
The findings confirmed McDonald, Brown and Bradley’s FFWC framework. Five new FFWC aspects relating to the existing five FFWC dimensions advance understanding of those dimensions. There are also four new FFWC dimensions revealed which extend the existing FFWC framework to nine dimensions. This enhanced FFWC framework helps to explain why employees often feel discouraged to use FFWPs. However, job characteristics were also found to play a part, although this varied between the private and public sector case study organisations. Type of HRM was also found to be an influence. Organisations employed a mix of soft and hard HRM which coincided with uneven usage of FFWPs. This finding supported the heterogeneity argument concerning HRM in practice. The revised theoretical model for studying FFWPs in this thesis integrates three bodies of theory together in an innovative fashion: FFWC, soft and hard HRM and human resource architecture theories. Empirical evidence from this thesis confirms that the revised theoretical model for studying FFWPs is useful for explaining the interplay between the institutional environment, participant characteristics, type of organisation, job characteristics, FFWC, style of HRM the availability and usage of FFWPs, and employee work and family balance. This is a significant original contribution to the study of FFWPs in the future. All in all, this thesis indicates that organisations need to investigate the lived experience of individuals to truly understand the difference between the rhetoric and reality of organisational life concerning FFWPs. This is because to examine policy alone is not enough.
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**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<td>ACCI</td>
<td>Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry</td>
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<td>ACTU</td>
<td>Australian Council of Trade Unions</td>
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<td>AHRC</td>
<td>Australian Human Rights Commission</td>
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<td>AHRI</td>
<td>Australian Human Resources Institute</td>
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<td>ASX</td>
<td>Australian Stock Exchange</td>
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<td>BCA</td>
<td>Business Council of Australia</td>
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<td>Cth</td>
<td>Commonwealth</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
<td>chief executive officer</td>
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<td>EOWA</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency</td>
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<td>family-friendly work practices</td>
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<td>HILDA</td>
<td>Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia</td>
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<td>OHS</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Despite formal policies and programs designed to help employees balance work and family, unsupportive work cultures may undermine the programs’ effectiveness (Thompson, Beavais and Lyness 1999: 393).

Much of the current work and family literature suggests that the mere presence of family-friendly work practices (FFWPs) does not guarantee that they will be utilised (Bond 2004; Behson 2005; Burgess, Henderson and Strachan 2007a: 416; McDonald, Brown and Bradley 2005:37-38; Jones, Burke and Westman 2006; Houkamau and Boxall 2011). Some studies certainly propose that an unsupportive organisational culture and specifically family-friendly work culture (FFWC) is often responsible for employees not using FFWPs (Thompson, Beavais and Lyness 1999; McDonald, Brown and Bradley 2005 and Bradley, McDonald and Brown 2010). However, FFWC in the context of accounting for the gap between the provision and utilisation of FFWPs has received very little empirical attention (McDonald et al. 2005; Bradley et al. 2010). Clearly, more knowledge is needed to understand the nature of this phenomenon.

The main purpose of this chapter is to establish the rationale for the thesis. This is achieved by establishing the need for this research within the current knowledge of the human resource management (HRM) discipline. In addition, the approach taken in conducting the research and the development of the study will be explained. This is followed by the research questions and important terms. The discipline of HRM and the field of diversity management are then discussed, including theories that are explored in the thesis. The roles of significant stakeholders are introduced next. The aims of the thesis are then discussed in light of the significance of its contribution to knowledge and the gap in the current research. A brief description is provided of how the aims were achieved and why the particular approach to methodology was chosen. A brief outline of the thesis structure follows. The conclusion to the chapter summarises the key arguments and provides a link to the next chapter, which discusses the context, legislation and institutions.
Development of the research study

The initial impetus for this research study arose from a combination of the writer’s personal life and work experiences, as well as those of family, friends and colleagues. Additionally a previous quantitative research study of work and family balance had revealed some insights requiring further investigation (Moore 1996). Various questions emerged with respect to the effectiveness of FFWPs in helping balance work and family demands for workers. Initial discussions with others indicated that organisational culture and FFWC were critical to the success or otherwise of FFWPs in organisations. There is a growing body of research considering work and family balance, including the provision and usage of FFWPs. However, pointing to the gap in the research to date, there have been far fewer studies that have explored the influence of organisational culture and FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs (McDonald et al. 2005; Bradley et al. 2010). This gap pointed to the need for research of an issue of importance to many stakeholders. Therefore, this thesis examines the role played by FFWC in shaping the availability and usage of FFWPs of individuals at four case study organisations using an understanding of FFWC from the existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). Previous FFWC research does not simultaneously examine how job characteristics or the style of HRM influence the availability or usage of FFWPs. Therefore these factors are also investigated as it is considered they may also play an interrelated part. The two key theoretical frameworks used were Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model and Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model, both of which theorise that HRM in practice is heterogeneous.

The research questions

The review of the work and family and HRM literature affirmed that there was a need to explore factors that related to the frequent difference between the FFWPs that were provided and those that were being utilised (Bond 2004; Behson 2005; Jones, Burke and Westman 2006; Houkamau and Boxall 2011). The principle research question and sub-questions were developed to encompass and assess the role of FFWC in shaping the availability and utilisation of FFWPs, an area under researched in the work and family literature (McDonald et al. 2005; Bradley et al. al
Furthermore, job characteristics and the style of HRM were also incorporated. There was one principal research question with five sub-questions under investigation within the context of the case study organisations as follows:

Principal Research Question: What is the difference between the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations?
Sub-questions:
1. What is the nature of FFWC at these organisations?
2. What is the impact of FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs at these organisations?
3. Are there any new FFWC dimensions to be revealed at the case study organisations?
4. What style of HRM is in place at the case study organisations?
5. What is the impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations?

Key terms in the thesis

Organisational culture is a contested concept and one that can be difficult to define. In this thesis, organisational culture was understood to be the ‘personality’ of the organisation. Occasionally, various personality characteristics are hidden under the surface and are difficult to see. Organisational culture is an outcome of many things, with an intangible, unstable and transitory nature. Studies of organisational culture have been around for quite some time and have been noticed and explored by others (Thompson, Jahn, Kopelman and Prottas 2004; Bradley et al. 2010), although not all work and family literature considers the influence of organisational culture and some is arguably ‘culture blind’. In some cases, culture is brought into the debate but it is seen as something that is simple and uncontested – somewhat like a commodity that can be crafted and engineered by managers (Smircich 1983). Taking the former view of culture, the role played by one aspect of culture, FFWC, in the lived experiences regarding FFWPs of individuals at their organisations is examined. Broader environmental contextual influences such as relevant laws are considered as they also shape the lived experience.
Another important term to explore in this thesis is ‘family’. Families of today and tomorrow will continue to challenge the traditional definition of family (DeSouza 2007: 36). In Australia, the traditional definition of family was defined in the Harvester case (1907) where the average employee referred to in the decision was a male worker supporting a wife and three children (Guidice 2007: 2). The idea that a family always consists of a husband, wife and children is now outdated and family relationships are becoming increasingly diverse in structure and functions (Bengston 2001: 1). Families that challenge the traditional definition of family include: same sex parents and transsexual parents and parents who are single (DeSouza 2007: 37).

‘Family’ can be understood to mean a group of people who are important to a particular individual, who have a significant impact on his or her life and who may or may not be related genetically. A policy example of the meaning of ‘family’ that has captured contemporary legislative and policy development is an organisation that has won diversity awards is provided below:

- biological, adoptive, foster and step relationships – a married, de facto, opposite sex or same sex partner, an ex-partner, a parent or partner’s or ex-partner’s parent, a brother or partner’s or ex-partner’s brother, a sister or partner’s or ex-partner’s sister, a grandchild or partner’s or ex-partner’s grandchild and a grandparent or partner’s or ex-partner’s grandparent’ (University of Western Sydney 2012: 1).

The way in which we perceive family is important to how family-friendly policy is shaped and implemented. An inclusive definition of family is helpful by placing clear parameters on the concept.

Working from the notion of ‘family’ the expression ‘family-friendly’ is defined as an umbrella term describing a variety of policies and programs having the goal of facilitating the ability of employees to fulfill their family responsibilities (Jones, Burke and Westman 2006: 236). Studies show that family-friendly policies and programs alone have little impact on employee work and family balance as they are often not utilised (Behson 2005; Bond 2004). To understand this gap between policy provision and utilisation, the family-friendly literature has begun to examine the relationship between organisational culture and work and family balance. Such examination has resulted in the fairly recent emergence of the term ‘family-friendly work culture’ in the work and family and organisational literatures (Thompson et al.)
The term ‘family-friendly work culture’ (FFWC) has been used to describe a particular aspect of more general, and more frequently discussed, organisational culture. FFWC has been defined as ‘the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives’ (Thompson et al. 1999: 394). This definition is widely cited and was the one used in this thesis. FFWC is a focal point of this thesis and the studies of Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005) are important as their research provided the existing framework of five dimensions in which FFWC could be examined. These five FFWC dimensions are explored and new FFWC dimensions and aspects are revealed based on the findings at the case study organisations.

**Implications of human resource management and diversity management for work and family balance**

Though this thesis is sensitive to the variety of literature that is relevant to the topic, the current research sits primarily within the HRM field and is a diversity management topic. Diversity has been used to refer to individual characteristics such as gender or family responsibilities and also to broader personal characteristics such as physical and mental capabilities and the interests of a variety of external stakeholders (Kramar 2012a: 245-246). The diversity literature advocates that diversity management requires a proactive approach which links people-management policies to desired organisational outcomes and culture (Kramar, 2006). There is limited understanding of what actually happens at the workplace level within organisations, making diversity management an area which is ‘ripe for research’ (Kramar 2012a: 257). To address this gap, individual experiences concerning FFWC

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1 Spelling of organization is followed as used by original author.

2 Diversity management and managing diversity are used interchangeably in the diversity literature. However, the term diversity management is the preferred term in this thesis.
and the availability and usage of FFWPs, from a range of occupational levels as well as the style of HRM are investigated.

There is a clear history in the work and family literature indicating a strong argument for family-friendly management to confront the issue of discrimination based on all kinds of differences, not just gender (Hall 1990: 69). A more strategic approach explicitly places the work and family agenda within the scope of diversity management (Chesterman, Ross-Smith and Peters 2004). Without this approach, FFWPs are likely to be introduced in a disorganised manner rather than as a holistic program aiming at increasing equality (Gonyea and Googins 1996: 69; Lewis 1997: 15). Kramar (2012a: 257) argues that actions to promote change in both the public and private sectors have declined despite widespread rhetoric about diversity. To investigate this claim, differences between the rhetoric and reality concerning FFWPs at two private sector and two public sector case study organisations are examined. The investigation was double-pronged, consisting of interviews and documentary analysis. This enabled the rhetoric of espoused values in organisation documents to be compared with the reality of lived experiences from the interviews. The consideration of the match or mismatch between rhetoric and reality of FFWPs is explored throughout the thesis.

The implications of this study being in the HRM discipline require some mention. In order to appreciate the development of ideas, theories and debates surrounding HRM a brief examination of its origins is now provided. HRM as a discipline has its roots in social sciences such as psychology and sociology and then its foundations in the human relations school (Thompson and McHugh, 2002: 42). Before 1912, engineering, accounting and economics were the only bodies of knowledge relevant to systematic management. After WW1, major corporations began to finance industrial psychology and this saw the emergence of the human relations approach to management. The human relations ideology attempted to improve consultation, encourage worker participation, disseminate information and humanise supervision (Wright 1995: 57). More recently the normative model of HRM has been linked to strategy, integration and culture (Wright 1995: 131). For example, human resource policies should be used to reinforce an appropriate organisational culture (Legge, 2005: 105). The inclusion of culture by these writers in their explanations of HRM
activity supports the logic of this thesis in examining FFWC from an HRM perspective.

What is embraced by HRM is both evolving and contested. According to Legge (1995: 91) HRM incorporates two approaches, hard and soft HRM. Hard HRM considers HRM from a contingent approach which is strategically oriented. Soft HRM values the development of employees as fundamental and a source of competitive advantage with business and customer needs as the main referent. Legge (2005) has more recently acknowledged that organisations are more likely to use a mix of HRM approaches in practice. Likewise, Lepak and Snell (1999) argue that HR strategy and practice is heterogeneous. Their ‘core and periphery’ idea explains that employees are valued differently by their employing organisation depending on whether they are considered to be core or periphery. Therefore, an employee’s job will determine their access and usage of employee benefits such as FFWPs.

This thesis investigates whether Lepak and Snell’s core and periphery idea was a robust indication of the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations. The soft and hard approach to HRM was utilised in this thesis to determine if the style of HRM influences FFWPs. It was also used to further explore Lepak and Snell’s (1999) and Legge’s (2005) heterogeneity argument concerning HRM. The soft and hard notion has been more recently touted as too simplistic by writers who, like Lepak and Snell, acknowledge that organisations are more likely to utilise bundles of HRM practices (Wright and Kehoe 2008: 13; Purcell, Kinnie, Swart, Rayton and Hutchinson 2009: 45) including high commitment and high performance work systems. Legge (2005:11) also believes that organisations are likely to use a combination of soft and hard HRM. She argues that HRM for professional knowledge workers, for example, is likely to incorporate soft characteristics of HRM. She refers to this as high commitment management which focuses on job security and employee development (Legge 2005:19), whereas high performance work systems, implementing hard HRM, are only concerned with high productivity and profits (Legge 2005:19). This thesis continues this assessment of the soft and hard HRM models. Furthermore it was due to its simplicity that the soft and hard HRM dichotomy was selected as an organising framework. It provided a straightforward way of conceptualising participants’ organisations’ HRM practices.
To sum up, the observations by such writers as Legge (1995; 2005), Lepak and Snell (1999), Chesterman et al. (2004); Wright and Kehoe (2008); Purcell et al. (2009) and Kramar (2012b: 252) highlight the importance of strategic thinking, people-centred approaches and the relationship between HRM and diversity management. Clearly there has been a change in how HRM has been viewed. For example, diversity management has been given consideration regarding the potential contribution of the human resource function to business strategy (Shen, Chanda, D’Netto and Monga 2009: 236; Kramar 2012a: 256). As a result, research is required on the state of HRM and diversity management from multiple perspectives (Shen et al. 2009: 247). This thesis integrates these ideas by investigating the core and periphery idea (Lepak and Snell 1999) and the style of HRM (Legge 1995) concerning their relationship with the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations. This seeks to learn about the reality of using FFWPs, that is, the lived experience of various individuals compared to the rhetoric espoused in company documents (Kramar 2012a: 256). In exploring the provision and utilisation of FFWPs, answers are sought regarding the role played by FFWC (Thompson et al. 1999 McDonald et al. 2005). These are normative ideas that are investigated empirically with the aim of contributing to knowledge, theory and practice as explained later in this chapter. To provide context for the contribution of this thesis, the role of significant stakeholders is now considered.

The role of significant stakeholders

Employment relations stakeholders have played an important role in the evolution of work and family policy. Governments, managers and employees have held differing views about work and family issues over recent decades. The question of who holds responsibility for the development, implementation and maintenance of family-friendly initiatives is consistently contested (Moore 1996). A quantitative study indicated that 66 per cent of respondents, all human resource managers, believed that it was an individual responsibility to manage work and family issues. Only 19 per cent viewed this to be an organisational responsibility (Moore, 1996: 122). Managing the work and family relationship is now considered to be an individual, collective and employer responsibility (Pocock, 2003). Organisations therefore need to be aware of the changing needs of employees and provide flexible working strategies in
order to retain their workers (De Cieri, Homes, Abbott and Pettit 2005: 91). However, employers also have their own interest in providing flexible hours brought on by the need to deviate beyond the ‘9 to 5’ work day. So, not only do flexible working hours help employees manage competing demands, they also meet business needs (Eikhof, Warhurst, Haunschild 2007: 327). The roles of significant stakeholders are discussed with greater specificity in Chapter 2.

The following section sums up the contribution to HRM knowledge, theory and practice that the thesis aimed to make by answering the research questions. An explanation is provided of how this was achieved. An outline of the remainder of thesis is also provided.

**Thesis contribution to knowledge, theory and practice**

The aim of this thesis is to understand the role that FFWC (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005) plays in explaining the relationship between the availability and usage of FFWPs. The contribution relates to the gaps in the previous research where it has been stated that there is a requirement for empirical studies to investigate the five FFWC dimensions (McDonald et al. 2005). As well as this, previous research regarding FFWC does not simultaneously consider the impact of characteristics of the employee’s job and the employer’s style of HRM. These are unresolved questions in the HRM field that require investigation. Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model relating to the impact of the job and Legge’s soft and hard model (1995) regarding styles of HRM are normative ideas that will be tested empirically.

As noted, the current state of knowledge in the field of HRM points to the importance of strategic thinking, people-centred approaches and the relationship of HRM and diversity management (Wright and Kehoe, 2008; Purcell et al. 2009; Shen et al. 2009; Kramar 2012a: 252, 256). Clearly, there has been a change in how HRM has been viewed. According to the Cranfield Network surveys 2008-09, a greater proportion of HR managers sit on the board of their organisations (Kramar 2012b: 147). Diversity management is being given some consideration regarding the contribution of the human resource function to business strategy (Shen et al. 2009: 236), although Kramar (2012a: 256) argues that in many private sector organisations
diversity management is still merely a response to legislation rather than a strategic decision by organisations. Therefore, the state of HRM and diversity management from multiple perspectives (Shen et al. 2009: 247) is investigated. The reality of being able to use FFWPs is compared to the rhetoric of the availability of FFWPs as espoused in organisation documents.

In previous FFWC research, the role of job characteristics, the type of organisation and the style of HRM at the organisation have not been investigated empirically together. This investigation combines three bodies of theory: FFWC, soft and hard HRM and human resource architecture theory. Integrating these should provide a richer explanation of the reasons why FFWPs are underutilised. As revealed in coming chapters, the thesis confirms that the availability of FFWPs does not necessarily indicate that such FFWPs are able to be used in organisational life. It was found that the reality of being able to use these FFWPs was often determined by the FFWC at the organisation, the type of job, and the style of HRM in place at the organisation. The theoretical framework that guided the empirical research was developed from the literature review undertaken in Chapter 3. This theoretical framework captures the interplay between the institutional environment, participant characteristics, the type of organisation, job characteristics, the style of HRM, FFWC, the availability of FFWPs, the usage of FFWPs, and work and family balance. These factors will be evaluated at length throughout the thesis.

The contribution of developing FFWC theory has significance because the role of FFWC has not been adequately investigated regarding the availability and usage of FFWPs (McDonald et al. 2005, Bradley et al. 2010). This means that the intentions of organisations around work/family balance may not be realised and expectations of employees may not be met. The existing five FFWC dimensions (Thompson et al 1999; McDonald et al 2005) are confirmed and, utilising a case study approach, this important work is extended to incorporate extra aspects and dimensions. As a consequence, an original theoretical conclusion is that FFWC is underpinned by nine dimensions.

The way in which the aims of this thesis were achieved was based on the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research. This led to the methodological choice of in-depth interviews and case studies. The pilot study comprised 16 interviews and was
followed by four case studies at two private sector and two public sector organisations. A major strength of using case study data collection was the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. Using multiple sources of evidence also allowed the integration of different types of data (Yin, 2003). This was achieved with the use of interviews and documentary analysis.

The research methods literature supports the decision to use qualitative methodology, particularly given the fact that the research topic relates to organisational culture in general and FFWC in particular. Linstead (2009: 157) argues that if culture is unconscious, it cannot be easily articulated. Questionnaires can therefore only reveal the visible aspects of culture. Research conducted using a quantitative method would contribute to research on issues of work and family, but it is less well suited to studying culture. During the fieldwork the qualitative nature of the research methodology allowed for probing of participants’ responses and the development of ideas that emerged that were often unexpected and unplanned. This enabled the discovery of insights that would have been impossible using questionnaires. Additionally, the case study approach allowed for accounts from participants to be interpreted in the organisational context, which is appropriate for the concept of culture as an outcome of organisational processes. An in-depth explanation of the methodology process is provided in Chapter 4.

The contribution of this thesis is significant for practice also. It is important for organisations to understand the reasons why their FFWPs are often not utilised by their employees. It is not enough to simply provide the benefit and assume it will be used. Greater use of FFWPs will assist employees in balancing their work and family demands. The effective implementation of FFWPs has the potential to provide benefits to organisations as well such as reduced turnover and reduced absenteeism. The implication of any gap between rhetoric and reality for employees will be considered later in the thesis.

**Thesis structure**

This opening chapter has provided an introduction to the thesis by way of explaining how the research topic was developed. The research questions were then introduced with key terms following. The implications of HRM and diversity management for
work and family balance were introduced. Significant stakeholders are then introduced. The next section provided the contribution to HRM knowledge, theory and practice that the thesis aim to make. This included a short statement concerning the significance of this contribution. There was also an explanation of how the aims of the thesis were achieved by the chosen methodology.

Chapter 2 brings together contextual information that is necessary for interpreting policy and practice in the case study organisations, such as legislation and institutions. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on HRM theory, work and family balance, organisational culture, FFWC, and the availability and usage of FFWPs. Chapter 4 discusses the methodological choices made, including the chosen methods of data generation and analysis along with related ethical concerns. The research findings are discussed in the subsequent four chapters; that is, each case study is presented in a separate chapter. Chapter 9 returns to the research questions and reflects on the findings of the fieldwork in light of insights from the relevant literature to date. The final chapter discusses the implications of the findings for the research aims and the theoretical framework. A reflection on the contribution to knowledge expresses the significance of this thesis relative to its limitations and the implications for the HRM discipline, to practice, and to further lines of enquiry.

**Chapter conclusion**

This thesis specifically investigates the influence of FFWC regarding the availability and usage of FFWPs. Although this research investigates FFWC, this is not an organisational studies thesis. This is an HRM thesis on an important and contemporary diversity management topic. This will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3 as relevant HRM theory is drawn upon. Key concepts that are investigated throughout the thesis include: organisational culture, family-friendly work culture, family-friendly work practices, work and family balance, human resource management (soft and hard), and core and periphery workers.

The research framework incorporated the role of FFWC in shaping the utilisation of FFWPs by assessing the dimensions of FFWC previously identified by Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005. The utility of the soft and hard HRM model (Legge 1995) and the core and periphery idea (Lepak and Snell, 1999) in predicting the
availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations were described. An important theme investigated in this research is the notion that there is often a difference between the organisational rhetoric compared to the reality (Kramar 2012a:257). In the current research this is expressed in the rhetoric of the availability of FFWPs compared to the reality of the usage of FFWPs.

The new FFWC dimensions and aspects that were uncovered reinforced the complexity of organisational culture as explored by authors such as Schein (1985) and Linstead (2009) and specifically FFWC (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005; Bradley et al. 2010). This thesis demonstrates that when organisational policies are available to support the usage of FFWPs, the intervention of organisational culture and specifically FFWC creates complex outcomes for each individual. Compounding this complexity, this thesis will explain how job characteristics (Lepak and Snell, 1999) and the style of HRM (Legge 1995) often play an intricate and idiosyncratic part.

To sum up, the gap in the current FFWC knowledge clearly established the need for the current research topic. There are two key areas in which this thesis will contribute to HRM knowledge, theory and practice. These areas relate to the notion of rhetoric and reality regarding the availability and usage of FFWPs and that organisational culture and FFWC are complex. The significance of these contributions will be further discussed in the last chapter. The following chapter provides a discussion relating to the context, legislation and relevant institutions that relate to FFWPs.
CHAPTER 2: Context, legislation and relevant institutions

Policy and practice around work and family balance are affected by external regulation, although there is still significant scope for managers to shape policy and practice around this regulation, particularly relative to the minimum provisions of employees’ rights around work and family. Some of the external regulation focuses on rights of workers as individuals, with protections against some forms of discrimination found in specific discrimination laws but also within industrial relations law. The main legislation relevant to the two large private sector case study firms is the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth). Other than some protections for individual employees, the law also provides for collective determination of wages and working conditions through awards (as the safety net) and enterprise agreements through bargaining. One of the large private sector case study firms, ‘Big Bank’, is covered by an enterprise agreement where the Finance Sector Union was the bargaining representative for employees. The second large private sector firm is regulated by awards which specify minimum conditions; there are arrangements in place for workers in the form of ‘over-award’ pay and conditions which are detailed in individual contracts. The two large public sector case study firms are NSW government organisations and are regulated by New South Wales law. As public servants, the government has power to determine working conditions directly but traditionally, work has been regulated by awards made by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. There are common provisions across all government agencies. Details of the specific arrangements around work and family in each case study organisation are presented in the relevant case study chapter. The appendices also contain descriptions of arrangements.

The transition from the male breadwinner model of the family and its nineteenth century social values has influenced policy debates and outcomes in which funding for parental benefits has been highly contested (Whitehouse 2004: 410). Australia has historically had a system of ‘wage-earner social security’. However, it is likely that because the focus of the Australian industrial relations system was based on a male wage-earner, paid maternity leave, for example, was not treated as a necessary
entitlement of work. In Australia the emphasis was on paying mothers a welfare payment rather than recognising the needs of working women (Baird 2003: 106-107). Consequently, until 2011 paid parental leave was largely confined to large private sector organisations and to the public sector through enterprise bargaining agreements (Baird 2003: 101 - 103; Smith 2011: 655 - 656). Australia, with the USA, lagged well behind the rest of the world in providing paid maternity leave for working women (Baird 2003: 97).

Amidst rising international embarrassment and domestic concern about Australia’s lack of mandated paid maternity leave (Baird 2003:107), governments in Australia have more recently demonstrated a heightened and explicit interest in the work and family needs of employees. Recent Government family-friendly initiatives include the Work and Family Fresh Ideas Policy which provides grants to small businesses to put in place family-friendly working arrangements (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). Australia’s first national Paid Parental Leave scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011. The scheme provides eligible working parents with government-funded pay when they take time off from work to care for a new-born or adopted child (Department of Social Services 2014). The Paid Parental Leave Act 2010 (Cth) provides 18 weeks’ paid parental leave paid at the Federal Minimum Wage (Smith 2011: 656). Addressing the diversity in family relationships, a payment called Dad and Partner Pay became available on 1 January 2013 under the Australian Government’s Paid Parental Leave Scheme. It provides up to two weeks of government-funded pay at the rate of the Federal Minimum Wage to working fathers or partners (including adoptive parents and same-sex partners) who care for a child born or adopted from 1 January 2013. Dads or partners may be eligible if they work full-time, part-time, casually, seasonally, on contract, or in a family business (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2013).

Further building the case for the significance of the research topic is current work and family legislation. The Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) creates a duty for employers to consider employees’ requests for flexibility. As well as this the legislation contains National Employment Standards.
As of 1 January 2010, the National Employment Standards (NES) replace the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard. Together with modern awards (also from 1 January 2010), the NES make a new safety net for employees covered by the national workplace relations system’ (Fair Work Ombudsman n.d.: 1).

The NES comprises ten minimum standards involving: maximum weekly hours of work, requests for flexible working arrangements, parental leave, annual leave, personal/carer’s leave, compassionate leave, community service leave, long service leave, public holidays, notice of termination and redundancy pay, and provision of a fair work information statement (Fair Work Ombudsman n.d.: 1).

The right to request flexible working arrangements applies to any employee who has completed twelve months’ continuous service and is either a parent (or has responsibility for) the care of a child under school age (Skinner and Pocock 2014: 38). The NES does not define ‘flexible working arrangements’ and therefore does not limit the scope or types of arrangements that an employer and employee may agree on to assist the employee in balancing their work and family demands. However, examples may include changes in hours of work, for example part-time work, or a change in location of work, for example, working from home.

As can be seen, a number of the standards in the NES apply specifically to family-friendly arrangements. For example, parental leave represents a significant change from the previous legislative standard in that the NES provides that twelve months’ unpaid leave is available to both parents (as long as the leave is taken at different times). With the consent of the employer, unpaid parental leave may be extended for up to a further twelve months. In addition to the above legislative changes, on Friday 28 June 2013, the Fair Work Act Amendment Bill 2013 (Cth) received Royal Assent, meaning that a number of family-friendly changes are now law (Fair Work Ombudsman n.d.: 1). As a result, more groups of employees now have the right to request flexible working arrangements including employees who are caring or supporting a family or household member who is experiencing family violence.
The Commonwealth legalisation creates a duty for employers to ‘reasonably consider’ such requests. Requests must be in writing, give details of the change sought and reasons for the request. In turn, employers must respond in writing with 21 days, formally granting or refusing the request. They are able to refuse requests on ‘reasonable business grounds’ (Skinner and Pocock 2014: 38). This Act is of particular significance to this thesis as the case study interviews were conducted in 2010, the year the legislation became effective. Though it is similar to legislation in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and New Zealand, Skinner and Pocock (2011:66) assess it as weaker than these countries (Skinner and Pocock 2011: 66). The Continental arrangements, in particular, impose more rigorous obligations on employers to consider requests seriously. Increased flexibility of working time arrangements and promotion of gender equality are two important elements in the European Union’s employment policy. An example of this can be seen in Sweden where parents have a right to shorten their working time by up to a fourth until their child is eight years old (Platenga and Remery 2010: 30-31).

The extent to which an employer ought to be legally required to accommodate an employee’s family care responsibilities remains highly contested in Australian policy debates. Employers clearly voice their concerns that such requests will increase their labour costs, whilst some employer groups are pushing for employer-oriented flexibility (Pocock, Charlesworth, Chapman, 2013: 601). Furthermore, the obligation that rests with employers to grant requests from employees ‘unless there are reasonable business grounds’ is not directly enforceable as civil remedy provisions (Chapman 2013: 120). After the amendment to the *Fair Work Act* on 1 July 2013 (Cth) reasonable business grounds has been defined with the employer’s interests in mind. In the past, the concept of ‘reasonableness’ has been interpreted to include a concern for the wellbeing of employees in industrial law. Thus, it is argued by Chapman (2013: 139) that the civil remedy provision of ‘reasonable business grounds’ may impose on employers obligations not previously realised or understood. For example, an employer may be required to conduct an investigation into the employee’s request which may consider issues beyond business interests. However, it may also be the case that the modest nature of the right to request is in
fact a weak force against the existing workplace cultures (Pocock et al. 2013: 602). This thesis investigates the role played by FFWC in the uptake of FFWPs.

An important piece of legislation relating to equal opportunity of work for women was introduced into Parliament in March 2012. The aim of this legislation was to retain and improve the Equal Opportunity for women in the Workplace (EOWW) Act and the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency. The EOWW Amendment Bill successfully passed through Parliament on 22 November 2012. The new Act is called the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) and the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency is now the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The principal objects of the amended Act as found in Sect 2A are:

a) ‘to promote and improve gender equality (including equal remuneration between women and men) in employment and in the workplace; and

b) to support employers to remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce, in recognition of the disadvantaged position of women in relation to employment matters; and

c) to promote, amongst employers, the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender in relation to employment matters (including in relation to family and caring responsibilities); and

d) to foster workplace consultation between employers and employees on issues concerning gender equality in employment and in the workplace; and;

e) to improve the productivity and competitiveness of Australian business through the advancement of gender equality in employment and in the workplace’.

To summarise, the recent *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) strengthens its predecessor, the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (Cth), and shifts the focus to gender equality (EOWA, 2012: 1) which is expressed in the renaming of the name of the Act (Sutherland, 2013: 103). As can be seen in the above listed objects of the new Act, the problem of the gender pay gap is identified in the first object with reference to equal remuneration between women and men.
The new Act places additional requirements on employers to report against a number of gender equality indicators. One of these includes equal remuneration between men and women (Charlesworth and Macdonald 2015: 427; Sutherland, 2015: 343). Whilst reporting is essential, the Act does not specify action to identify pay inequality, such as the use of gender bias-free job evaluation methods. Rather than being required to meet minimum standards across all gender equality areas that are stipulated under the new Act, organisations that employ 500 or more staff will be allowed to choose which policy area they wish to focus on. This means an organisation could choose not to introduce a policy that covers equal remuneration (Charlesworth and Macdonald 2015: 428).

An important reform introduced by this Act is that employers are now required to report on progress towards gender equality outcomes not just processes (Sutherland, 2015: 343). Another significant change brought about by the Act is that it promotes the accommodation of family and caring responsibilities (Sutherland, 2013: 104) although the coherence of the enforcement measures is questioned. For example, the sanction for non-compliance has not changed in the new Act and remains only the possibility of being named in a report by the Agency. There are concerns the Act will be too weak to drive greater progress on gender diversity at workplaces without specific efforts to foster the cultural changes needed (Gaze, 2014: 623-624). Further attempts to support for work and family balance and anti-discrimination is also found in the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth). The amendment to this Act in 2013 strengthened the provisions relevant to employees with families. Pregnant women can now transfer to a safe job, employees can take special maternity leave, employee couples can take up to eight weeks unpaid parental leave at the same time, and more groups of employees now have the right to request flexible working arrangements (Fair Work Ombudsman 2013: 1).

Public policy support for work and family balance has been influenced by trade union advocacy. Over the years, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has developed policies that recognise that workers, particularly women, will require extended periods of time out of employment to undertake care, together with assistance in making a series of transitions back to work. At the ACTU Congress in 2009, the ACTU claimed that its Family Provisions Test Case 2005 delivered
significant improvements to award based work and family entitlements (ACTU 2009a). Despite these improvements, views expressed by the ACTU indicate that Australia is still falling behind much of the developed world in recognising the needs of employees with caring responsibilities (ACTU 2004; 2008; 2009a; 2009b). Unions maintain that a system of workplace laws that respect Australian’s rights to be treated fairly is needed, with dignity and in a way that allows them to fulfill their family obligations and other commitments outside of work (ACTU 2012). Despite this, the Fair Work Ombudsman’s 2012-2013 annual report revealed nearly a third of all complaints of discrimination were pregnancy related. The ACTU conducted its own enquiry and was flooded with complaints from members regarding maternity leave rights not being obeyed (Carter 2013).

Employer associations have also influenced public policy. One such employer association, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), argued that the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach of the union movement and the lack of focus by policy makers on the capacities of businesses were isolating employers from the work and family debate (ACCI: 2004). This indicates an obvious polarisation of views between the employers and the unions at that time. More recently, employers have acknowledged that there is a business case for providing workplace flexibility. These benefits include reduced absenteeism and reduced turnover of staff. Consequently, ACCI’s current work and family policy now encourages and supports formal or informal workplace agreements regarding work and family issues. However, the ACCI believes many small businesses are limited in their capacity to accommodate employee family issues (ACCI 2010). Clearly, the ACCI’s views are now more convergent to the views of the ACTU. Despite this, there are still areas of tension such as the ACCI’s views regarding small businesses. However, the empirical focus of the current research is large organisations, an issue which will be revisited in the literature review.

To conclude, this discussion provides an overview of some of the conflict between the employment relations stakeholders. The diverging perspectives have resulted in a struggle over the control and management of work and family issues. The discourse on the work and family domain has been strongly shaped by the various stakeholder interests. Clearly, there have been a number of recent government policy and
legislative initiatives regarding work and family balance. The contrasting views highlighted here of the ACTU and ACCI help us to understand some of the conflict about work and family balance. This includes the interpretation and application of the relevant policy framework. The policy framework is publicly contested at the macro level and the outcome is then filtered to the micro level. An emphasis is placed in this research on the experiences of individuals regarding FFWPs at the workplace level.

In the following chapter various theoretical frameworks will be discussed relating to the availability of family-friendly work practices by organisations. Two of these being institutional theory and organisational adaption theory relate well to the context, legislation and relevant institutions as discussed in this chapter. This is because institutional theory believes that the adoption of FFWPs is a way of conforming to normative pressures from the wider society (Wood, de Menezes and Lasaosa 2003). Such pressures could come from legislation and institutions. Likewise, organisational adaption theory argues that recognition needs to be given to how management perceives and interprets or recognises the institutional environment. Therefore, in this thesis the role of the institutional environment is considered to be important and it is included in the proposed theoretical framework.

The following chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to FFWPs. It develops a theoretical framework that will guide the empirical study. The chapter aims to explicate the concepts and theories used in the thesis, review the literature on FFWPs and FFWC and to legitimate the research questions.
CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

The gap between work and family rhetoric and practice may partly explain dissatisfaction with organisations. Organisational policies lead to understandings of what employees can expect from the organisation. When employees’ expectations are not met by the organisation, they are likely to experience negative feelings (Metz 2011: 288).

The aim of this chapter is to identify what is known about the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices (FFWPs). The key elements to be examined are family-friendly work culture (FFWC), job characteristics, and the style of human resource management (HRM). The focus of this thesis is to understand how these three factors interrelate to affect the availability and usage of FFWPs. The chapter explores the literature relevant to conceptualising and theorising FFWC, current knowledge of FFWC, the nature and significance of work and family balance, implications of HRM and diversity management for work and family balance, theoretical frameworks concerning FFWPs, and studies regarding the provision and utilisation of FFWPs. The research gap is then presented followed by an explanation of how this thesis proposes to address the research gap, and the development of the theoretical framework to guide the empirical research. The research topic is complex with literature available within the fields of management, gender studies, work and society, community, work and family studies, sociology, and behavioural sciences. Whilst being cognisant of this range of literature, the thesis adopts an HRM lens.

The conceptual framework was used to critically analyse the theory and empirical studies from the work and family literature. The questions in this framework that were used to assess the literature relating to the theoretical perspectives were: How do the organisation and the environment interact? What is the role of the individual? How are employees managed? The questions that were used to critique the literature relating to the various empirical studies were: What did the study investigate? How
did the study investigate this topic? What were the findings of the study? What was the significance of the findings? Did the findings leave a gap in our knowledge? How did the study relate to the research questions of this thesis? Given the broad range of literature considered in this chapter, the chapter commences with the presentation of the thesis’ theoretical framework to provide some structure. That is, the framework is presented first and then the literature from which it was derived is explained.

**The proposed theoretical framework**

Working from the findings from the work and family literature, the theoretical framework proposed for this thesis was developed and is provided in figure 1. The theoretical model provided a framework within which to understand what factors play a role in the availability and usage of FFWPs. This theoretical model presents an HRM problem. An important consideration is that HR practices, as we have traditionally viewed them, will be a necessary component of influencing employee attitudes and behaviour (Purcell *et al*. 2009: 9). Thus, this thesis adopts an HRM lens and therefore investigates whether the style of HRM would have an impact on the availability and usage of FFWPs. As described earlier, the dichotomy of soft and hard HRM was identified by Legge (1995: 66). Lepak and Snell’s human resource architecture model (1999) suggests that HR strategy and practice is heterogeneous and that the characteristics of the job were a key area of distinction for the authors. They considered whether an employee’s job was core or periphery would determine their access to HRM benefits such as FFWPs. This idea is explored in this thesis. Legge’s (1995) framework, by way of her soft and HRM dichotomy, is a useful schema for exploring Lepak and Snell’s (1999) heterogeneity idea further.

Evident in the framework is organisational culture, specifically, FFWC. Organisational culture and FFWC are considered to be important media of organisational values and attitudes, norms and expectations (Schein 1985). FFWC, the focus of this thesis, incorporates managerial support, career consequences associated with using FFWPs, organisational time expectations that may interfere with family responsibilities, the gendered nature of policy utilisation and co-worker support (Thompson *et al*. 1999; McDonald *et al*. 2005). Organisational culture and specifically FFWC are also considered to be an important influence on the
availability and usage of FFWPs. This in turn contributes to the outcome of work and family balance which is the lived experience of the individual employee. There is often a gap between the provision and utilisation of FFWPs. This highlights the difference between the rhetoric and reality that often exists in practice of many diversity management programs (Kramar 2012a: 257).

Another component of the framework is the FFWPs themselves. These include childcare, elder care, job-share and part-time work, among other things. Participant characteristics in the diagram include gender and age, marital status, number of children, qualifications and occupation. Organisational characteristics include industry, sector and size of organisation (Bardoel and Tharenou, 1997; Houkamau and Boxall, 2011). The institutional environment relates to the normative pressures from the wider society on the organisation. This includes the legislative framework. According to institutional theory, the adoption of FFWPs is a way of conforming and of institutionalising family-friendly management (Wood, de Menezes and Lasaosa 2003).
Conceptualising and theorising family-friendly work culture

As noted in the introduction, the thesis’ focus on culture requires exploration of culture as a concept. Numerous attempts have been made to define culture (Linstead 2009: 154). Common to many of these is the view that culture consists of value-driven, normatively-based and often symbolic aspects of organisational life that are shared by a significant number of organisational members (Eldridge and Crombie 1974: 89; Schwartz and Davis 1981: 33). According to Schein (1985: 9) culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid. Therefore, it is
taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. Constructs, practices and rituals are part of organisational culture. Each part is one piece of the larger contextual whole of organisational culture (Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo 1982: 126). Schein (1992) proposed a model of organisational culture which describes the three levels at which culture manifests itself: visible artefacts; espoused values; and underlying, basic assumptions. He considered basic assumptions to be the essence of culture and the foundation for values. In this way culture sits at a deep unconscious level.

At the heart of organisational culture are hidden values which are unconscious thoughts and feelings which are the ultimate source of values and action (Schein 1985). In this sense some part of culture is difficult to manage in it is not capable of being directed. This means that attempts to articulate and reinforce appropriate values and norms need to reflect hidden values (Purcell et al. 2009: 23). Another compelling aspect of organisational culture as explained by Lewis (2010: 357) is that the masculine model of work is deeply embedded in most organisational cultures. That model may have appeared functional at a time when male breadwinners were the norm, though this is not the case today.

Every organisation may also contain less uniform or even conflicting cultures known as sub-cultures which add to the complexity. Sub-cultures are groups of people who are part of a wider group, subscribing to the overall culture but with some distinctly different values of their own (Linstead 2009: 189). These sub-cultures are typically defined by department designations and geographical separation (Linstead 2009: 163). In other words, different groups develop different outlooks on the world, thus emphasising the pluralism of organisations (Alvesson 2011: 15). Because the four organisations that were studied in this thesis were large, the concept of sub-cultures was addressed by concentrating on participants’ perceptions at both the work unit level as well as the organisational level.

Organisational climate refers to perceptions of organisational policies, practices and procedures that are shared by individuals within organisations (Cleveland, Cordeiro, Fisk and Mulvaney 2006: 230). Climate measures the fit between the prevailing culture and the individual values of the employees (Schwartz and Davis 1981: 33). Schein (2011) makes an important distinction between the culture and climate
concepts in the following way. He points out that culture can be thought of as a series of layers of personality formation resulting from the various groups into which a person has been socialised. In contrast to this, climate can be thought of as the result of various rewards and punishments that parents and other authorities provide in a person’s environment (Schein 2011: xi). Therefore a climate can be locally created by what leaders do and what the environment affords. By contrast, a culture can only evolve out of mutual experience and shared learning (Schein 2011: xii). Thus, it is possible for leaders to create climates and to dictate behavioural change in the short term, however, only a shared learning process of what works over a long period of time for a group of people will create culture (Schwartz and Davis 1981:33; Schein 2011: xii).

The definition utilised in this thesis indicates that organisational culture is understood as being like the ‘personality’ of the organisation. Often these personality characteristics are hidden under the surface, difficult to see, like an iceberg. Culture is an outcome of many things with an intangible, unstable, transitory nature. The environment is a factor that shapes the strategies of management. As a result, this thesis considers that managers cannot simply engineer culture regardless of the environment. That makes it important to review the literature on institutional theory and resource dependence theory due to their interest in environmental aspects of organisational decision-making.

To help employees cope with the conflicting pressures of work and family, many organisations have attempted to create ‘family-friendly’ workplaces. Family-friendly initiatives include child and elder care supports and supportive leave policies (Duxbury and Gover 2011: 271). Studies show that such policies and programs alone have little impact on employee work and family balance because of the organisation’s informal processes (Eaton 2003: 150; Bond 2004: 3; Behson 2005: 495; Houkamau and Boxall 2011). To understand this gap between policy provision and utilisation, the work and family literature has begun to look at the relationship between organisational culture and work and family balance. This examination has resulted in the fairly recent emergence of the term ‘family-friendly work culture’ (Thompson et al. 2005: 118; Duxbury and Gover 2011: 275). The term ‘family-friendly work culture’ (FFWC) has been used to describe a particular aspect of the
more general, and more frequently discussed, organisational culture. FFWC has been defined as ‘the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees work and family lives’ (Thompson et al. 1999: 394). This definition is widely cited and is the one utilised here.

There is a question of whether the challenge for organisations lies in work/life balance rather than work/family balance. Few studies have examined work and family issues of single employees without children (Casper, Weltman and Kwegisna 2007: 480). Casper et al. (2007) examined single employees’ perceptions of how their organisations supported their work-life balance in comparison to employees with families. The 543 study participants in their study were university students in the central United States. Participants completed an online survey which was based around the singles-friendly culture measure developed by Casper et al. (2007:486) from their literature review. This conception of singles-friendly culture was consistent with Schein’s (1990) definition of organisational culture and Thompson et al.’s (1999) view of work-family culture. Their findings indicated that organisations that are inclusive of single, child-free employees can enhance worker attachment through a sense of support. They recommended that organisations would benefit from ensuring their work-life programs support various non-work roles, not just family (Casper et al. 2007: 498). Furthermore, Lewis (2010) argues that the term family-friendly is problematic as the nature and complexity of family is not always acknowledged and the word ‘friendly’ can be taken to imply favours rather than entitlements. Hence the term work-life is increasingly being substituted in more recent literature and practice. However, Lewis and Campbell (2008: 535) acknowledge that work-life balance’s focus on ‘everyone’ may have more potential to include men but may nevertheless ‘obscure the gendered division of unpaid work that is so fundamental to gender inequality’.

For the purpose of this thesis the term ‘family-friendly’ is used because it is considered that ‘work-life’ encompasses non-work aspects such as study or voluntary work that are not within the scope of the current research. Yet, the complexity of ‘family’ as identified by Lewis (2010) is acknowledged in this thesis. For this reason some of the participants were single, while the majority were partnered or separated.
or divorced. Singles were included because it is believed that single people can experience ‘family’ demands as well those who are partnered. The demands of singles may include looking after an elderly parent or a sibling who requires special care due to illness or disability.

Theoretical frameworks relating to the availability of family-friendly work practices by organisations

Writers have drawn upon a variety of different frameworks and theories in order to understand the forces that operate for the adoption of FFWPs in organisations. Key findings related to the present research are set out here.

Institutional theory

According to institutional theory, the adoption of FFWPs is a way of conforming to normative pressures from the wider society and of institutionalising family-friendly management (Wood, de Menezes and Lasaosa 2003). A significant organisational characteristic that has been studied relating to work and family programs relates to the size of the organisation. Firm ‘size has been one indicator of the extent to which a firm concedes to institutional demands with larger firms expected to be affected by such pressures’ (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000: 1108). Firms that are subjected to greater institutional pressure or that exist in more institutionalised environments should receive greater benefits from the adoption of work-family policies (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000). It is also considered that, due to their high visibility, large private firms and public sector organisations are more likely to confirm to societal pressures (Oliver, 1991; Goodstein, 1994). It is also thought by such theorists that pressures to respond to demands such as family-friendly issues may be greater in some industries than in others (Morgan and Milliken, 1992: 228).

A limitation of the institutional research is that individual perceptions of employees are largely ignored. For example, individuals active in tight labour markets have an advantage over employees operating in sectors with high unemployment. This was experienced by Procter and Gamble who found that two out of every three high performers who left their organisation were women (Poelmans and Sahibzada, 2004). This created the drive for the organisations to develop flexible work arrangements. Institutional theory views organisations as relatively passive players adapting to
pressures in their environments through a process of osmosis. The relative strength of institutional versus efficiency factors is moderated by the stage of institutionalisation, as well as factors related to the organisation’s resistance to institutional pressure (Barringer and Milkovich 1998: 10). Barringer and Milkovich (1998) proposed a model that delineates both institutional pressures and expected efficiency gains as influencing the provision of flexible benefits plans.

The value of institutional theory is in terms of explaining the relation between organisations and environments. Of course, organisational practices are not entirely determined by the environment. Most variants of institutional theory see some role played by the strategic and pragmatic decisions of managers. This includes responses to the demands of employees. The power of individual employees to influence policy and practice may depend on their status as shaped by labour market supply and demand. Institutional theory informed the first research question, specifically in terms of investigating the availability of FFWPs at the case study organisations.

*Organisational adaptation theory*

Organisational adaption theory argues the analysis of the organisation and the environment must recognise the process of strategic choice by organisational decision makers (Hannan and Freeman 1977; Daft and Weick 1984; Goodstein 1994, 1995 and Wood et al. 2003). Child (1972: 10) argues that there needs to be recognition of the political process around this strategic choice. He argues that managers may well have the power to enact their organisation’s environment (Child 1972: 10). Thus in organisational adaptation theory credibility is given to how management perceives and interprets or recognises the institutional environment. Previous studies have used this framework for studying work and family (Davenport and Pearson 1998; Friedman, Christensen and DeGroot 1998 and Milliken, Martins and Morgan 1998). The organisational adaptation literature suggests that if women strongly request family-friendly arrangements, then organisations which are female intensive are highly likely to provide them (Wood et al., 2003).

Comparing institutional theory with organisational adaptation theory provides convincing evidence that organisations are no longer passive players within their environments (Osterman 1995: 698; Kochan and Osterman 1995; Capelli, Bassi,
Katz, Knoke, Osterman, and Useem 1997). However, organisation adaption theory does not address the question of organisational differences such as size of organisation in responsiveness to change. To overcome this weakness, organisational differences are examined in terms of the important idea of management response to the environment. For example, participants were asked about their managers’ responses to work and family issues, such as whether managers support the use of work and family policies in their organisation. Organisational adaption theory informed the first research question, specifically in terms of investigating not only the availability of FFWPs but also factors affecting the usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations.

Resource dependence theory

The resource dependence view argues that when firms have resources that are valuable or rare they can implement value-creating strategies not easily duplicated by competing firms (Barney 1991; Conner and Prahalad 1996; Peteraf, 1993; Wernerfelt 1984, 1995). The resource dependence model assumes that management decisions are heavily influenced by internal and external stakeholders, who control critical resources (Barringer and Milkovich 1998). It is considered that certain job classifications are more vital than others to the organisations. These jobs are able to demand attractive conditions of employment such as flexible work patterns to accommodate work and family. This idea is explored below in the human resource architecture model. External stakeholders include unions which can exert pressure on an organisation, particularly during enterprise bargaining negotiations. Resource based theorists recognise that the ability to implement strategies is a resource in itself and is thus a source of competitive advantage (Barney 2001: 54).

An advancement of the resource dependence theory is Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model. This model attempts to deal with the issue of different employee groups. It considers that, like other organisational assets, employee skills can be classified as core or peripheral and this then gives them a value to the organisation. Lepak and Snell (1999) suggest that it will depend on the uniqueness and value of human capital as to which of the HR configurations will be applicable. This idea is supported by Glass and Finley (2002: 316) who argue that the most powerful workers, such as holders of professional and managerial jobs, receive
the most generous employer benefits. The concept of core and periphery employees is consistent with the HR causal chain model. This model looks at the chain of processes that helps HRM to be effective, one such being how management manages people across different jobs (Purcell et al. 2009: 15). Supporting the aims of this thesis, the HR causal chain model also points to the need to distinguish between intended and actual HR practices as experienced by employees and the importance of organisational culture.

More recently, Lepak and Snell (2002) acknowledged that their human resource architecture theory relies upon a variety of modes of employment. Such modes include differences between industrial, salaried, craft and secondary employment within firms (Lepak and Snell 2002). Interesting differences can also be found when studying employment relationships that range from long-term relationships with core employees to short-term arrangements with contract labour (Matusik and Hill 1998; Rousseau 1995; Tsui, Pearce, Porter and Hite 1995). Supporting their core and periphery idea, Lepak and Snell’s (2002: 535) study found that the strategic value and uniqueness of human capital varied across employment modes. These findings may be encouraging for advocates of the resource-based view of the firm such as Barney (1991), Quinn (1992) and Wernerfelt 1984.

The importance of knowledge work has increased in developed economies in recent years. Therefore, efforts to understand how firms generate, leverage and protect knowledge have moved to the forefront of the human resources field (Hansen 1999; Hedlund 1994; Nonaka 1991; Sveiby 1997; Szulanski 1996). In fact, both Grant (1996) and Liebeskind (1996) argue that it is important for organisations to protect knowledge from imitation. Consistent with this argument, Lepak, Takeuchi and Snell (2003) and Lepak and Snell (2007: 213) have refined the human resource architecture model further by adopting a knowledge-based view of employment. This updates their model to reflect the increase of knowledge-based industries in developed nations. The high value and uniqueness of core knowledge workers means they contribute to the firm’s success through knowledge and intellect. Such job categories include managers, planners, engineers and analysts (Purcell, et al. 2009: 97). The core and periphery model provides some useful insights into the way some employees gain access to family-friendly policies and others do not. For example at
ABC, John Fairfax and Unisys it was found that highly valued employees received greater access to family-friendly benefits (Breakspear 1998). Uneven employee access informed the current research and participants were asked if they thought employees were equally valued in the organisation and if employees had the same access to family-friendly benefits.

Lepak and Snell’s (1999) can be distinguished from the earlier Atkinson and Gregory core and periphery model (Atkinson 1984a and 1984b; Atkinson and Gregory 1986). Atkinson and Gregory focused on core and periphery in terms of segmentation of the labour force, for example full-time workers and part-time workers. Atkinson and Gregory (1986: 13) introduced the idea of numerical flexibility explaining that ‘peripheral groups are brought in mainly to achieve greater flexibility in the number of workers employed’. Peripheral workers are offered a job not a career. In contrast, with core workers, firms are looking for functional flexibility and core workers enjoy greater continuity of employment compared to peripheral workers. In the core group, promotion prospects are generally favourable as the mastery of skills tends to be firm specific. Therefore, organisations rely less on the external labour market to fill vacancies (Atkinson, 1984b: 29, 31).

This thesis was informed by Lepak and Snell’s (1999) definition of core and periphery used within the HRM discipline; specifically this was with respect to fourth research question which investigated the impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations. This core and periphery definition was used rather than the Atkinson and Gregory (1986) version to explain labour market patterns in light of increasing flexibility observed in the 1980s and 1990s. Therefore, during the fieldwork, core and periphery job characteristics were explained to participants in terms of employees being valuable and unique/or not to an organisation, rather than whether they were full-time or part-time.

The ideas underlying the resource dependence theory and the human resource architecture model have obvious merit, particularly due to the fact that they value knowledge work highly. This makes sense given that in recent times in developed nations, the knowledge worker has become the major source of competitive advantage. However, Breakspear (1998: 122) argues that the resource dependence theory is limited in that it only provides superficial explanations and that a better
understanding of family-friendly benefits distribution would be gained by considering organisational behaviour theory. Lepak and Snell (2007) themselves acknowledge that it is also possible that the differentiation of human resource practices raises a number of practical and ethical issues. These issues include recognising that organisational decisions regarding employment options are not always based solely on economic rationality (Boxall and Purcell 2003). Such decisions should be undertaken with due consideration to legal, social and institutional environmental issues (Lepak and Snell 2007).

Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model provides excellent input for the contemporary debate regarding the contingent perspective versus a best practice approach to strategic HRM (Becker and Gerhart 1996). The model refocuses strategic human resource theory on a new emphasis for fit which may be differentiated across and within firms with differing HR architectures. Becker and Huselid (2006: 916) and Wright and Snell (1998) ask if this emphasis on differentiation will create a tension between fit and the constraints of flexibility. Huselid and Becker (2011:421) agree with Lepak and Snell (1999) that a focus on strategic capabilities and strategic jobs represents significant potential value creation for firms. However, they also argue that differentiation by strategic capability by organisations represents challenges for managers and theoretical and empirical challenges for academics (Huselid and Becker (2011: 424). These challenges include measuring workforce differentiation and the operationalising of strategy, strategic capabilities and strategic jobs (Huselid and Becker 2011: 425).

A further issue that comes to mind from providing uneven HR practices between the core and periphery jobs is that they may hinder the dedication and commitment of employees. This ‘second tier’ of employees who are not highly valued are often excluded from benefits and have fewer career options (Greenwood and Wilcox 2006: 338). If employees feel that they are not receiving the same benefits as others in the organisation and that they are not being equally valued, it is possible that they will become de-motivated. This could result in reduced productivity, increased absenteeism or increased turnover. Obviously, the reactions of employees working together who are treated differently needs to be tested further and these ideas are included in the research questions.
A novel perspective regarding the growing importance of the periphery is proposed by Deiser (2009: 15). To ‘remain competitive, large corporations have to let go of steep hierarchies and central control and instead empower the periphery of the organisation’ (Deiser 2009: 16). Therefore senior leadership needs to create the right organisational architecture to encourage cross-functional collaboration. Corporate learning can help to reshape the mindset of an organisation to an enabling role where the periphery can survive. Deiser’s (2009) viewpoint questions whether Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery idea is still relevant and for that reason is tested by this thesis.

Despite the apparent issues and possible limitations arising from the Lepak and Snell (1999; 2002) human resource architecture model, the framework continues to be widely cited. Lepak and Snell (1999) have 1,262 citations in total, 341 of them since 2010. Lepak and Snell (2002) have 429 citations, 174 since 2010. Recent citations of Lepak and Snell (1999) include Ployhart and Moliterno (2011:127) who offer a new approach to the conceptualisation of human capital resources. They focus on how human capital resources are created and argue that human capital is created from each individual’s knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (Ployhart and Moliterno 2011:145). This thesis attempts to develop Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model. The aim is to take the model further by also considering the role played by FFWC, the type of organisation and style of HRM. This is to ensure that it is robust and relevant to today’s organisations.

**What do we already know about family-friendly work culture?**

The first published academic study of its kind which explored the dimensions of FFWC measured work and family culture using a 21-item scale which was developed from a review of the literature and previous pilot studies (Thompson et al. 1999: 399). Their results indicated that employees whose organisations provided work-family benefits reported greater affective commitment, less intention to leave the organisation, and less work-to-family conflict. Of particular importance is their finding that the perception of a supportive work-family culture was significantly related to work attitudes, above and beyond availability of work-family benefits (Thompson et al. (1999: 409). Using surveys from 276 managers and professionals,
Thompson et al. (1999) identified three dimensions of work-family culture: managerial support for work-family balance, perceived negative career consequences associated with utilising work-family benefits and organisational time expectations that may interfere with family responsibilities. Managerial support is based on the argument that managers play an important role in the success of family-friendly programs (Allen 2001). Managers are likely to perceive that they have more control over work and family (Thomas and Ganster 1995) because they either encourage or discourage the usage of the programs by their subordinates (Perlow 1995; Thompson, Thomas and Maier 1992 and Allen 2001). The role of supervisors is discussed further in this chapter in the section relating to the usage of FFWPs. The perception of negative career consequences is thought to arise when others in the organisation perceive that an employee’s absence due to family demands equates to a lack of commitment. The third dimension relates to organisational time demands, defined as the extent to which an organisation expects an employee to put work before family. This could result in having to work back late without notice or having to take work home (Thompson et al 1999: 395, 408). This dimension relates to work overload in any kind of job within the organisation. It does not explore the effect of job characteristics that is investigated by this thesis.

Thompson et al.’s (1999) family-friendly cultural dimensions are used in the current research as they were considered to be important aspects of the family-friendly cultural phenomenon. Thompson et al.’s (1999) research findings were persuasive and compelling because they introduced a measure of work and family culture and investigated which employees were more likely to utilise FFWPs (Thompson et al. 1999: 408). New legislation and shifts in the labour market have occurred since Thompson et al. conducted their 1999 study. These factors highlight the importance of the current thesis which aims to understand more about FFWC dimensions that have been identified and to explore whether there may be additional dimensions from those previously identified by Thompson et al. (1999). Consequently, more recent studies in FFWC have also been considered in this investigation and are described below. As well as Thompson et al.’s (1999) dimensions two other FFWC dimensions (McDonald et al. 2005) were incorporated in the FFWC framework utilised in this thesis and are outlined shortly.
The influence of organisational culture and climate on the effectiveness of individual strategies for the management of work-family role integration is an important factor Kossek, Noe and DeMarr (1999). Organisations can have a culture and climate reflecting commonly held perceptions regarding boundary separation and the degree to which care-giving roles should be pursued during the normal work day (Kossek et al. 1999: 119). The concepts of integration and segmentation (Kossek et al. 1999) were incorporated into the pilot interviews and the case study interviews of this thesis when participants were asked ‘What is your experience of work and family balance?’ and ‘Are you expected to take work home?’ The rationale for including Kossek, Noe and DeMarr’s (1999) concepts of integration and segmentation around work and private life was that they are considered to be very significant when studying the topic of work and family balance. This is because these and other organisational norms help shape individual’s actual experiences of work and family balance as well as their usage of FFWPs. Kossek, Noe and DeMarr’s (1999) concepts are discussed again later in this chapter when discussing the availability of FFWPs.

An important aspect to work and family culture relates to personal employee factors such as dependents. Kossek, Colquitt and Noe (2001) were the first to examine how the type of dependent and positive or negative work-family climates interacts with care-giving decisions. Their findings support the notion that work-family variables interact in complex ways, demonstrating that research on work-family performance, conflict and well-being would benefit from consideration of the simultaneous effects of such variables. Their findings show that dimensions of climate (i.e. sharing concerns and making sacrifices) have differing effects on the relationship between care-giving decisions and employee well-being, conflict and performance. Many organisations have internal cultures that signal, through rewards such as promotion, that employees should sacrifice family for work. This aspect of Kossek et al.’s (2001) understanding of culture is consistent with the working definition in the current research. Their study makes an important contribution by highlighting that examining any of these facets in isolation leads to an underestimation of the complexity of these phenomena. Furthermore, the study by Kossek et al. (2001) informed the current research as questions were asked relating to the participants’ dependents.
Temporal and operational flexibility is considered to be an important aspect concerning the management of work and family balance. Campbell Clark (2001) developed a measure of FFWC based on: temporal flexibility (flexible work scheduling), operational flexibility (flexible work processes), and an understanding by management that family needs are important. All these aspects were included in the fieldwork questions relating to culture in this thesis. Campbell Clark’s (2001) study showed that operational flexibility (the flexibility to alter one’s work) is the cultural dimension most often associated with aspects of work and family balance. It was also found that the presence of family-friendly culture characteristics did not benefit one group of workers over another in terms of work and family balance outcomes. Students from classes in two universities located in the north-west United States were asked to supply names and addresses of possible participants to the study. Campbell Clark’s (2001) research makes a unique contribution as an empirical study on a cross-section of individuals who work in a wide variety of work cultures in organisations of different sizes because it examines three aspects of culture simultaneously. This research is also unique because it treats work and family balance as a multi-faceted concept which includes work satisfaction, home satisfaction, work functioning, family functioning and role conflict.

De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott and Pettit (2005: 90) report the findings of three surveys conducted annually from 1997 to 2000 with organisations in Australia. They explore the range and usage of work/life balance strategies in Australian organisations and identify the barriers to those strategies. Their study is relevant to this thesis as the barriers that they investigated include organisational cultural factors such as a long work hours culture, an unsupportive work environment, attitudes of senior and middle management and lack of communication and education about work/life balance strategies (De Cieri et al. 2005: 93). Their findings indicate that, although there have been some achievements made over the years, there remain substantial challenges for the uptake and management of work/life balance strategies. De Cieri et al. (2005: 98) argue that the implementation of work/life balance strategies needs to be a process involving effective implementation and communication to managers and employees, cultural change to eliminate barriers and the development of a ‘track
record’ of recent achievements to encourage future management commitment to this area.

There is much theoretical debate surrounding the ideas used in research on work-family culture which accounts for the lack of consensus on how to define and measure it. Mauno, Kinnunen and Pyykko (2005) argue that the issue that needs further clarification is whether the relationship between a supportive work-family culture and well-being is direct or mediated by other factors. Their study examined whether perceived work-family conflict would function as a mediator in the link between work-family culture perceptions and self-reported distress. Data was obtained from 1,297 people in five Finnish organisations representing both the public and private sectors. The findings of the study showed that perceived work-family conflict functioned as a partial mediator between employees’ perceptions of work-family culture and self-reported distress in two organisations, whereas the relationship turned out to be direct in the other three organisations. Thus a supportive work-family culture was related directly and indirectly through reduced work-family conflict to the well-being of employees.

A supportive work and family culture has been shown to vary depending on gender distribution of senior management positions. Lyness and Kropf (2005: 54) using survey responses from 505 managers and professionals from 20 European countries found a positive association between the proportion of women versus men in senior management and the perceived supportiveness of organisational work-family culture. They concluded that these results might be interpreted as showing that inclusion of women in critical societal or organisational roles may help to temper otherwise male-gendered organisational cultures. This results in cultures that are more supportive of employees’ needs to balance work and family. In addition, when women are valued as citizens and employees, linking back to resource dependence and institutional theory, it is likely that there will be increased focused on family-friendly work issues (Lyness and Kropf 2005: 54). However, the argument is not so simple, as the results of Blair-Loy and Wharton’s (2002) study, previously discussed, showed that the probability of using flexibility policies was much higher with a male, single supervisor than a female, married supervisor. Such contradictory results again justify
the need for the current thesis as well as future studies to help understand how various factors play a part in the provision and utilisation of FFWPs.

The gendered nature of policy utilisation and co-worker support were first proposed as new cultural dimensions by McDonald et al. (2005). They were later empirically tested by Waters and Bardoel (2006) and Bradley et al. (2010). The gendered nature of policy utilisation refers to the fact that, although work-life policies are ostensibly gender-neutral, in practice they revolve around facilitating the working conditions of women. This makes it difficult for men to use such policies. Co-worker support, referring to those employees who do not have children, may backlash when they are expected to work longer hours (McDonald et al. 2005:45). McDonald et al. (2005:48) extend Thompson et al.’s (1999) cultural measures by adding two new dimensions and encompassing life beyond family responsibilities. They propose that this provides an extended measure which more comprehensively assesses work-life balance culture. They suggest that more work is needed to develop and test the dimensions (McDonald et al. 2005: 49). To address this need for further testing, McDonald et al.’s (2005) five FFWC dimensions were utilised as the framework for investigating the provision and utilisation of FFWPs at the pilot organisations and the case study organisations.

A number of factors impact on employees’ use of FFWPs. Using qualitative data from focus group interviews of 76 participants, Waters and Bardoel (2006) investigated the use of FFWPs in an Australian university. The focus group data provided an opportunity to explore McDonald (2005) et al.’s model. Six themes emerged from the findings regarding reasons why participants would not access family-friendly policies: poor communication of policies, high workloads, career repercussions, management attitudes, influence of peers and administrative process (Waters and Bardoel, 2006: 72). It can be seen that these themes align with the five dimensions of work-life culture of McDonald et al. (2005). Thus the research by Waters and Bardoel (2006:79) confirmed that ‘if policies remain symbolic, they are of little value to staff’. Affirming the rationale of the design of this thesis, Waters and Bardoel (2006: 80) propose that future research needs to include different industries in order to analyse whether variations exist between industry contexts with respect to the reasons influencing employee decisions to utilise FFWPs.
Management and organisations as a whole have been shown to play an important role in employees’ perceptions of FFWC (Allen 2001; Thompson et al. 2004; Kopelman, Prottas, Thompson and Jahn 2006). Studies indicate that the number of family-friendly benefits offered related to the perceptions of a supportive FFWC as well as organisational commitment (Thompson et al. 2004; Kopelman, et al. 2006). These studies perceive organisational support as an employee’s attitudinal response to the organisation as a whole that is distinct from the attitudinal response that an employee may form regarding his or her direct supervisor (Allen 2001). In line with Allen’s (2001) approach, the organisational and managerial and supervisory attitudes and responses were considered in this thesis to be possibly different. Therefore, questions were asked regarding the organisational response in terms of current policy arrangements as well the extent to which the participant thought their manager supported work and family balance issues and the use of FFWPs. The research by Thompson et al. (2004) and Kopelman et al. (2006) was significant as it highlighted the magnitude of the distinction between reality and rhetoric when organisations attempt to implement FFWPs. However, the group sizes were small; in the majority of cases the groups consisted of only two to four employees, which makes generalising the findings difficult and highlights the need for further research.

Empirical research undertaken by Bradley, McDonald and Brown (2010) involved two studies to test and refine the five family-friendly cultural measures set out by Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005). Over 700 participants completed the first survey and 629 participants completed the second study. The results showed that Thompson et al.’s (1999) initial dimension of manager support consists of two separate dimensions. One is the dimension that reflected the support of supervisor and managers. The second reflects the supportiveness of the workplace more generally (Bradley et al. 2010: 23). This is in line with previous studies (Allen 2001; Thompson et al. 2004; and Kopelman et al. 2006). The results from the first survey also led to the co-worker support dimension proposed by McDonald et al. (2005) being significantly modified. The new dimension, co-worker consequences, focused on attitudes about workloads being shared equally, whereas co-worker support focused on co-workers’ attitudes about work-life balance arrangements (Bradley et al. 2010: 19). The results were not as strong as desired for co-worker
support and Bradley et al. (2010: 22) recommended that future research is needed to examine this dimension. Evidence from these two studies suggested that the FFWC measures could be extended to include aspects of life beyond family to be used in future research (Bradley et al. 2010: 22-23). Thus Bradley et al.’s (2010) empirical study made a valuable contribution in the field of family-friendly research as they extended and empirically tested Thompson et al.’s (1999) FFWC measure by including three extra dimensions: organizational support, career consequences and gendered perceptions as well as broadening the concept from work-family culture to work-life culture.

The gendered nature of policy utilisation and co-worker support, proposed by McDonald et al. (2005), were included in the FFWC framework in this thesis. This was due to the data collection taking place between 2007 and 2010, and not being aware of Bradley et al.’s (2010) extended measure at that time. Questions were also asked about the organisation and the employee’s supervisor and manager (Allen 2001; Thompson et al. 2004; and Kopelman et al. 2006). Questions were asked to explore if there were any reasons why an employee would feel reluctant to use a FFWP at their organisation; whether there were any specific organisational practices or norms that would lead to more or less work-family conflict, such as working back late without notice or scheduling meetings early in the morning; and whether the participant could suggest any changes to their organisation’s policies, practices or cultural norms or attitudes that would lead to a better work and family balance. However, management support and organisational support were not considered to be two separate dimensions at the time of the empirical research of this thesis as had been later identified by Bradley et al. (2010). Rather these ideas were examined in accordance with the existing model known at the time (McDonald et al. 2005) which identified them as the manager support dimension.

Perceptions of supervisory support for work and life balance programs were tested by McCarthy, Cleveland, Hunter Darcy and Grady (2013) to determine if they influenced the uptake of such programs. Their research was based on 15 large organisations in Ireland, including interviews with 15 human resource managers and quantitative surveys from 133 supervisors and 729 employees (McCarthy et al. 2013: 1262). Supervisory support was measured using a five-item scale adapted from
Thompson et al. (1999). The results of McCarthy et al.’s (2013: 1271) study found employee perceptions of their supervisor support partially explained the relationship between work-life balance programme availability and the uptake of such programs. In their recommendation for future research McCarthy et al. (2013: 1272) proposed that it would be useful to investigate how various constituents, including senior management, colleagues or subordinates, effect on the relationship between work and life balance programme availability and outcomes. This was addressed in the current research by examining the lived experiences of participants from various job categories within the four case study organisations. A recent study investigated the relationship between national paid leave policy, perceptions of organisational supports, perceptions of supervisor support and work-family conflict (Allen, Lapieere, Spector, Poelmans, O’Driscoll, Sanchez, Cooper, Walvoord, Antoniou and Brough 2014: 22-24). The results suggest that in order for paid parental leave, paid sick leave or paid annual leave to be beneficial individuals need to have family-supportive supervisors as well as a family-supportive organisation (Allen et al. 2014: 21-22). This is a significant study as the data is from a large international study.

A recent quantitative study examined the relationship between family-oriented benefits and employee behaviours and how co-worker support influences that relationship (Bourne, McComb and Woodward (2012: 64). 891 Questionnaires were distributed to employees from two insurance companies and two retail organisations in the north-eastern United States. Employees were asked to assess the level of support they felt from their co-workers concerning family matters. One of the key results concerning co-worker support of importance for this thesis was that ‘emotional support, which involves listening and caring, offers little in the way of practical help … Offering emotional support without also offering practical assistance may lead to frustration’ (Bourne et al. 2012: 76). It was also found that when employees did receive help from their co-workers they felt obliged to reciprocate which added to their stress levels.

FFWC links closely to the usage of FFWPs, as has been previously discussed in this chapter, and the presence of FFWPs does not guarantee that they will be used or work effectively. A key factor is whether the company’s informal culture supports work and family balance. Supporting McDonald et al. (2005), Jones et al. (2006:
claim that ‘employees may not use particular programs because of the potential impact they believe using them will have on their careers’. O’Neill, Harrison, Cleveland, Almeida, Stawski and Crouter (2009:18) conducted a study investigating the association between work-family culture, turnover intentions and organisational commitment. They surveyed 37 organisations and 526 participants. Their results indicated that a FFWC related to reduced turnover and increased organisational commitment at the organisational level. This study was conducted in the hotel management industry and thus it may be difficult to generalise the results to organisations in other industries. The sample was mostly managers which do not provide a wider perspective of the views of non-management employees. To overcome these issues, this thesis investigated four organisations from different industries and from both the private and public sector. Furthermore, participants are selected from various occupational levels within each organisation to gain a wider perspective of employee opinions.

The work and family literature has linked FFWC to types of organisations. This combines the institutional research which is discussed earlier in this chapter with the FFWC literature. It is important for this thesis to consider the differences that exist between public sector and private sector organisations. Typically in Australia the public sector has been expected to set the standard for workplace conditions, including FFWPs. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider institutional theory in this thesis because it examines normative societal pressures regarding FFWPs. Lewis (2010) conducted a case study of a United Kingdom public-sector organisation addressing issues of FFWC in relation to FFWPs and gender equality. Semi-structured interviews were developed around a common set of questions used in organisations in five European Union states. The findings indicated that the ‘long hours culture’ is present in pockets throughout the organisation. However, it is treated as a problem to be managed by stress management and not as normative or desirable, nor as essential to demonstrate commitment or productivity. The findings from this study have created a greater emphasis on outcomes rather than inputs (Lewis 2010: 362). Her study found that the limitation of policies such as job sharing, once considered to be in the forerunner of family-friendliness, will also have to be considered insofar as this perpetuates standard models of working time.
Therefore, it is important to increase understanding of the family-friendly responses that exist between public and private sector organisations. In order to compare private and public sector organisations, Mauno, Kinnunen and Piitulainen (2005) examined FFWC in two private sector organisations and two public sector organisations in Finland. They attempted to clarify whether perceived FFWC would vary according to gender, economic sector and type of organisation. Their findings showed that a more positive work-family culture prevailed in the public sector organisations, which were female-dominated. Men tend to feel less entitled than women to modify their work schedules for work responsibilities (Lewis 1999 and Lewis and Smithson 2001). This higher sense of family-friendly entitlement is often taken at the expense of career opportunities for women (Campbell Clark 2000; Hammonds 1997; Lewis 1997). As the data was gathered using self-reporting questionnaires, the relationships between the dimensions studied may have been inflated (Mauno et al. (2005: 133). Notwithstanding this limitation, this thesis considers these findings important as they help to clarify the relationship between gender, economic sector and type of organisation on work-family culture.

Non-standard approaches to the organisation of work are an important aspect for employees’ ability to manage work and family commitments. Skinner and Pocock (2014) analysed data from the 2014 Australian Work and Life Index survey, which contained employment, demographic, social and work-life items plus questions on employee request for flexibility relative to legal rights to request flexibility. This was a national stratified random survey of 2,690 Australian workers, conducted using computer-assisted telephone interviews. A key finding from the study by Skinner and Pocock (2014: 3) was that particular types of work are associated with higher work-life interference. The occupations with the highest work-life interference are managers, machinery operators and drivers, professionals and community and personal service work (Skinner and Pocock 2014: 37). This finding indicates that research around policy and practice should include consideration of particular kinds of work beyond the value of the job to the firm in Lepak and Snell’s core/periphery sense.

There is a need to gain a better understanding of the nature of FFWC and its relationship with job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction, work engagement and
turnover intentions at the individual and department level. In order to explore these factors, Mauno, Kiuru and Kinnunen (2011) conducted a survey-based study to gather data from 52 Finnish work departments in the domains of health care, ICT and the paper industry. FFWC was assessed using managers’ supportiveness, organisational time demands and the expected career consequences of utilising family-friendly work practices. The results indicated that employees in the same department shared similar perceptions of the department’s FFWC. Moreover, the positive effects of a supportive FFWC on work attitudes were established at both the individual and departmental levels (Mauno et al. 2011: 161). This study is significant because it investigates the effects of FFWC on worker attitudes at both individual and group levels. It is important to note that Mauno et al.’s (2011) survey does not include the important FFWC dimensions identified by McDonald et al. (2005) and Bradley et al. (2010) of the gendered nature of FFWPs and co-worker support. In order to address this limitation, this thesis explored the FFWC dimensions identified by Thompson et al. (1999), McDonald et al. (2005) and aimed to uncover a number of new FFWC aspects and dimensions. FFWC aspects build on existing dimensions.

In examining what we already know about FFWC, this section has incorporated a number of studies that examined how FFWC influences the availability and usage of FFWPs. A discussion is provided later in this chapter relating to studies that investigated aspects other than FFWC regarding the availability and the usage of FFWPs.

The nature and significance of work and family balance

The most widely held meaning of work-family balance is a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles (Duxbury and Gover 2011: 273). For working parents, ‘balancing’ work and family involves establishing a workable and acceptable combination of the two spheres (Moore and Crawford 2005). The extent to which individuals are able to ‘juggle’ rather than ‘struggle’ with their work and family lives will have an effect on the balance between these two aspects (Moore and Crawford 2005: 207). Though relatively little research has been conducted on the process by which individuals achieve work-family balance (Greenhaus and Singh 2003), the research to date suggests that an essential element of balance is some
autonomy in how working parents manage their roles (Thornthwaite 2004). Some limitations have been identified in the work and family balance research. These include that only narrow generalisations may be made concerning the findings. This is because most of the studies used measures of work-family balance whose psychometric properties have not been assessed. Such limitations reflect the early stage of research on work-family fit and balance (Voyandoff 2007: 141) indicating where gaps exist in the current knowledge.

In recent literature work-family balance has often been replaced by the term work-life balance and it has been stated that ‘work’ and ‘life’ are two distinct spheres when in fact work is part of life (Fleetwood 2007: 352). ‘It is unclear whether work and life balance refers to: an objective state of affairs, a subjective experience, perception or feeling; an actuality or an aspiration; a discourse or a practice; a metaphor for flexible working; a metaphor for the gendered division of labour; or a metaphor for some other political agenda’ (Fleetwood, 2007: 352). Recent research demonstrates that the demands and resources associated with one domain have important effects on role performance and quality of life in the other, either directly or through mediating mechanisms (Voydanoff 2007: 3). Writers have argued that there is mutuality between the two spheres (Eikhof et al. 2007: 332; Pocock, Skinner and Williams 2008: 24) with the suggestion that the metaphor of collision is more accurate than balancing or juggling (Pocock et al. 2008: 25). As both spheres of life sit alongside each other, Pocock prefers the term interaction (Pocock et al. 2008: 25).

For this thesis the scope is work and family balance. This is understood to mean aiming to combine work and family life in a manner that reduces conflict and stress. In this definition, work and family are not considered to be separate; rather they are seen to be interconnecting and permeable domains that have different dynamics and logics. The working definition in this thesis for ‘work-family’, therefore, does not adopt the broader sense of ‘work-life’ as seen in some of the current literature. Therefore, the way that pursuits such as voluntary work or study interact with work demands are not intentionally part of this research.

Social and demographic changes have occurred that are relevant for the study of FFWPs, for example, the increasing numbers of women in the paid workforce (Poelmans and Sahibzada 2004). This idea is well supported by statistics. The
Australian Bureau of Statistics highlights the changes that have occurred in workforce demographics over time. Women’s increased participation in the labour force in November 2013 was 58.3 per cent; almost double that of August 1961 when it was 34 per cent (ABS 6202.0, 2013). Having young children has a large influence on women’s labour force participation. Many women these days reduce their working hours while their children are young, rather than not returning to work at all as was previously often the case (ABS 1301.0, 2012). Unfortunately, organisations tend to lag behind in their responses to such social and demographic changes.

Balancing paid work commitments and family responsibilities remains a major challenge for many Australians. At the heart of efforts to manage paid work with family responsibilities is the issue of time (ACTU 2009a; Australian Human Rights Commission 2008). Despite a decade or more of economic growth and prosperity many Australians are not living the lives they want and feel pressured, stressed and overly constrained in the choices they can make, particularly at key points in their lives (Australian Human Rights Commission 2007). Parents of young children face extreme time pressure, particularly mothers of young children who are working full-time (ACTU 2009b). Australia does not have statutory limits on working hours and Australian workers have only limited control over their working hours which have increased over the last 15 years (Townsend, Lingard, Bradley and Brown 2012: 443-444).

The prevalence of a culture of long working hours within Australia has been attributed to the nation’s weak working time regulation (Brown, Bradley, Lingard, Townsed and Ling 2010: 197). Some industry sectors are notorious for their attitudes to work and family balance. The Australian construction industry is one such sector. That industry’s culture is not family-friendly, with long hours and geographic flexibility seen as essential to career success (Moore, Johns and Johnson 2006: 69). Qualitative research by Francis, Lingard, Prosser and Turner (2013: 392) compared the experiences of employees working in construction for an Australian public sector organisation and an Australian private sector organisation. Their findings indicated that private sector employees reported higher levels of work interference with their family life due to longer work hours and less work flexibility. Findings from another Australian study which utilised case studies of focus groups and interviews across
four construction sites indicated that long working hours *per se* did not necessarily create work-life imbalance. Moreover, employees benefited by gaining time off to enable the pursuit of personal time (Brown, Bradley, Lingard, Townsend and Ling 2010: 206) especially when it was synchronised with family members and friends in longer blocks such as weekends (Brown, Bradley, Lingard, Townsend and Ling 2011: 57).

The experience of work-family imbalance for men in western countries is clearly linked to the number of hours they are required to work. In 2006 males spent nearly twice as long as females on employment related activities. However, females on average spent nearly double the time spent by males on unpaid work such as domestic activities and childcare (ABS 4125.0 2013). Thus, rigid and outdated policies and social expectations create an environment of constrained choices for women. Many women are forced into the financial decision of who works and who does the caring in a relationship (Broderick 2008). Consequently to date, work and family balance is largely a ‘female’ issue. This is supported in Pocock’s (2006: 142) research which indicates that 41 per cent of young Australian males are ‘male minimisers’. This means that they expect their future wives to do all the housework. Pocock’s (2006) research also indicated that one-third of females did not expect to have housework equally shared with their future partner. Gender roles ‘reflect core beliefs, deeply ingrained through socialisation, and [they] are institutionalised expectations about behaviour appropriate for the genders’ (Reed and Blundson 2006: 136). Thus, attitudes and behaviours towards caring, such as the perception that it is the responsibility of women, are often the result of unquestioned gender assumptions that we are brought up with. Such outdated perceptions need to be actively challenged to help bring about greater equity in the work and family debate. No doubt, education plays a crucial role in supporting cultural and societal change. Combined with this, it is important to amend existing policies and frameworks to adequately address the needs of men as carers as well as women (Australian Human Rights Commission 2007; Pocock 2006: 152). Coupled with this, creating workplaces that support women and men to balance paid work and share caring responsibilities is critical to achieving gender equality (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012).
It is hoped that the attitude in society is changing that women should be more responsible for managing work and family responsibilities which would reflect the increased number of women in the paid workforce. An important indicator of ideas regarding the sharing of work and family responsibilities is the current attitudes of young people. A recent Australian study by McDonald, Pini, Bailey and Price (2011: 68) examined how adolescents anticipate their future employment, family life and leisure activities. Of all the themes examined, the way in which young people expressed the work-family nexus was the most obviously gendered. Around half the boys who wrote about work-family issues felt that their work commitments were likely to interfere with family life and to preclude being an involved spouse or father. Unlike many of the boys, for whom ‘balance’ meant a distant involvement in family life, almost all the girls envisioned ‘balance’ through the lens of primary care-giving. No boys referred directly to expectations of primary or shared care-giving (McDonald et al. 2011: 79). By contrast, in United States workplaces, one study found there has been a convergence of gender roles among men and women. ‘Though older employees have consistently been more likely to endorse traditional gender roles than younger employees, over time employees of all ages have been less likely to hold such views’ (Galinsky and Matos 2011: 268). While the Australian data and the United States study are not directly comparable, the studies raise the possibility that Australia is lagging the United States in evolution of gender roles.

Typical symptoms of work-family imbalance include: declining quality of life, loss of community, and rising levels of guilt, especially for mothers (Pocock 2003). Increasingly, in Australia, workers’ experiences of work-family imbalance are linked to unpaid overtime and an increasing work pace and intensity (Thorntwaite 2004). Research conducted in six large New Zealand organisations found that the most common work-family conflict concerned workloads that interfered with family time (Liddicoat 2003). Liddicoat’s research adopted a stakeholder approach, consisting of interviews with CEOs, human resource managers and union officials and a survey administered to 809 employees. This research was valuable as it took a multi-faceted approach to the issue of work and family balance.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that women typically bear the bulk of the burden of domestic duties, with male behaviour changing very little regardless of
whether the female partner is employed or not (Kirchmeyer 2002). More recent studies with Australian adolescents (McDonald et al. 2011; Pocock 2006: 142) suggest that girls foresee their future involving primary care-giving. The majority of girls still desire to combine paid employment with having a family seeking to balance work with family (McDonald et al. 2011).

Some research highlights the importance of achieving a healthy work and family balance, as mothers who experience strong tension between these two aspects of their lives tend to report lower outcomes on physical and mental health measures (Losoncz and Bortolotto 2009: 136). Drawing on data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA), Losoncz and Bortolotto (2009: 36) suggest that possible areas to support a healthy work and family balance should include support from others within and outside the home to enable parents to adjust their working hours to achieve a better balance between work and family. Though workers may feel pressured for time because of working long hours, there are other likely factors also contributing to such pressure. This is because the feeling of being caught in a time squeeze may be exacerbated by gendered domestic labour arrangements (Eikhof et al. 2007: 332). Therefore, it can be seen that reducing work and family conflict is not straightforward. The solution goes beyond simply providing FFWPs, hence the need for the current research. It is important that issues such as the unequal burden of domestic duties carried by women be included in the debate.

Implications of human resource management and diversity management for work and family balance

Work and family balance plays an important and evolving role in HRM. Organisations often implement work and family programs as a part of their strategic HRM to attract and retain the most talented employees (Stock, Bauer, Bieling 2014: 1834). Organisations have significant power to influence employee satisfaction with FFWPs and employees’ perceptions of such policies (Ezra and Deckman (1996: 178). An important change occurring in family demographics relates to the rapid increase in married women in the workforce, single mothers or fathers, as well those who remain single and childless (Kim and Wiggins, 2011: 728). Two-thirds of
Australians are now participating in the labour force and women’s rate of participation is increasing. Dual career families as the norm and the majority of sole-parents are engaged in paid work. As the population ages, combining paid employment with elder care will also be a common experience, especially for women (Skinner and Pocock 2014: 34; Chapman et al., 2014: 87).

Despite these profound social changes, the male breadwinner/female caregiver model of the 20th century is alive and well in 21st century Australia, and many workplace cultures are made in the image of the full-time male worker unencumbered by care responsibilities. Australian women work around this image and the practices it embeds – while doing substantially more caring and domestic work than men (Skinner and Pocock 2014: 34). This disconnect between changing labour force participation and unchanging gendered patterns of care-giving is likely to account for the consistent observation across AWALI surveys from 2008 to 2014 that women are more likely to experience poor work-life outcomes (Skinner and Pocock 2014: 34). These findings clearly highlight the role of gender in managing work and family responsibilities. Despite legislative changes, such as the right to request flexible working conditions, the surveys show that women are still most severely affected by work-life conflict (Chapman et al., 2014: 99-100).

Therefore, it is important for human resource managers to ensure that they provide a policy that is supportive of these demographic changes which themselves highlight the growing diversity of what the term family now means (Wells 2007; Kim and Wiggins 2011: 737). It is also critical for human resource managers to ensure that there is effective communication in the organisation of work and family benefits to enhance equity of access to them (Lockwood 2003). This requires education for employees regarding the nature, content and value of various FFWPs. An exploration of these HRM activities and functions is provided in the findings chapters where participants provide a firsthand account of their lived experiences. This includes examples of how well their organisations communicate their FFWPs to staff.

Though this thesis is sensitive to the variety of literature that is relevant to work and family balance and specifically FFWC, it sits primarily within the HRM discipline
while addressing a diversity management topic. Diversity itself is an unclear concept which is contextually specific (Burgess, French and Strachan, 2009: 78). It has been used to refer to individual characteristics such as gender or family responsibilities. It has also been used to refer to broader personal characteristics such as physical and mental capabilities and the interests of a variety of external stakeholders (Kramar 2012a: 245-246). The dimensions identified by an organisation will largely determine the way in which diversity is managed (Kramar 2012a: 247). Effective diversity management through appropriate HRM practices has the potential to lead to positive outcomes (Shen et al. 2009: 246). Despite this, there is limited understanding of what actually happens at the workplace level within organisations (Kramar 2012a: 257). The current research investigated individuals’ experiences at their organisations to understand the factors related to the provision and utilisation of FFWPs.

The approach, language, organisation and methods used to manage people have altered drastically in the last fifty years (Kramar 2012b: 134). During this time the nomenclature changed from personnel management to HRM. This reflected a modification in the nature of the work from an employee-centred role to a management-centred role. HRM is now considered to be a strategic management role (Legge 1995: 114; Kramar 2012b: 134). It is considered that human resource policies should be used to reinforce an appropriate organisational culture (Legge, 2005: 105). Similarly, Wright (1995: 131) also notes that the normative model of HRM has been linked to strategy, integration and culture. The inclusion of ‘culture’ in these definitions of HRM supports the logic of this thesis which examined organisational culture and FFWC from an HRM lens.

It is considered that there is no single view of HRM. Two contrasting perspectives have been identified in HRM (Legge, 1995: 91). The first sees HRM from a strategically oriented approach and is known as the ‘hard’ model. Supporters of hard HRM consider human resources primarily as costs. In the ‘soft’ model, managers harness commitment and co-operation of employees and see the development of employees as fundamental and a source of competitive advantage. Employees are capable of development and worthy of trust and collaboration (Legge 1995).
A connection can be made between Legge’s (1995) soft and hard approach to HRM and the two major implementation approaches for diversity management. The productive diversity approach is based on a business case for diversity (Burgess, French and Strachan 2009: 81). The use of FFWPs is recognised as a method of diversity management that can provide economic benefits through reduced absenteeism and stress (Kramar 1995). Obvious linkages can be seen here between this diversity management approach and the hard approach to HRM. The other perspective is the valuing diversity approach which is based on a human resource/organisational development approach and involves valuing differences, with mutual adaptation of the individual and the organisation as a desired end result (Burgess et al. 2009: 82). This approach involves including all staff in the process. Similarities can be seen between this diversity perspective and the soft approach to HRM.

The hard and soft model of HRM as a dichotomy has more recently been questioned, even by Legge (2005) herself. She identifies problems in the conceptual language of the model. The key concept in the ‘hard’ model is integration. However, it has a double meaning of integration with business strategy and the integration and consistency of mutuality of employment policies aimed at generating employee commitment, flexibility and quality. The problem is that fit with strategy would argue a contingent design of HRM policy, whereas internal consistency associated with mutuality would argue an absolutist approach. ‘Can this contradiction be reconciled without stretching to the limit the meaning of HRM as a distinct approach to managing HRM?’ (Legge 2005: 107).

Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern and Stiles (1997: 55) argued that the incorporation of both soft and hard elements within one model is problematic because they are founded on opposing assumptions regarding human nature and managerial control strategies. Based on their own empirical study, Truss et al. (1997) concluded that we need to retain the distinction between HRM at the rhetorical level and the reality as experienced by the individual in our conceptualisations of HRM if they are to be both empirically and theoretically sound. This approach has been undertaken in the current research by comparing the lived experiences of individuals at their workplaces with the organisational rhetoric by way of an examination of
company policies and procedures, awards and agreements, annual reports and various legislation. For this reason the hard and soft HRM model was utilised to investigate the fourth research question which explored if there was a connection between the style of HRM in place at the case study organisations and organisational rhetoric about the availability of FFWPs and reality of their usage. Due to its simplicity the model was considered to be a straightforward way of explaining HRM to participants in the pilot and case study interviews.

In conceptualising HRM, academics have shifted from focusing on hard and soft models of HRM to high commitment management and high performance work systems (Legge 2005:19; Purcell et al 2009:3; Chiang, Han and Chuang 2011: 606; Glover and Butler 2012: 211). As noted in Chapter 1, Legge (2005:11) now believes that organisations are likely to use a combination of soft and hard HRM. Despite that Legge’s perspective on soft and hard HRM has transitioned to more sophisticated iterations to include high commitment management and high performance work systems, this thesis utilised the original soft and hard dichotomy because it was considered to be a readily explained heuristic device. This allowed participants to conceptualise their organisations’ HRM. Legge’s more contemporary depiction of HRM was evaluated in the thesis as a way of assessing the complexity of HRM in practice.

The examination undertaken in this thesis is a continuation of the assessment of the soft and hard HRM (Legge 1995) model. A critical stance is taken to question whether the soft and hard HRM model needs to be reappraised due to its simplicity. It is argued that rather than discount the soft and hard HRM framework in its entirety, these new high-commitment and high performance approaches enhance the HRM discipline’s relevance to the larger debate around economic and employee well-being in our societies (Boxall 2012: 169). Jenkins and Delbridge (2013: 2688) propose that hard and soft dimensions may exist in conjunction with each other rather than as a polarity. As suggested by Keenoy (1999) and Watson (2004) it is now recognised that it is a question of using the soft and hard human resource model with something else. This thesis considers an approach that gives thought to organisation-environment relations could be fruitful given that human resources must be attracted to the firm from the environment. Therefore, the current research
explores if Legge’s (1995) soft and hard model in combination with the Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery model, is useful to understand the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations.

The following section considers relevant theoretical frameworks that help to explain the various pressures on organisations to adopt FFWPs. These theories will be critically examined using the conceptual framework outlined earlier in this chapter.

The availability of family-friendly work practices

Family-friendly work practices (FFWPs) are those initiatives used by employees to assist them manage their work and family lives. These initiatives include job-sharing, part-time work, childcare and maternity leave (Moore and Crawford 2005: 206). They are used as a response to various pressures from individuals who struggle to manage the often conflicting demands of work and family. The results of an exploratory study investigating the provision of FFWPs indicated the most prevalent were: part-time work (86%); relocation assistance (85%) and flexible hours (75%). The least prevalent were: information on elder care (16%) and unpaid sick child/elder leave (22%) (Moore, 1996: 121).

A number of other studies have attempted to categorise FFWPs (Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Grover and Crooker 1995; Health and Family Services Victorian Office 1996; Morgan and Millken 1992; Stoner and Hartman 1990 and Vanderkolk and Young 1991). These studies have identified a total of 100 FFWPs. Bardoel and Tharenou (1997:4) classify them into five categories based on the earlier work of Zedeck and Mosier (1990) and Lambert (1990): child and dependent care benefits, flexible working conditions, leave options, information services, and personnel policies and organisational culture. Bardoel and Tharenou (1997:4) also classify these responses according to Kirchmeyer’s (1995) typology of organisational responses as follows: child and dependent care benefits, information services, care and leave options (integration) and flexible working conditions and organisational cultural issues (respect). When referring to ‘integration’ Bardoel and Tharenou (1997) are referring to the integration of work and family lives and when referring to ‘respect’ they are referring to the respect for family life. Consistent with institutional theory, the five work-family categories are likely to be influenced by the characteristics of the
organisation. Several studies have examined FFWPs implemented by organisations and the organisational characteristics associated with these policies (Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Goodstein 1994; Kossek, Dass and DeMarr 1994; Ingram and Simon 1995; Morgan and Milliken 1992; Vanderkolk and Young 1991).

Important institutional factors relevant to work and family include the effects of an organisation’s size, organisational demography, public versus private sector, legal organisational requirements, and track record in HRM on FFWPs. These aspects were tested by Bardoel and Tharenou (1997) who confirmed that organisational characteristics influenced the way organisations are likely to respond to institutional pressures in relation to FFWPs. These findings were similar to other studies. For their sample, larger employers were more likely to offer the broadest range of FFWPs. For those organisations with predominantly female employees they found the provision of FFWPs to be limited to providing a shorter working day. The findings indicated that public sector organisations are more likely to provide FFWPs; however, employees are no more likely to receive leave benefits than private sector employees. As this study was based on university students the results cannot be generalised across the wider population. Nevertheless, Bardoel and Tharenou’s (1997) study is relevant to this thesis in that an aspect of institutional theory, organisational demographics, is analysed to explore the possible connections between them and the provision and usage of FFWPs.

The above findings are supported in a more recent study of 500 New Zealand workers’ perceptions of their employers’ diversity management activities. This study found that though the public sector and largest organisations have a higher level of formal policy in diversity management, they are no better at creating family-friendly conditions than are smaller or private sector organisations (Houkamau and Boxall, 2011: 456). These findings suggest that mere availability does not guarantee the uptake of FFWPs at public sector organisations. Finally, those organisations with a perceived good track record in HRM were significantly linked to the five types of FFWPs previously listed.

The implementation of family leave policies in the context of organisational sector is a significant factor to be considered regarding the provision and utilisation of FFWPs. Research conducted at the Department of Social Services, a public sector
organisation in New York, found that respondents perceive family leave policy to have a positive impact on work satisfaction (Kim 2001). Only 23 percent of the survey respondents believed that family leave affected their career advancement negatively. Almost every interviewee believed that their organisation created a family-friendly environment. This is important since studies show that supportive managers, supervisors and workplace cultures are increasingly seen as crucial for successful implementation of work-family policies (Ezra and Deckman 1996 and Thompson et al. 1999). As the study by Kim (2001) is based only at one public sector organisation we are unable to assume these results would apply to all public sector organisations.

Despite the fact that Kim (2001) was unable to make generalisations, like the study by Bardoel and Tharenou (1997), it makes an important contribution to the overall understanding of the institutional factors that contribute to the success or failure of family-friendly policies in organisations. This idea is adopted more recently by other authors, for example, Warhurst, Eikhoj and Haunschild (2008: 16) who suggest that work and family experiences can differ by occupation and industry and that more comparative research is required. Consequently, important organisational factors are integrated into this thesis, including comparisons between public and private sector organisations, between different industry sectors and also across various occupational groups.

Along with a legislative imperative for FFWPs, employers are being encouraged to introduce policies that are more inclusive in order to improve business performance. Examining these ideas of inclusiveness and business performance, Wise and Bond (2003) studied four financial services organisations in the UK. A total of eight senior HR managers, 33 line managers and 16 employees were interviewed. Topics included the introduction, awareness and operation of work-life policies as well as attitudes to and experience of work-life issues (Wise and Bond 2003: 21). The findings of their study indicated that the people responsible for implementing policies and bringing about business benefits, the line managers, were more often than not inadequately informed of the contents of the policy. In other words, they were not aware of the rationale of the policies or how they were be used. Their findings also show that the problem of inclusiveness continues to plague the area of
diversity policy. Moves towards mainstream acceptance of facilitating work lives have so far not been substantial. Properly targeted communication of policies and training for line managers in work-family/life issues is essential for turning strategy into effective practice. The findings of the study by Wise and Bond (2003: 29) are significant for organisations. This is because it is imperative that all stakeholders are provided the opportunity to participate in developing work and family strategies rather than being offered a reactive solution that is not well thought out.

The usage of family-friendly work practices

This thesis seeks to answer the question regarding not only the availability of FFWPs but also their usage. This is because formal policies and programs do not always translate into actual outcomes (Burgess, Henderson and Strachan 2007a: 416). One reason for lack of utilisation may be the shift from permanent work to continent work. Many contingent workers do not have access to FFWPs. The rise of casual work has been a major feature of labour restructuring in Australia for at least two decades. Workers who are classified as casual in their main job now represent around one quarter of all employers (Burgess, Campbell and May 2008: 175). This is not isolated to Australia as analysis conducted here and in the US and the UK shows that many workers lack formal access to any work and family services or programs because they are part of the growing proportion of the contingent labour force. Even statutory maternity leave becomes threatened with fixed-term contracts (Lewis 2010: 357). These individuals work on contract, on a short-term basis or are casuals who are likely to receive no advantage from family-friendly arrangements as they are excluded from non-wage benefits (Burgess and Strachan 2005: 8). Family-friendly policies are often not developed with these flexible workers in mind. Instead they are created for a core workforce; those whom the organisation currently wishes to retain and motivate (Lewis 2010: 357).

Work and family roles have been seen by many to be generally in conflict with one another. Role theorists argue that the involvement of individuals in multiple roles can be complex and provoke a degree of stress due to conflicting demands (Allport 1933: Katz and Kahn 1978). Contributing to work and family role theory, Kossek et al. (1999) developed the concepts of integration and segmentation to measure the degree
to which norms in the workforce support the combination or separation of work and family. They argue that there are two main decision-making components to work-family role management: boundary management and role embracement. Boundary management comprises the strategies used to organise and separate role demands into specific realms of home and work. Role embracement is the enthusiasm which is embraced in fulfilling a role. This is reflected in the amount of energy and time that a person chooses to devote to work and family roles collectively.

There are many reasons that not all employees with availability to family-friendly policies are able to access them (Budd and Mumford 2006; Burgess et al. 2007a: 426). Some might not be able to find a suitable co-worker with whom to job share, others may not be able afford part-time work, and others may fear negative reprisals if they take family leave. Employees might not be aware of the benefits to which they are entitled. They might feel that a policy is not accessible because of financial constraints, impracticalities (such as job requirements preventing telecommuting), and the fear of discrimination (Budd and Mumford, 2006:38). Burgess et al. (2007a: 426) noted that most women in the organisations they studied had access to a degree of flexibility in the hours and times they worked but this depended on business demands and the nature of their work. Both of these studies clearly indicated different perceived access rates for FFWPs within workplaces depending on the nature of their work.

Some workplaces had limited the opportunity for flexible working arrangements (Burgess, Henderson and Strachan (2007b: 109). Employees felt that a policy was not available or accessible because of work requirements such as the job they were doing, the company they worked for, their manager or the goodwill of others (Burgess et al. 2007b: 108). In the case of Budd and Mumford (2006) those employees who were least likely to need the policies, such as middle-aged males with high incomes, had the highest perceived access. These writers, in identifying the importance of work requirements such as the nature of the job related to the concepts of the Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model; do not delve into the core and periphery ideas or the concepts of human resource architecture. In fact, Budd and Mumford (2006) only investigated perceived access. They left the investigation of the actual usage level to future research. This thesis seeks to fill this gap by investigating the
availability and usage of FFWPs, incorporating workplace factors previously written about from a core and periphery perspective.

The role that a supervisor may play in the actual implementation and usage of family-friendly policies has started to emerge in the work and family literature as an important factor regarding the usage of FFWPs. The role of the supervisor is also explored in the FFWC section of this chapter. Blair-Loy and Wharton (2002) examined whether powerful supervisors or co-workers would increase the use of family-care programs and flexible work policies. They argued that a social context with powerful individuals (e.g., with men being more powerful than women in the workplace, Kanter, 1977; Maume, 1999; Reskin and McBrier, 2000; Reskin and Ross 1995; Tomaskovic-Devey 1993) would provide the support necessary to employees. Their study showed that the probability of using flexibility policies was much higher with a single male supervisor than a married female supervisor. This is because more ‘powerful supervisors and co-workers may provide social resources for knowing how to successfully take advantage of work-family policies or inoculate workers against some of the negative effects that policy use may have on their careers’ (Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2002:838). This study makes an important contribution to institutional research and shows the importance of the social context at work. Blair-Loy and Wharton’s (2002) study is particularly relevant to this thesis as their data was gathered from an international finance company as was data from this thesis.

Perceived accessibility should be a concern for policy and practice. The success of government campaigns to increase the use of FFWPs in workplaces depends on employees perceiving access is possible, not merely on workplace-level availability (Budd and Mumford, 2006). Research revealed that those employees most likely to be in need of FFWPs are less likely to perceive that they have access to them, for example, single mothers in low-paying jobs.

Much of the work and family literature reinforces the notion that while men’s and women’s perceptions of the work and family interface are similar, their behaviours relating to work and family involvement remain divergent and are in line with the traditional model of work. Men and women appear to seek different solutions to work-family balance. Compared to men, women expressed greater interest in all
options that would provide additional time off or more freedom in planning their
time. Men on the other hand demonstrated less interest than women in choosing time
off over cash in keeping with their breadwinner orientation.

Scandinavia is a leader in provision of FFWPs, yet the gap between the availability
and use has been questioned. Most Swedes support Swedish fathers taking parental
leave and the majority of Swedish fathers now take some of that leave. However,
despite government efforts, Swedish fathers still take a small proportion (about
twelve per cent) of all leave days available. According to Haas, Allard and Hwang
(2002), an increase in Swedish fathers’ participation in parental leave will depend on
fundamental changes in organisational culture, that is, the assumptions, expectations
and norms in the workplace. Haas et al. (2002) chose six companies all located on
the west coast of Sweden. They developed measures to explore the impact of
organisational culture at the organisation level as well as the work group level. Their
study measured masculine ethic which included male norms in organisations include
competitiveness, aggressiveness, a compulsive orientation to task accomplishment,
reliance on unemotional decision making, focus on short-term self-interest and
emphasis on individual achievement and material success (Bailyn, Rapoport and
Fletcher 2000; Maier 1999). When asked if work group norms supported or rejected
a ‘long hours’ culture, fathers tended to say that work group norms called for visible
time at work. The results support Lewis’ (1997) statement that a gendered workplace
culture often remains a crucial factor in limiting the potential impact of family-
friendly social and corporate policies. Very little specific research documents the use
of paternity leave by male workers (Peper, van Doorne-Huiskes and den Dulk 2005).
Therefore, a longitudinal study would provide a better understanding of how
negotiations in families and the workplace can encourage fathers to use FFWPs
(Haas et al. 2002: 339).

Authors have explored how fathers construct different practices though negotiations
with leave schemes and different working conditions. Brandth and Kvande (2002)
identified four types of practice amongst Norwegian fathers: limit-setting,
unrestrained, rights-using and tradition-bound. The limit-setting practice applies to
men who set limits to their work as they see the leave as a necessary part of bonding
with their child. The unrestrained practice represents fathers who tend not to use the
leave because they are subjected to a conflict of interests (for example, the demands they feel are inherent in their working conditions). The rights-using practice comprises individuals who take their quota of leave although the majority would not have taken this extra type of leave if it had not been offered to them. The tradition-bound practice refers to men who have given lower priority to fatherhood as they have not used the leave rights that they are entitled to.

Writers have included the idea of being able to justify the cost of providing work and family benefits as being an important aspect in this discussion. Healy (2004: 222) argues that there is a need to include more men with access and take-up of FFWPs in order to equalise the costs of providing these policies to organisations. If only female-intensive employers offer these policies, then the burden for family responsibilities will rest heavily on female parents ‘with employers of male parents having a free ride’ (Healy, 2004: 222). The potential problem with this is that there is the possibility of greater discrimination in hiring practices.

Many organisations today operate as if men are still the sole breadwinner for the family with a stay-at-home partner. Williams (2000) argues the ideal worker is considered to be one who will work long hours to an inflexible and demanding work schedule within a greedy organisational climate. The result is gender stereotyping in professional norms and everyday interactions (Williams, 2006: 174). A study by Cleveland, Cordeiro, Fisk, Mulvaney and Chando (2006) examined the effects of employee gender on employee ratings of role conflict and work-family conflict. Data gathered from eighty-one faculty participants indicated that women report greater role conflict and work-family conflict than men. However, perceived organisational climate predicts these outcomes beyond gender. The results from Cleveland et al. (2006) help to explain the higher uptake by women of FFWPs since they are experiencing greater work-family stress than men. The study highlights the important role that organisational culture and climate play in the work and family arena. This study is an important one in terms of our understanding of the effects of employee gender, organisational climate and work-family climate. It is important to recognise that the data was gathered within a university. There is reason to believe that employment within the university sector has a number of desirable family-friendly features that may not spill over to other organisational settings. Therefore, we need to
be mindful of its specific contextual factor. This study has helped inform the thesis as it made comparisons between public and private sector organisations.

The multiple barriers to flexible work for men should be considered when trying to understand why men do not opt for more part-time jobs and flexible working arrangements such as parental leave. The lack of take-up of flexible working or work-life policies by men has been explained in terms of gender roles, social norms, economics and organisational culture (Vandeweyer and Glorieux 2008). The high take-up of parental leave in Scandinavian countries is partly due to strong government campaigns, which have slowly succeeded in forcing a switch in mentality among employers and employees. About 70 to 90 per cent, depending on the source, of Swedish fathers take up parental leave, as do almost all Swedish women (Vandeweyer and Glorieux 2008: 274). This take-up rate is far higher than any other country (Haas 2003; Moss and O’Brien 2006). The study by Vandeweyer and Glorieux (2008) suggests that if men reduced their working hours by taking career breaks or other flexible work arrangements, a more even distribution of paid and unpaid work in the household could be established and a better balance between work and family life obtained.

It has been argued that when examining the moderator effects of gender and parenting status, that individual factors such as gender or family structure may play a role in affecting how beneficial FFWPs are for various individuals (Mauno, Kinnunen and Feldt 2012: 107). According to the theory of gender roles, work-family issues are more relevant for women because they have been socialised to nurturing roles and less to provider roles (Kroska 2004; Loscocco and Spitze 2007; Martinengo, Jacomb and Hill, 2010; Maume 2006 and West and Zimmerman 1987). Traditional gender roles imply that men are less likely to use FFWPs. This is certainly evidenced in the studies outlined above. Further, employed men are more likely to have a stay-at-home or part-time employed spouse than employed women (Cleveland et al. 2006: 231). The 2014 Australian Work and Life Index provides a good indication of trends over the past seven years concerning work and life balance issues for men and women. Whilst there have been small changes across the years, the general pattern of findings remains consistent. This Index shows that women are
more time pressured and have less satisfaction with work-life balance (Skinner and Pocock, 2014: 21).

The studies discussed show that work-family balance is not equally experienced by all employees. Employee context, such as type of organisation, together with demographic factors, such as gender and parenting status, are likely to determine what groups of employees would benefit most from a supportive workplace environment. It is vital that organisational change be part of broader societal change as wider social norms impact on workplace culture (Bond 2004: 15). Countries vary in the way they address work-family conflict, in part due to differences in societal cultures (Blair-Loy and Frenkel 2005: 1). Consequently, recognising the importance of cultural models of gender, work and the family in shaping peoples’ attitudes and actions around work-family issues has important outcomes for the construction of state and organisational policies. We still have a way to go in terms of societal attitudes supporting an equal share of caring responsibilities between men and women as identified in the studies of Pocock (2006) and McDonald et al. (2011). The findings from this thesis will enliven the debate toward balancing the usage of flexible practices between the genders, as well as the broader aim of focusing interest on the importance of FFWC. Such dialogue would assist parents to more equally share the role of parenting and for fathers to spend more time with their children.

It is vital that research be undertaken to find out the reasons why employees are not using the FFWPs that are available to them. This should reduce the gap between the provision and utilisation of these policies. Ultimately, providing outstanding policies adds no actual value to the organisation or to its employees if they are not being utilised. Thus the significance of the research undertaken in the current investigation is emphasised.

**Summing up the research gap**

The important issues outlined in this literature review led to the identification of a research gap and formed the basis of the current research. As noted by others, more research is needed regarding job characteristics, the style of HRM in an organisation and FFWC offered by an organisation, as these may affect the availability and usage of FFWPs. Further understanding is required regarding the nature of the FFWC
dimensions and whether there are any new ones to be uncovered. Research is urgently needed to help understand the determinants of FFWC and to quantify how such a culture benefits key stakeholders. The preceding literature focused on the lack of understanding of the relationship between FFWC (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005; Bradley et al. 2010), the employee’s job type (Lepak and Snell, 1999) and the style of HRM (Legge 1995), and the availability and usage of FFWPs. It is also suggested that future research should take a multilevel view of organisational culture by exploring sub-cultures (Duxbury and Glover, 2011: 285). These aspects have been brought together in the theoretical framework presented as figure 1 at the outset of this chapter. This framework has been used to direct the case studies and to report and analyse the findings from each case study.

Much of the work and family literature has focused on the debate that although work-family benefits may create new ways of working, employees who use such programs may be negatively affected if the culture continues to encourage old work practices (Perlow, 1995; Thompson et al. 1999). It was noted by other authors that FFWC is a very recent – but very important – research topic and therefore many more studies and theoretical views on these issues are required. It has been suggested that qualitative studies would also be appropriate, as many aspects of organisational culture would be better revealed by qualitative research methods (Mauno, Kinnunen and Piitulainen (2012: 134). In line with this idea, qualitative methods are employed in this thesis as explored in the next chapter. It has been noted that cultural change programmes with the aim of improving work-life integration would do well to appreciate the importance of values and to correctly identify those that resonate well with their employees (Callan 2008: 95).

The work of Thompson et al. (1999) and Bradley et al. (2005) identified the existing five FFWC dimensions. They indicated an urgent need for future research to increase our understanding of the complex nature of managing work and family, specifically the influence of FFWC. The next section demonstrates how this thesis proposes to address this research gap.
Addressing the research gap

This thesis aims to enhance our understanding of FFWC concerning the availability and usage of FFWPs by the utilisation of organisational case studies, including documentary analysis and interviews. Ideas relating to FFWC as developed by Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005) are utilised in the empirical investigation. The influence of job characteristics (Lepak and Snell, 1999) and the soft and hard human resource models (Legge 1995) on the availability and usage of FFWPs are explored. Important organisational factors such as industry, sector and organisational size are also investigated to explore if the availability and usage of FFWPs were affected by these organisational factors. The rationale for considering industry, sector and organisational size was based on the knowledge gained by reviewing the institutional theory literature. In addition, the way an employee’s job characteristics, the type of HRM and organisational factors relate to each other will be considered. The aim is to determine if these factors are inter-related or if they are independent of each other. By examining this range of individual and organisational factors the aim is to increase knowledge about their possible impact on the availability and usage of FFWPs (Thompson et al. 2005: 130).

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter the existing work and family literature was reviewed to allow the research problem investigated in the current research to be discussed in full. The literature has been presented in a way that provides a sense of how knowledge was developed as the thesis evolved. Literature was reviewed relating to organisational culture, FFWC, the nature and significance of work and family balance, implications of HRM and diversity management for work and family balance, theoretical frameworks relating to the availability of FFWPs and studies regarding the availability and usage of FFWPs. Important issues emerging from the literature were that organisational culture and FFWC are difficult to define and difficult to study (Linstead 2009: 157). Secondly, there is a significant difference between the rhetoric of espoused availability of FFWPs and the reality of FFWPs as experienced by employees in their everyday working lives (Kramar 2012a: 257). Thirdly, HRM has been considered as heterogeneous in practice (Lepak and Snell 1999). A useful
schema for exploring the heterogeneity further, in terms of FFWPs, is by way of Legge’s (1995) soft and hard dichotomy. A key area of distinction for Lepak and Snell was the core and periphery idea concerning workers’ value to the organisation and their access to benefits such as FFWPs.

Working from the insights from the preceding work and family literature, the proposed theoretical framework has been developed to underpin the close connection between organisational culture, FFWC, style of HRM: whether it is soft, hard or a mixture; job characteristics: core or periphery; the availability and usage of FFWPs and the resulting work and family balance experienced by the employee. These concepts link directly to and affirm the research questions that were presented in the introduction chapter. The purpose of the remaining chapters is to address the research gap indentified in this chapter, to provide answers to the research questions outlined in the introduction, identify contributions made by this thesis and to suggest areas for future research.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology utilised which is shaped by the research questions and the issues emerging from this literature review. It provides the rationale for selecting a qualitative case study methodology. It provides the rationale for selecting a qualitative case study methodology, and explains the processes, procedures and rationale for the selected methods of data collection and analysis, and for selecting participants.
CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

Case study research strategy is attractive, particularly for HRM projects, which seek to investigate the interaction of different factors and events that contribute to the focus of the enquiry (Anderson 2013: 63).

This chapter is organised around three key issues which emerged from the literature review provided in the previous chapter. The first issue relates to why qualitative methodology was utilised, the second issue illustrates how researching culture has challenges because of the nature of the phenomenon and the third issue relates to the idea that the methodology and research design were chosen in order to tackle the task of distinguishing between the rhetoric and reality in family-friendly work practices (FFWPs). In short, the method was designed to separate the rhetoric of policy from the reality of lived experience.

The chapter is structured as follows. The research questions are revisited and then there is a justification for selecting qualitative methodology. This includes an explanation of the case study research and the time and length of the study. Next, the rationale for the data analysis strategy and framework follows with a description of the thematic data analysis utilised is presented. Phase one data collection and data analysis and phase two data collection and data analysis are then provided. The interviews an documentary analysis of the second phase examine the role that FFWC plays in the availability and usage of FFWPs at the organisational unit of analysis for each of the four case studies. As well as analysing at the organisation level, comparisons are made between the various case study organisations. The unit of analysis for phase one was individual whereas for phase two it was organisational. The decision to employ different units of analysis was intentional because of the nature of the research topic. Research topics in the managing diversity field need to consider different levels of analysis: national, organisational and individual (Syed and Kramar, 2010: 107). Therefore, this thesis has uncovered that the phenomenon of
FFWC is something that occurs at many levels or units of analysis. When more than one unit of analysis is included in the fieldwork, case studies may be layered or nested within the overall case study approach and the fieldwork often has a series of intersecting and overlapping units of analysis (Patton 2002: 298). Important ethical considerations and considerations of rigour are addressed next. Finally limitations of the thesis are explored.

**Research questions reiterated**

There was one principal research question with five sub-questions under investigation within the context of the case study organisations as follows:

Principal Research Question: What is the difference between the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of FFWC at these organisations?
2. What is the impact of FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs at these organisations?
3. Are there any new FFWC dimensions to be revealed at the case study organisations?
4. What style of HRM is in place at the case study organisations?
5. What is the impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations?

A number of problems had to be faced in addressing the research questions. The notion of culture is one that holds many interpretations for many individuals and as such was often difficult to delineate (Linstead, 2009: 154). Linking back to the critical analysis of culture provided in the literature review, culture is value driven and is a way in which organisational members perceive, think and feel (Eldridge and Crombie, 1974: 89; Pacanowsky et al. 1982: 126; Schein 1985: 9; Schwartz and Davis 1981: 33). Therefore, we can say that culture is embedded in social relations between workers in organisations. A challenge that was faced with this assumption was that it was difficult to determine the degree of candour that individuals express when discussing their organisations and it was possible that some employees may tend to present their organisation in a positive light.
The literature review firmly established ‘rhetoric versus reality’ as an idea in human resource management and diversity management research, although there appears to be limited understanding of what actually happens at the workplace level within organisations (Kramar, 2012a: 257). Furthermore, indications in both the private and public sectors suggest that actions to promote change have declined despite widespread rhetoric about diversity (Kramar, 2012a: 257). The research design was required to address the challenges in comparing the espoused availability of FFWPs with the actual availability of FFWPs within the case study organisations. Shein’s (1992) model of culture describes three levels at which culture manifests itself: visible artefacts, espoused values and underlying basic assumptions. Schein’s model emphasises the importance of considering rhetoric versus reality in understanding culture, though he uses slightly different language, that is, visible artefacts versus espoused values.

Being mindful of these challenges was an important part of the selection of the chosen methodology. This was a case study approach with multiple sources of data and is discussed below.

**Justification of Methodology**

The methodology evolved and was a process that reflected changes in methodological approaches as more was learned about the research topic. Originally there were to be two phases: qualitative interviews and then a quantitative questionnaire. After conducting the first phase of qualitative interviews it was decided to change the second phase to case studies using multiple sources of data. The reason for the change in methodology was an acknowledgement that the nature of organisational culture, specifically FFWC and the challenges associated with studying this phenomenon, would be best handled by a case study approach. Furthermore, in examining the rhetoric versus reality theme, it was decided that documentary analysis of company policies and procedures, awards and agreements, annual reports and legislation would provide a robust source of data which could be compared with the actual lived experiences as told by participants from the organisations during interviews.
Therefore, a case study methodology was chosen based on the purpose of the research which was to examine the lived experiences of individuals regarding FFWPs at the four case study organisations. The research questions prompted the use of a qualitative approach because of the depth and quality of information that is revealed from in-depth interviews and case studies. An HRM lens has been adopted in this thesis and the dominant research paradigm in HRM is qualitative (Anderson 2008: 14) and distinguished by its emphasis on holistic treatment of phenomena (Stake, 1995: 43). Case study research strategy is attractive, particularly for HRM projects, which seek to investigate the interaction of different factors that contribute to the focus of the enquiry (Anderson 2013: 63). An approach that examined the whole system rather than just its component parts is appropriate to the research topic. This was because it was considered that many influences were considered to be important in this thesis. The aim of selecting the case study methodology was to enable the systematic enquiry into the HRM issue of understanding the availability and usage of FFWPs to increase knowledge and underpin effective action (Anderson 2013: 11).

The qualitative research method was regarded as the most suitable approach for this study because it enabled insight into the dimensions of FFWC. Supporting this decision, Linstead (2009: 157) argues that to observe what a culture does the researcher has to be there; consequently, questionnaires cannot be relied upon. This is because questionnaires can only reveal the visible and less remarkable aspects of culture. Therefore, being present in the case study organisations to the extent that was possible was an advantage. The aim of employing the qualitative strategy was to obtain quality data from the participants where the value lies in a full and rounded understanding of the experiences and situations of a few individuals resulting in a large amount of rich material (Veal 2005: 26). Qualitative research is a multi-perspective approach to social interaction aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting, or reconstructing this interaction in terms of the meanings that are subject to it (Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 3). Generally speaking, qualitative researchers are prepared to sacrifice scope for the detail which is found in the precise particulars of matters such as people’s interpretations and interactions (Silverman, 2005: 9). An alternative methodology could have been ethnography. Case studies
are inspired by ethnographic methodology but ethnography involves participating and observing social interactions to understand the culture as an insider might. Ethnographic studies are very resource intensive and require the researcher to have extensive access to organisations over a period of time. Case studies with some organisational access have some of the benefits of ethnography in terms of being able to explore the meaning that interviewees give to aspects of organisational life but have the additional benefit of assessing the role of external and internal contexts that shape social practice. Consideration of context can help identify causal factors that a focus on internal constructions of meaning would overlook.

Qualitative research ‘can shed light on enduring barriers to those fundamental shifts in organisational culture which are required to challenge ways of working which perpetuate work and family conflict’ (Callan 2008: 79). This argument builds support for the decision to utilise this approach. Callan (2008) goes on to say that the qualitative approach can make a significant contribution to the research in the FFWPs area. This is because it emphasises the understanding of the social world of those experiencing the family-friendly policies. Such research aims to access the employee’s interpretation of this experience. Further endorsing the utilisation of qualitative research for this study, Schofield (2000: 84) argues that qualitative research is like a movie with various scenes developed over time that reflect the fluidity and interrelationship of the ‘actors’. This thesis aimed to study the dynamics of organisational life concerning FFWPs and thus the qualitative method is ideal.

Qualitative research then is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. It offers a number of advantages to the current study of examining the participants’ lived experiences of FFWC at their organisations including: these methods allow the researcher to understand and explain in detail the personal experiences of individuals; they focus on people’s understanding and interpretations; qualitative methods allow the researcher to experience research issues from a particular participant’s perspective; qualitative research reports are normally presented in narrative form, making them interesting and understandable for readers; and these methods tend to focus on human-interest issues that are meaningful to managers (Veal 2005: 125).
Research design: case study

The research design guided the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting the data. The main purpose of the research design was to ensure that the evidence addressed the initial research questions (Yin 2003: 21). The current research used a case study approach within the qualitative paradigm with an ‘interest in understanding the world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it’ (Locke 2001: 8). It is possible that values and views may well differ across groups and across social settings, with case study methodology presuming that social interactions and interpretations of meaning are affected by the organisational context. In order to understand these lived experiences it is necessary to engage within the setting with the use of interviews and documentary analysis. Inductive theorising and an emergent design are employed to make sense of ‘what you have found after you have found it’ (Gillham, 2000: 7). Such an emergent and evolving approach was experienced in this research when it was realised that the questionnaire that was originally planned to be distributed to the participants would not provide the depth of information required. The research design was then changed to a case study approach, as previously explained. In this way, topics and issues that were raised unexpectedly by participants were able to be explored further during the interview. The advantage of using the case study approach is its capacity to provide rich descriptions. This approach is also able to communicate contextual information that is grounded in the particular setting that was studied (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 359).

Further supporting the choice of the qualitative methodological approach when studying the role played by FFWC in the availability and usage of FFWPs, Geertz (1973: 5) argued in his seminal work on culture that:

‘Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning’.

The case study method allows for the holistic characteristics of life events to be retained (Yin 2003: 2). The purpose of this research was to research the lived experiences of individuals relating to FFWPs from a holistic perspective, thus case study methodology was considered to be desirable. Furthermore, as this is an HRM
thesis, case study research is particularly useful. This is because a range of types of
data, such as interviews, and documents, can contribute to the thesis to provide a
‘rounded’ analysis of the topic under investigation. Thus the interaction of important
factors can be examined. (Anderson 2013: 63). This was considered to be a critical
requirement of the research strategy in this thesis as there were four key themes to be
investigated concerning the availability and usage of FFWPs. One of the themes
related to job characteristics and (Huselid and Becker (2011:427) suggest that case
studies are useful for evaluating the impact of workforce differentiation. In the HR
strategy literature this is especially true because the processes through which firms
implement differentiated workforce strategies are not yet well understood (Huselid

Theory development as part of the design phase is essential for case studies
regardless of whether the purpose is to develop or test a theory (Yin 2003: 28). For
this reason, theory development took place prior to the collection of case study data.
As recommended by Sutton and Staw (1995: 377) theoretical propositions were
noted with a view to be developed during the study. These propositions related to
FFWC and its impact on the uptake of FFWPs and were based on the work of
Thomson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005). Another proposition related to
HRM and its relationship to the availability and usage of FFWPs and was based on
the work of Lepak and Snell (1999) and Legge (1995). By starting with these two
conceptual statements the research was able to build a logically detailed case with

Time and length of study: phase one and phase two

Data collection, data analysis, data organisation and the compilation of phase one,
the pilot interviews, were conducted over a period of approximately eighteen months.
Data collection commenced in April 2007 and was completed in October 2007. Data
collected from different sources were analysed at different times depending on the
time of their completion.

Data collection, data analysis, data organisation and the compilation of phase two,
the case studies, were conducted over a period of approximately twenty-four months.
Data collection commenced in February 2010 and was completed in July 2010. A
strength of the case studies is that they utilised data collected from different sources. These were analysed at different times depending on the time of their completion. The data from the documents provided useful information regarding the availability of FFWPs, whereas the data from the interviews and provided insights concerning the actual usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations.

Data analysis

The strategy

Theories generate expectations about the world and theories enable us to predict or explain events (Anderson 2008: 98). The data analysis strategy in this research relied on theoretical propositions which led to the use of a case study methodology. This strategy assisted in treating the evidence fairly, producing compelling analytic conclusions and ruling out alternative interpretations (Yin 2003: 111). A proposition is an example of a theoretical orientation guiding the case study analysis which helps to focus attention on certain data and to ignore other data. In this research the theoretical propositions related to FFWC and HRM (job characteristics and style of HRM) and their relationship to the availability and usage of FFWPs. With this broad data analysis strategy in mind, the following data analysis framework was implemented.

The framework

Data collected from the interviews and documents were analysed using a process of induction consistent with the Miles and Huberman’s (1994: 10) framework of analysis. This framework was chosen because it provided step-by-step guidance on how to proceed through analysis to produce and document findings that other qualitative analysts would regard as dependable and trustworthy (Miles and Huberman 1984: 23). The Miles and Huberman (1994) framework explains that analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion-drawing/verification. The data reduction process in this study involved coding and teasing out themes without stripping the data from the context in which it had occurred, as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994: 10). The data display process is an organised, compressed assembly of information that
permitted conclusion drawing. This involved designing an Excel spreadsheet in which data were entered. The third stream of analysis activity, conclusion-drawing and verification, resulted in drawing meaning from the displayed, reduced data, also recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994:11). This process involved noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions. These three streams of activities were fluid, interactive and cyclical, with the coding of data leading to new ideas about what should go into the data display spreadsheet (Miles and Huberman 1984: 24).

The process of analysis: thematic data analysis

Analysis involves finding answers to research questions using the data and begins to occur while data is being gathered (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 141; Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran 2001: 181; Anderson 2008: 169). Content analysis is the process of identifying, coding and categorising primary patterns in the data, allowing themes to emerge from the raw data (Patton 2002: 453; Cavana et al. 2001: 171). Qualitative analysis requires some creativity, for the challenge is to place the raw data into logical, meaningful categories; to examine them in a holistic fashion; and to find ways of communicating this interpretation to others. In this research the qualitative analysis was first deductive and then inductive, so that the data was initially analysed in terms of a theoretical framework developed by Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005). After this, undiscovered patterns, or inductive analysis took place (Patton 2002: 454). Finally, alternative explanations formulated conclusions. A diagram of how this process flowed is provided in figure 2.
The actual process of data analysis utilised a thematic method. Identifying themes is an emergent process, as some themes may be generated during the data-gathering process or later during the data display process (Anderson 2008: 189). To help manage the data, the various themes were entered onto an Excel spreadsheet. The goal was to create descriptive, multi-dimension categories which formed a preliminary framework for analysis. Themes were selected based on the research questions as well as dominant issues emerging from the data (Miles and Huberman 1984: 25). The aim of this process was to discover similarities and differences. Data
was categorised and coded into different chunks of data (Anderson 2008: 173). Words that appeared to be similar were grouped in the same category. These categories were gradually modified during subsequent stages of analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994: 62). The codes related to one another and were guided by the study’s conceptual framework (Miles and Huberman 1994: 62). The research was characterised by the use of ‘voice’ in the text; that is, participants’ quotes were used to illustrate the themes being described.

Manual ‘colour coding’ was used by colour striping down the right hand margin for parts of various transcripts depending on the theme that was being discussed. Notes relating to these themes were written in the margin. This visual colour cue was found to be a useful way of organising information, and comparing and contrasting responses. These manual processes enabled a close connection to the data which in turn led to deeper analysis. Having engaged in a search for themes and patterns, the implications of the analysis were then considered (Anderson 2008: 190). This was done by pattern matching, where outcomes were predicted based on Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model and Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model relating to the provision of FFWPs. Theory-building also took place whereby new FFWC dimensions were identified from the analysis, building once more on the work of Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005).

**Data collection: the process**

There were two phases of data collection which are discussed below. Phase one used interviews and phase two was the case study which used interviews and documentary analysis. Quality of life, which incorporates work and family balance, can be conceived and assessed at three different levels: the individual level, the group level, (e.g. family, community) and the macro level (e.g. country, society) (Diener and Suh 1997: 201). Scholars from distinct disciplines may conceive the topic at different levels of analysis and apply different measures. Psychologists, for example, may use measures at the individual or group level when studying individual or family phenomena, while policy makers, who are interested in improving the work and family balance of a whole country, may focus on the quality of life assessment at the
macro level. Furthermore, scholars may apply different types of measurement indicators depending on the level of analysis (Diener and Suh 1997: 201).

Syed and Kramar (2010: 107) similarly argue that organisations seeking to pursue an integrated approach towards diversity management need to employ a multi-level framework at the national, organisational and individual level. The idea that quality of life and diversity management can be conceived at different levels informed the decision to use different units of analysis for phase one and phase two. This was based on the understanding that the research topic is complex and relates to many levels. This decision is supported by Yin’s (2003: 24) argument that the selection of the unit of analysis is related to the initial research questions and can be revisited due to discoveries arising during data collection. For the purpose of this study the unit of analysis for phase one was the individual level whereby responses were compared regarding FFWPs as experienced by individual participants at their organisations.

**Phase one data collection and analysis**

*Phase one data collection: pilot interviews*

The method used to generate data in the first phase was in-depth interviewing as this technique fulfilled the purpose of understanding participants’ points of view, perceptions and experiences of family-friendly work culture at their organisations. The interview is a form of social interaction involving a face-to-face encounter between at least two people who are constructing the meanings of the other’s words (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 98). Therefore, the interview was used with the aim of providing participants the opportunity to speak and construct their reality for the purpose of obtaining deeper insights into issues relating to the research project.

The semi-structured interview was utilised to create a relaxed, open and interactive model. The face-to-face interview method that was utilised provided the opportunity to develop a positive relationship of trust and understanding so that participants were more prepared to accept probing questions (Neuman 2000: 356; Anderson 2008: 149). To help build trust and to encourage the participants to open up, the researcher shared background information on herself and on the study (Neuman 2000: 370). The face-to-face interactive process encouraged participants to share intrinsic opinions
and tacit knowledge (Cavana et al. 2001: 138). Throughout the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to develop their own issues and answer questions freely in an empathetic environment. A tape recorder was used with the participants’ consent which enabled concentration on the process of questioning and listening rather than taking extensive notes (Anderson 2008: 152; Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland 2006: 106).

Interviews were conducted at the participants’ places of work using an interview guide based on the research questions and several key themes. The interview guide for the initial two interviews and the pilot interviews of phase one is provided in Appendices 1 and 2. Taylor and Bogdan (1998: 105) argue that the interview guide reminds the interviewer to ask certain things and it was found to be an excellent tool in keeping the interview on track while at the same time allowing the researcher to focus on what the participant was saying. In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, interview guides can be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or to exclude questions the researcher has found to be unproductive for the goals of the research (Lofland et al. 2006: 105; Taylor and Bogdan: 106). After conducting the first two pilot interviews the interview guide was amended to include additional questions relating to FFWC and also soft and hard HRM.

Sixteen interviews were conducted in 2007. These interviews received Ethics Approval from the University of Technology Sydney Ethics Committee. Two preliminary interviews established the importance of culture, and were followed by the other fourteen. The purpose of these sixteen interviews in the first phase was to help shape and inform the interview schedule for the second phase of the data collection, at the case study organisations. There were nine female and seven male participants employed at large private and public sector organisations based in Sydney. These participants were from various occupations. A mix of women and men was selected. The original intention was to have equal representation of men and women but this was not achieved in practice due to unavailability of some potential participants. Proposed participants were identified from the network of people known to the researcher. The selection criterion was that the potential participants were working and also had family responsibilities. Family
responsibilities were not defined to exclude single people. Family responsibilities were taken to mean that the individual had childcare and/or eldercare responsibilities. Individuals were selected from different organisations, different white-collar industries, different demographics and different job categories. These individuals were then invited to participate in the interview.

The preliminary two pilot interviews revealed the importance of organisational culture in managing FFWPs with the following comments made to this question. The participant names in this chapter have been invented to maintain anonymity:

Are there any reasons employees would feel reluctant to use family-friendly work practices? – Researcher

Often there is this hidden discrimination of people who use these types of leave. When everybody uses it and it is used appropriately, then it's just another working condition. You might have to dictate workplace policies and procedures first but when it becomes part and parcel of the culture of the business that's when it really starts to actually work – Brian, HR Manager Public Sector (interview)

We firstly need to get ourselves in the game around our policies. Then what we need to do once we get ourselves there is to really focus on the behaviours, mindsets and values. There is this culture that when people have flexible work arrangements to keep it quiet, keep it secret – Isabelle, Director, Human Capital, Private Sector (interview)

What made these comments more striking was that both participants mentioned culture, though culture was not mentioned in the question. Because organisational culture emerged as an important factor that both organisations were grappling with regarding their FFWPs, a literature search on a specific aspect of culture relevant to FFWPs that is FFWC was commenced. It was soon assessed that FFWC was an aspect of the work and family literature that was under-researched. As discussed in the previous chapter, Thompson et al. (1999) had identified managerial support, fear of negative career consequences and time expectations; and McDonald et al. (2005) had identified the gendered natured of FFWPs and co-worker support as FFWC dimensions. The work and family literature search confirmed that the study would focus on the role played by FFWC in the availability and usage of FFWPs as the need was established in the literature for a better understanding about this concept (McDonald et al. 2005: 49).
Phase one data analysis procedure: pilot interviews

In order to ensure accuracy of the interviews they were tape recorded and brief interview notes were taken which was found to be indispensible as recommended by Taylor and Bogdan (1998: 112) and Patton (2002: 380). Participants’ permission was sought prior to this occurring. The tape recorder allowed for greater rapport to be established because eye contact could be maintained rather than spending time writing lengthy notes. The researcher transcribed the interviews herself so that she was able to immerse herself in the dialogue. She commenced transcribing the interviews verbatim and found the process greatly assisted her in understanding the content of the interviews. This was because, as Patton (2002: 441) and Lofland et al. (2006: 107) suggested, the opportunity to get immersed in the data usually generates emergent insights.

Dragon voice recognition software was initially utilised in an effort to expedite the transcription process. However this was soon discontinued due to an unacceptable error rate. The researcher recommenced transcription herself and felt that this process resulted in fewer errors, misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Interview notes and transcriptions were repeatedly reviewed and the data was coded identifying themes. The themes were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet to clearly display comments made by each participant. The themes were then reviewed in line with the main research questions and the literature and the findings were recorded.

Industries were diverse including: education, I.T., construction, science, law, hospitality, retail, health, government, finance, accounting and transportation. Occupations were also diverse including: Lecturer, HR Administrator, Chief Executive Officer, Development Manager, Project Leader, Engineer, Lawyer, Receptionist, Head of Department, Staff Specialist, Human Capital Manager, Administration Manager, Head of Portfolio Risk, School Administrative Officer and Shop Merchandiser.

Overwhelmingly, participants felt that their organisations were ‘quite good’ concerning their management of FFWPs with a mix of soft and hard HRM styles being implemented. There was a mixed response about whether core and periphery workers were treated the same regarding FFWPs.
Some of the views expressed were:

I think it is the same across the board.

Another said:

I would never use those terms. They are all valuable workers. There’s no core or peripheral at all. The administrative support staff here are just as important as other workers.

One participant felt that core workers were actually worse off:

I think it’s harder for the core workers because we take our responsibilities seriously and that’s an obligation to the clients. You don’t get that from the peripheral workers.

When asked the reasons for not using FFWPs responses included:

People have difficulty in letting go. Replacement is not made when people are away.

Another response was:

Some people are old school types and hard nuts. They would never take advantage of these policies and they would frown upon others doing so.

These comments are in line with McDonald et al. (2005) who identified co-worker support as an important factor in whether employees were likely to utilise family-friendly work practices.

Other comments included:

Yes, they might think am I going to miss out on the next promotion or not?

Another participant said:

There’s nothing that we won’t consider. Employees hang back a bit in using them because some of the options that they have available to them often mean reducing their income.

These comments supported the results of Thompson et al. (1999) who identified fear of negative career consequences as a factor inhibiting employees using FFWPs.

One participant noted:

I think nearly all managers are bending backwards to help their staff. There are some particularly obnoxious people, but they are in the minority.
This view, too, is in line with Thompson et al. (1999) who identified managerial support as having an important bearing on the usage of FFWPs.

The findings from the pilot interviews helped to shape the interview schedule that was used in the second phase. Based on those findings, six more questions were added to the case study interview schedule for phase two which is provided in Appendix 3. Phase two, the case studies, is now described.

**Phase two of data collection: the four case study organisations**

*Phase two recruitment and selection of participants*

Four large organisations, two from public sector and two from private sector, were selected for case studies. This section explains the selection. The four case studies were chosen because analytical conclusions independently arising from four case studies will be more compelling and robust than those coming from a single case study (Yin 2003, 2009: 46). If a finding holds in one setting and, given its profile, also holds in a comparable setting but not in a contrasting case, the finding is more robust (Miles and Huberman 1994: 29). The findings of a comparable study by Bardoel and Tharenou (1997), one that pointed to the importance of organisational size, employer of choice, a good track record in HRM and participation in the finance sector as indicators of organisations with FFWPs, guided the selection of the two large private sector and two public sector organisations. This decision is supported by Yin (2003: 26) who argues that previous literature can become a guide for defining the case and the unit of analysis. The sample was ten participants from each of four large Sydney based organisations. The four organisations were recruited from within the network of contacts known to the researcher. Two public sector organisations and two private sector organisations were selected in order to understand differences between the sectors.

Information concerning the research study was circulated to employees at the four case study organisations by utilising the email newsletter systems at each of the organisations. Potentially interested participants were requested to email the researcher directly. Further information about the nature of the research was then provided by email or in some cases by telephone to interested participants. Potential
participants were selected through the strategy of purposive sampling, with the criteria being that they were working and had family responsibilities, but without excluding single people. Additionally, using a sliced purposive technique (Anderson 2008: 162), participants were selected from different occupations and levels within their organisation in order to test the core and periphery idea (Lepak and Snell 1999). If the selected potential participants were happy to participate, an interview time was scheduled. Purposeful sampling was used because it focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study and maximises the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take account of contextual conditions and cultural norms (Patton 2002: 234; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen 1993: 82).

The following section describes the data collection of phase two which utilised multiple data collection methods. The decision to utilise multiple data collection methods was based on two of the ideas introduced in the beginning of this chapter. To revisit these ideas, researching culture has challenges because of the nature of the phenomenon which itself links back to the critical analysis of culture provided in the literature review. Culture is embedded in relations between workers in organisations. Therefore, the case study approach with multiple sources of data is ideal. Furthermore, the case study approach with multiple sources of data was chosen in order to tackle the task of distinguishing between the rhetoric and reality of the availability and the usage of FFWPs, a key idea found in the HRM and diversity management literature. The two data collection methods, interviews and documents, are now described.

**Phase two data collection: interviews**

The interviews were open-ended and proved to be an excellent source of data for this research as they help the researcher to understand and put into a larger context the interpersonal, social and cultural aspects of the environment (Erlandson et al. 1993: 85). The purpose of the interview is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective (Patton 2002: 341). The participants were reminded of the informed consent details relating to the nature and purpose of the interview and background information was provided regarding the researcher. The participants were given the opportunity to ‘warm up’ by being asked personal details relating to their family,
their qualifications and how long they had worked in the organisation (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 270).

As in phase one, a high level of empathy was required during the interviews as the participants opened up about their everyday lives concerning their work and family responsibilities. For example, one single mother explained that both of her children had severe disabilities and that she had realised when the children were very young that she could not actually work and have a primary caring role for the children as well. It was only when she accepted her current role in the public sector that she realised it could be possible because of the range of flexible work practices. This meant she could actually manage to hold down a full-time job as well as keeping her children as her primary focus. Based on the success of using an interview guide in phase one, an interview guide was again used as a useful tool in keeping the interview on track while at the same time allowing the researcher to listen closely to what the participant was saying (Yin 2003: 92). It was therefore possible to take advantage of a participant’s spontaneous comments; to explore and probe, and still be able to keep the interview focused (Erlandson et al. 1993: 90; Patton 2002: 343).

Based on the findings from phase one, six extra questions were added to the interview guide as follows (see Appendix 3):

Q4 How are you made aware of your organisation’s policies and procedures regarding family-friendly work practices?

Q7 Who are the most positive and negative contributors of this?

Q9 Are certain occupational groups treated differently re FFWPs? Are workers considered equally valuable?

Q13 To what extent do you believe organisational policies regarding family-friendly work practices are utilised?

Q14 Are there any dismissive comments made relating to family-friendly concerns? Are you made to feel guilty for going home early?

Q16 To what extent do you believe your supervisor supports the achievements of family-friendly work practices?
Each person participated in one interview for approximately 45 minutes. As in the first phase, to ensure accuracy of the interviews, they were recorded with a tape recorder and participants were asked permission prior to this occurring (Erlandson et al. 1993: 91; Patton 2002: 381). Strategic and focused notes were also taken consisting of key phrases and key terms (Patton 2002: 381). The aim of these in-depth interviews was to study an individual’s lived experiences regarding work and family balance and to understand the relationship of FFWC to the availability and usage of FFWPs. Terms used during the interview process such as hard and soft HRM and core and periphery employee were explained to the participants to ensure clear understanding (Erlandson et al. 1993: 87).

One of the main goals of the interviews was to shed light on the individuals’ experiences of being able to use FFWPs at the case study organisations and, in so doing, gain an understanding of the reality of their experience and how FFWC played a part in their lives. The following section describes the documentary analysis which aimed to provide insight on the rhetoric of availability and usage of FFWPs.

**Phase two data collection: documentary analysis**

Documents refer to a broad range of written and symbolic records, as well as any available materials and data and provide a rich source of information about organisations and programs (Erlandson et al. 1993: 99; Patton 2002: 293). The search for useful documents was guided by the research design and proved a flexible yet systematic process that allowed also for tentative propositions as well as hunches to guide in the ‘accidental’ discovery of valuable data (Erlandson et al. 1993: 100). An example of ‘accidental’ discovery of valuable data was that only certain internal organisational policies may have been provided by an organisation to present their ‘position’ which, in combination with other documents, allowed an assessment of a broader view of the espoused position of the particular organisation concerning FFWPs.

Specific documents were intentionally identified – enterprise agreements, for example – as they were considered likely to indicate negotiated policy concerning family-friendly issues and annual reports were accessed as they were likely to contain espoused values and policies in the area. In another instance, a particular
document source was unavailable for this study as the participants at that case study organisation were employed on individual, above-award agreements which were confidential. However, the relevant industrial award for that organisation was available. Consequently, overall, a plethora of documents relating to FFWPs were collected including company policies and procedures, annual reports, awards and enterprise agreements and relevant legislation. In some cases, the evidence from the documents contradicted other sources which then prompted further investigation (Yin 2009: 87). Such a contradiction was seen in the espoused values they were described in some of the organisations’ annual reports compared to the actual lived values described by the participants. When analysing these documents, it was acknowledged that they are not always accurate and may have bias (Yin 2009: 87). Nevertheless, they did represent a particular perspective, which was important to this research.

The main goal, therefore, of the documentary analysis was to shed light on the rhetoric of availability of FFWPs at the case study organisations. As has been explained, each of the methods was utilised to assist in distinguishing between the rhetoric and reality of the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations. The following section provides a description of the data analysis procedure of each of the data types.

Phase two data analysis procedure: the four case study organisations

Data analysis: interviews

As in phase one, the researcher decided to transcribe the interviews herself, although due to the time it was taking the task was eventually delegated to a qualified transcriber. The advantage was that this allowed the researcher to focus on data analysis. Upon receipt of the completed transcripts the researcher listened to the recorded interviews again, checking against the transcript for accuracy. This approach is supported by Patton (2002: 441) who argues that doing some of your own interview transcriptions provides an opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that often generates emergent insights. The transcribed interview notes were read several times to identify themes, and colour coded. Themes relating to participants’ views of management, for example, were coded pink and those relating
to the usage of FFWPs were coded green. These codes were then entered into an Excel spreadsheet for each case study organisation. The list of participants was entered down the left hand side column and their responses were typed into separate columns relating to each theme that had been identified as described above.

Displayed this way in the Excel spreadsheet, the themes were analysed in relationship to the research questions and then compared with insights from the work and family and HRM literature. The findings that are discussed in Chapters 5 to 9 were based on the themes emerging from this process of analysis of data from the interviews as well as the data analysis from the documents as described below.

Data analysis: documents

Analysis of documents was invaluable to the research as it allowed for the corroboration of evidence from other sources, verifying intra-organisational details and making inferences (Yin 2009: 87; Anderson 2008: 125). Document analysis provided a behind-the-scenes examination of the organisations’ FFWPs which may not have been provided by interviews alone (Patton 2002: 307). The process of document analysis involved reading thoroughly, several times, all pages of the documents that were relevant to the case study organisations. Key words that related to the research topic were highlighted in each of the documents. As Patton (2002: 499) points out, one of the challenges in analysing documents is determining the accuracy of their contents.

Contradictions were seen in the espoused FFWPs values as described in some of the organisations’ annual reports compared to the actual lived experiences of FFWPs as described by the participants. In reviewing documents the listening skills of an open mind, a good memory, and the ability to read between the lines were adopted (Yin 2009: 60). A reporting of the analysis of documents and how they relate to the work and family and HRM literature is found in the findings chapters for each of the case study organisations and is further explored in the discussion chapter.

Ethical considerations

Ethics deal with questions of values and morality and focus on what is right and correct and what is wrong. Ethical standards such as the participants’ rights,
confidentiality, mutual respect and anonymity are imperative in the qualitative research method (Anderson 2008: 59). Ethical issues were an integral part of this research from its inception through to publication of the findings (Lofland et al. 2006: 28). Due to a transfer of HDR student enrolment, phase one of this research was approved by the ethics committee at the University of Technology Sydney in approval number HREC 2006-221 (details provided in Appendix 4). The second phase of the research was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Western Sydney in approval number H7657 (details provided in Appendix 5).

As the nature of the study involved humans, particular care was required to ensure that no harm was done. It was emphasised to participants that involvement was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time. The participants were provided with full information about what the thesis research involved (Miles and Huberman 1994: 291). An Information Sheet and Consent Form were made available to participants prior to the interviews taking place. The Interview Sheet provided an outline of the nature of the research as well as the approximate amount of time that the interview would take. It also provided details regarding privacy and confidentiality as well as details of approval of the research from the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee with appropriate contact details if participants required further information or if they had any concerns they wished to discuss.

The researcher’s role during the interviews is not to be an expert but an empathetic listener (Patton, 2002: 330), by that means establishing a climate of mutual trust and respect. One way that this climate was created was by thoroughly explaining the purpose of the research prior to commencing the interview. Additionally, the participants were reminded that neither the organisation nor the participant’s name would be identified in the published thesis. Constant eye contact was maintained throughout the duration of the interview which was enabled by the use of a tape recorder to avoid lengthy note taking.

Documents, tapes and transcripts were securely stored to ensure privacy and confidentiality of individuals and all names and organisations were de-identified. Finally, the study was conducted carefully, thoughtfully and correctly in terms of a reasonable set of standards. These relate to ensuring the goodness of the study: its
confirmability, dependability, credibility and potential transferability to other settings (Miles and Huberman 1994: 294). These ideas are explored in further detail below.

**Consideration of rigour**

Rigour is usually considered crucial for quantitative research. It is a measure of the legitimacy of the research process. Disagreement remains about the demonstration of rigour in qualitative studies, leading Tobin and Begley (2004: 394) to advocate a pluralistic approach including the concepts of goodness as explained by Miles and Huberman (2004: 262). The concept of goodness is a means of locating trustworthiness and authenticity and it is embedded in the research process (Tobin and Begley 2004: 391; Denzin and Lincoln 2011: 121). One way that goodness was embedded in this study’s research process was by adopting the Miles and Huberman (1984) framework of analysis.

Meanings emerging from the data need to be tested for their confirmability, that is, their validity (Miles and Huberman 2004: 11). General guidelines for judging the goodness of qualitative research, to ensure that it is valid and robust, are provided by Miles and Huberman (2004: 262). They suggest that we can test and confirm our findings by linking three levels of understanding: the meanings and interpretations of our participants, our own interpretations of those meanings, and our confirmatory, theory-connected operations (Miles and Huberman 2004: 263). The use of multiple methods of data collection as well as adopting the data analysis strategy in this thesis that relied on theoretical propositions relating to FFWC (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005) and to HRM (Lepak and Snell 1999; Legge 1995) provided these three levels of understanding. Utilising multiple methods of data collection links back to an important idea introduced in the beginning of this chapter. This is that researching the role FFWC may play on the availability and usage of FFWPs has many challenges because of the nature of the phenomenon. The decision to use multiple methods overcomes many of the problems of rigour that would exist with a single method.

Reliability is understood as the degree of consistency in which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers. In this measurement, the particular method of data collection is replicable (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 292; Neuman 2000:
This ability is difficult to achieve in qualitative research because human behaviour is never static (Merriam 1988: 170) and different researchers using alternative measures will get distinctive results (Neuman 2000: 170). However, by providing a detailed description of the methods of data generation and analysis, this thesis enables transparency for the reader about how the research was conducted (Kvale, 1996).

Validity is the degree to which findings of a research study present a true and accurate picture of what is claimed to be described (Neuman 2000: 164; Silverman 1993: 149). In qualitative research, this has been described as credibility. In this regard it has been suggested that authenticity is more important for qualitative research (Neuman (2000: 171). This means giving a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of someone who lives it every day. This was the aim of utilising multiple data collection sources in this thesis.

By way of illustration of how multiple sources of data were utilised to examine the case study organisations the following example, taken from Chapter 5, Big Bank, is provided below.

Combining the two data sources to compare the espoused availability of FFWPs at Big Bank with the participants’ actual lived experiences of their usage, the findings both supported the previous studies (Thompson et al.; 1999; McDonald et al., 2005) and identified new FFWC dimensions. The analysis of the documents indicated an extensive range of FFWPs were in place at Big Bank. However, there was a gap on the one hand between formal FFWPs provided at Big Bank and on the other hand the actual use of FFWPs. The comments from the interviews at Big Bank suggested that experiences regarding FFWPs were fragmented between different people in different jobs, for example, operational versus managerial, and different departments within Big Bank, with different teams having different expectations and different performance indicators. The interviews indicated also that the usage of FFWPs was more prevalent among women at Big Bank.
This example shows how the utilisation of multiple sources of data enabled the opportunity for a robust examination of Big Bank. Despite the strengths of the chosen methodology, it was not without its limitations, which are now considered.

**Limitations of the Methodology**

It is acknowledged that participants may feel that they need to protect themselves or their organisation. To overcome this issue, participants were reminded that neither they nor their organisations would be identified in the final thesis document. Moreover, the participant:

> may deliberately try to please the interviewer or to prevent the interviewer from learning something about the respondent. In order to do this, the respondent may embellish a response, give what is described as a ‘socially desirable’ response, or omit certain relevant information (Fontana and Frey 2000: 650).

The participant may also make errors due to a faulty memory or may have a biased perception for one reason or another. The interviewer may impede proper communication of the questions: ‘It is the degree of error assigned to the interviewer that is of greatest concern’ (Fontana and Frey 2000: 650). There may be a limitation with the interviews in that interviewer bias may have been introduced (Cavana et al. 2001: 245). This was very difficult to determine since the interviewer was so close to the interviewing process. To overcome interviewer bias and error, the interview guide was utilised during the interview process. Furthermore, an atmosphere was created in which participants were encouraged to talk freely and time was spent with people ‘on their own turf’ as they went about their day-to-day working lives (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 92).

By using a variety of sources this research is able to build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimising the weaknesses of each approach (Patton 2002: 307). A limitation of case study research relative to surveys is that surveys are able to shed a broad understanding on FFWC and the relationship between FFWC and the usage of FFWPs. In contrast, case study research is able to provide a deeper understanding of the research topic, but from a smaller sample. Even though the case studies were concentrated in the Sydney region it is still likely that the findings can be used to provide insight about other geographical areas. For example, the
FFWPs available in Big Bank’s Sydney office are likely to be the same in other States. However, to confirm this idea the thesis suggested opportunities for future research in other geographical areas, nationally and internationally, as explored in the final chapter. Finally, the terms organisational culture and FFWC are often perceived very differently by individuals and mean many things to many people. FFWC is something that occurs at many levels and many units of analysis. However, this was seen as an excellent research opportunity rather than a limitation. Addressing these challenges, in this fieldwork, the case studies were layered and nested within the overall case study approach and have a series of intersecting and overlapping units of analysis (Patton 2002: 298). This idea is further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, an outline of how the research was conducted has been provided. It was seen that there were three key issues which provided challenges in the methodology. Firstly, the chosen methodology was not a straightforward process; rather it evolved from lessons learned during phase one, so that the original design of a questionnaire for phase two was changed to a case study approach. This was linked to the second challenge emerging from the literature review, namely, that researching culture and specifically FFWC is difficult and to observe what a culture does the researcher needs to be there (Linstead 2009: 157). Therefore, due to the complexity of culture, a case study approach for phase two with mixed data collection methods was decided upon. There were various weaknesses in each approach. However, by using mixed data sources, diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon were provided, overcoming many of these problems (Patton 2002:556).

The third challenge related to distinguishing between the rhetoric and reality of the availability and usage of FFWPs. The methodology and research design of case studies was chosen to tackle this task. The interviews shed light on the actual experiences, the reality, and the documents highlighted the espoused values, the rhetoric, of the availability of FFWPs. The utilisation of mixed data sources was a sensible choice given the task at hand.
This chapter has provided the rationale for selecting the qualitative case study methodology and an explanation relating to the processes, procedures and selected methods of data collection and analysis. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman’s (1984, 1994) framework which involved data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. To address considerations for rigour mixed methods of data were adopted. The next four chapters present the research findings generated by using this research methodology. The next chapter relates to the findings of the first case study organisation, a private sector organisation, called Big Bank.
CHAPTER 5: Big Bank

I think that the attitudes come from two places; they come from the management team and they come from your colleagues and subordinates. So if the attitude of your colleagues and subordinates is not supportive of you working part-time, even if your management supports it, it is really hard to make it work. In fact, that was one of my problems at my previous role. It wasn’t so much that management had a problem, but the whole culture of that little team is completely different to the team that I have now. – Brigita (interview)

This is the first of four chapters that present an account of the research findings. This chapter discusses the findings from a large private sector bank, called here Big Bank. The purpose of this case study is to explore the participants’ lived experiences of gaining access to FFWPs in this organisation’s context. A comparison is made between the rhetoric of the availability and the reality of the usage of FFWPs as espoused by Big Bank.

The chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical framework relating to the case study. This framework informed the types of questions to be asked during the interviews and the documentary analysis. Following this, there will be an overview of the nature of Big Bank from an organisational perspective. Discussion follows on various family-friendly documents from Big Bank such as policies and procedures, industrial awards and enterprise agreements. These documents reveal much about the type of FFWPs in place. An introduction to the participants follows which provides details of their work and personal lives. The remainder of the chapter considers the findings. This part includes various questions that were asked during the interviews and the major themes emerging from the interviews. The findings from the interviews reveal the participants’ experiences of being able to access FFWPs at Big Bank. The conclusion draws together the two data sources to compare the espoused values at Big Bank with the participants’ lived experiences at their organisation. This
reveals significant conclusions concerning the reality and rhetoric of the availability and usage of FFWPs at Big Bank.

**Theoretical framework**

The reporting of the data in this and the next three chapters is in line with the thesis research questions. Therefore, the information that is provided in these chapters is both context and data driven; that is, the data addresses the research questions. For example, to provide a contextual backdrop various enterprise agreements and policies and procedures relating to FFWPs are examined. It was with consideration of these research questions and a review of the relevant literature that the proposed theoretical framework was developed. This framework incorporates four main themes. The first theme considered the availability and usage of FFWPs and the various reasons why employees may choose to not use them. The next theme explored and developed the nature of FFWC and described the impact of organisational culture, specifically FFWC, on the availability and usage of FFWPs. This theme flowed from the first and attempted to focus on cultural factors. In exploring this theme there was an intention of adding to the FFWC dimensions of those previously identified by Thompson *et al.* (1999) and McDonald *et al.* (2005). These FFWC dimensions were managerial support, negative perceptions of career consequences, organisational time expectations, the gendered nature of policy utilisation, and co-worker support. With this theme a contribution can be made to the body of existing FFWC knowledge. This is because there is a dearth of published empirical studies regarding FFWC.

The next theme examined the style of HRM, and the final theme investigated job characteristics on the availability and uptake of FFWPs. The exploration of these two factors utilised the theories introduced in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 - Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model and Lepak and Snell’s human resource architecture model (1999). Both these models identified important characteristics that influence work and family balance within the organisation. Lepak and Snell (1999) argue that the mode of investment in human capital will vary for different types of human capital. They consider that HRM is heterogeneous and that not all employees possess skills that are equally unique and/or valuable to a particular firm. Like other organisational
assets, employee skills can be classified as core or peripheral and this then gives them a value to the organisation. Likewise, some employees may possess unique skills which can involve idiosyncratic learning processes. These skills will not be readily available in the market and will require the organisation to invest in training, for instance. Lepak and Snell (1999) suggest that the type of HR configurations that will be applicable will depend on the uniqueness and value of human capital.

The framework for exploring Lepak and Snell’s (1999) heterogeneity idea further in terms of FFWPs is by way of Legge’s (1995) soft/hard HRM dichotomy. Legge (1995) identified hard HRM as having an emphasis on strategic aspects of managing a ‘head count’. The ‘soft’ version of HRM focuses on treating employees as valued assets. As discussed in Chapter 3, criticism has been mounted recently toward this approach on account of its simplicity and it is now recognised that it is more appropriate to use the soft and hard human resource model together with something else (Keenoy 1999; Watson 2004). This thesis investigated whether the ‘something else’ may be Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model, whilst acknowledging the potential suitability of other models such as the high performing work systems and high commitment management (Purcell et al., 2009: 45).

The next section introduces the organisation.

**Introducing the organisation**

Big Bank is a large multi-national bank servicing commercial and individual customers. It is a private sector firm listed on the Stock Exchange. It is useful to refer back to the institutional theory literature to highlight factors such as how the type of workplace may determine the range of FFWPs available to staff. An Australian study by Bardoel and Tharenou (1997) tested the organisational effects of organisation size, organisational demography, public versus private sector, legal organisational requirements, and track record in HRM on work and family practices. As found in similar studies (Warhurst et al. 2008:16; Houkamau and Boxall 2011: 456), the results of Bardoel and Tharenou’s (1997) study indicated that organisational characteristics influence the way organisations are likely to respond to institutional pressures in relation to work-family practices. For their sample, larger employers were more likely to offer the broadest range of FFWPs.
Perry-Smith and Blum (2000:1108) also state that firm ‘size has been one indicator of the extent to which a firm concedes to institutional demands with larger firms expected to be affected by such pressures’. Big Bank is considered in the market to be an ‘employer of choice’ organisation with a perceived track record in HRM. The results of Bardoel and Tharenou’s (1997) study indicated that public sector employees are no more likely to receive leave benefits than private sector employees despite public sector organisations having more benefits available. Based on the results of these studies, four large organisations, two from the public sector and two from the private sector were selected for study in this thesis.

Documents that constitute a source of evidence include a broad range of written and symbolic records, as well as any other available materials and data (Erlandson et al.1993: 99). In order to gain a clearer understanding of Big Bank, documentary analysis was conducted using annual reports, relevant legislation, enterprise agreements, and Big Bank’s family-friendly policies. The findings of this documentary analysis are now provided. Big Bank employs approximately 40,000 people in Australia and around the world (Big Bank annual review and sustainability report 2010). Big Bank is ranked in the top 20 listed companies on the Australian Securities Exchange Limited and provides a broad range of banking and financial services, including retail, business and institutional banking (The Big Bank Group annual report 2010: 9). The financial services industry demands particularly long hours as it faces competitive pressures from globalisation, consolidation and new technologies (Blair-Loy 1997). The employment rights of women in the finance sector have been mixed and in Australia this sector is notorious for gender pay inequity and negative effects on women from the glass ceiling. Women working in the finance and insurance sector enjoy flexible work arrangements but the glass ceiling remains firmly in place with most employed in clerical and administrative roles (McPhee 2006).

Notwithstanding this established glass ceiling, a new study by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) found the finance and insurance industry was leading the way in providing flexible arrangements for women, with 57 per cent of companies offering paid maternity leave, compared to only 46 per cent across the rest of the sector's EOWA surveys. However, the study also found that
women were ‘almost a novelty’ at executive levels in the sector. Only two per cent of chief executive officers at finance and insurance companies are women compared to nine per cent across all the sector’s EOWA surveys. Australian banks still have female-dominated workforces but male-dominated hierarchies despite their award-winning efforts to comply with AA/EEO legislation since 1988 (Metz 2011: 287). Therefore, investment banking is a ‘big blokes club’ that is missing out on good employees because of its inhospitable work environment (McPhee 2006).

As stated in its annual report, Big Bank’s vision is to be one of the world’s great banks, helping their staff and stakeholders to develop. They believe their staff to be an integral aspect of their business advantage through having a flexible and diverse workforce (The Big Bank Group annual report 2010: 9). As reported in Big Bank’s 2010 annual review, a Senior Executive Human Resources of Big Bank states that Big Bank has a long track record of putting diversity practice into action. They report that they must keep listening, engaging and responding to future demands. It is stated that diversity is about much more than gender or a workforce profile. The results from Big Bank’s diversity audit are provided in the annual review which establishes benchmarks for their diversity performance. The reported results found almost half of the workforce have primary carer responsibilities and a majority of staff would like flexible work in the next one to three years to meet their personal needs (Big Bank annual review and sustainability report 2010: 37).

It is important to consider the family-friendly response by Big Bank and the other three case study organisations in the context of contemporary Australian regulatory frameworks that were described in Chapter 2. There is a need to explore the formal policy framework so that a comparison between the realities as revealed in the interviews can be made. This analysis will also uncover aspects of work and family balance that Big Bank is deliberately pursuing as part of their HRM strategy, other than just what is required legally. Such HRM strategy could include creating a positive FFWC. Regulation around work and family that were described in Chapter 2 that apply to Big Bank include the NES provisions, such as the right to request flexibility, entitlements around paid parental leave, and protection from discrimination. Big Bank is covered by the Banking, Finance and Insurance Modern Award 2010 but has an enterprise agreement. The award is relevant as a starting
point for bargaining and serves as a benchmark of fairness for enterprise agreements to be legally enforceable.

It is important to examine relevant sections of the *Banking, Finance and Insurance Award 2010* when providing a contextual picture of Big Bank. Box 1 contains relevant excerpts from the award. They indicate that the majority of work and family issues defer to the provisions of the NES. The only exception is section 7 relating to award flexibility. It is reasonable to expect that arrangements for when work is performed could also relate to work and family balance in so far as starting and finishing times are concerned.

**Box 1. Excerpts from the Banking, Finance and Insurance Award 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to the award and the National Employment Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The employer must ensure that copies of this award and the NES are available to all employees to whom they apply either on a notice board which is conveniently located at or near the workplace or through electronic means, whichever makes them more accessible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. The National Employment Standards and this award

The NES and this award contain the minimum conditions of employment for employees covered by this award.

7. Award flexibility

7.1 Notwithstanding any other provision of this award, an employer and an individual employee may agree to vary the application of certain terms of this award to meet the genuine individual needs of the employer and the individual employee. The terms the employer and the individual employee may agree to vary the application of are those concerning arrangements for when work is performed.

25. Personal/carer's leave and compassionate leave

Personal/carer's leave and compassionate leave are provided for in the NES.

The final regulatory framework to be examined is the new enterprise agreement for Big Bank called the Big Bank Group enterprise agreement 2010 with relevant sections in Box 2. They are paraphrased to ensure anonymity of Big Bank.
Box 2. Excerpts from Big Bank Enterprise Agreement 2010

Paid Parental Leave: an employee who is the child’s primary care giver will be entitled to receive the first thirteen weeks of parental leave as paid leave or the first 26 weeks as half pay paid leave.

Right to request: if the employee is entitled to parental leave the employee may request the employer to allow the employee:

a) to extend the period of Leave up to a maximum of eight weeks;

b) to extend the period of unpaid parental leave by a further period of leave not exceeding twelve months.

Working from home arrangement: the following issues will be outlined in the agreement between the employee and employer:

a) the equipment to be provided by the employer;

b) details of the expenses incurred to be reimbursed

An examination of this enterprise agreement indicates that the agreement articulates arrangements concerning parental leave, the right to request flexibility, and working from home arrangements. For a fuller description of these factors please see Appendix 6.

Having outlined the relevant regulatory frameworks applying to Big Bank, the policies that are currently implemented at Big Bank will now be reviewed. This will enable an examination of how this organisation is interpreting legal compliance. It will determine if they are implementing anything better or different than the mandate requires. The policies that will now be discussed were those that were updated in 2009 and 2010. These were current at the time that the fieldwork was undertaken. Commencing with an examination of the Big Bank’s diversity policy, this policy suggests that diversity is about appreciating individual differences, rather than just legal requirements. The policy states that Big Bank helps diversity flourish in many ways including supporting employees in integrating their work and family responsibilities by offering choices. The policy lists the range of programs, initiatives
and benefits available at Big Bank relating to work and family. These are childcare, eldercare, flexible work arrangements, becoming a parent, telecommuting, and women’s initiatives. The policy stated that Big Bank has won a number of national work and family balance and HR awards. This suggests that Big Bank is ‘publicly’ perceived to be a family-friendly employer.

The eldercare policy indicated that Big Bank recognised that employees have a wide range of family obligations that have an impact on their ability to manage both their work responsibilities and lifestyle. Among them, it was acknowledged, many employees have responsibility for caring for an older parent or relative. Therefore Big Bank provides information designed to help their employees understand the issues involved and to access the services they may need. It is mentioned that Big Bank believes it is very important to provide options such as flexible hours, family leave or free counselling services to assist their employees balance their work and family lives.

The job sharing policy affirmed that Big Bank promoted job sharing across all roles. This policy outlined the benefits for the employee, including greater opportunities to meet priorities outside of work, as well as the business, including attracting and retaining talented people who want flexible working arrangements that match their skills and experience.

The parental leave policy recognised that becoming a parent is an important life event in Big Bank’s employees’ lives. As a leading employer of choice, they provide financial and non-financial assistance to their employees who are having children. The parental leave policy outlined the benefits of the policy including taking up to two years’ parental leave. This incorporated up to twelve weeks of paid parental leave. There was also the right to request part-time work until the employees’ children are of school age (Big Bank family-friendly policies 2010). A fuller description of these policies is provided in Appendix 7. A summary of the FFWPs available at Big Bank is provided in the table below. These FFWPs have been categorised according to Kirchmeyer’s (1995) typology.
The participants from Big Bank are now introduced.

**Introducing the participants**

Before the discussion turns to participants’ lived experiences at Big Bank concerning the availability and usage of FFWPs, a consideration of their individual characteristics is now provided. This section provides an overview of the key demographics of this group of participants including their age and job title. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Providing
anonymity is necessary to meet ethical requirements but it also aimed to engender more meaningful responses during the interview process.

Ten Big Bank employees were interviewed. In selecting the sample of participants, a range of positions have been targeted within Big Bank that meet the definitions of core and periphery workers, as well as a number of different family types. Selecting a range of individuals in different jobs provides for a richness of data while also seeing how different jobs within organisations are valued by the organisation in line with Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery model. The participants worked in a combination of roles, with some working five days in the office, some four days, with others working three days in the office, two of whom worked from home on the other two days. Five participants were male and five were female. Eight were partnered and all but one had children. Seven had tertiary qualifications and job titles ranged from the more junior role of Associate to middle management roles such as Product Development Manager and also senior management roles such as Director in Treasury. These details are provided in Table 2 overleaf.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Number of days worked per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shaniqua</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Polytech from NZ equivalent to TAFE</td>
<td>Associate Periphery</td>
<td>3 days in office 8.30-5.30 2 days at home 7-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Product Development Manager Core</td>
<td>3 days in office 7.15-4.15. 2 days at home 6 hours per day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma in Psychology</td>
<td>Director of Learning and Diversity Periphery</td>
<td>3 days in office officially but takes calls at home on other 2 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science and two Masters degrees in Accounting and Science</td>
<td>Director in Treasury Core</td>
<td>5 days in office ranging from 35 hours per week to 60 or 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigita</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>Head of Derivative Sales Core</td>
<td>4 days per week 7.30-6.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darren</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No tertiary</td>
<td>Risk Control Manager Periphery</td>
<td>5 days per week 8.30-5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robby</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>Trader financial markets Core</td>
<td>5 days per week 55 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Asian Studies</td>
<td>Human Resources Director Periphery</td>
<td>5 days per week 8.00-6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Compliance Analyst Periphery</td>
<td>5 days per week 8.00-7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Currently completing Masters Business in Marketing</td>
<td>Product Manager – Equities Core</td>
<td>5 days per week 8.30-6.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table also identifies each participant as either core or periphery. These terms are identified by Lepak and Snell (1999) and are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

A key theme incorporated into the theoretical model, the differences between the availability and usage of FFWPs, is now explored.

The availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Big Bank

By examining the policies, enterprise agreements, awards and annual reports outlined in the earlier part of this chapter, we are only provided with an insight of the formal framework at Big Bank. This does not inform us about the participants’ lived family-friendly experiences. Policies shed light on the values espoused by organisations, whereas whether they are used or not indicates the difference between their rhetoric and the reality, with the value at issue here being FFWPs. The authenticity of the potential gap between the availability and usage of FFWPs was firmly established by insights from the work and family literature reviewed in Chapter 3. The literature argued that FFWC plays an important and complex part while this thesis proposes that factors associated with FFWC need to be considered, including job characteristics and the style of HRM.

In order to gain insight into the availability and usage of FFWPs at Big Bank, the following question was asked:

To what extent do you think organisational policies regarding FFWPs are implemented? – Researcher (interview)

Eliza said that:

I don’t think that these policies are used very much. I don’t know many people that use them. I know a few people who work from home as part of the arrangement but not that many. It could be that they don’t know about it. Depending on the person’s role and title would mean they need to be in the office because they are part of the team. – Eliza (interview)

This low usage is supported by Budd and Mumford (2006) whose study revealed that very few employees in workplaces with entitlements to FFWPs actually use them, often because of employee lack of awareness of them. This was mentioned by Eliza.
Other writers have also discussed the importance of communication in determining the success FFWPs (Lockwood 2003; Wise and Bond 2003 and Waters and Bardoel 2006).

Such a sentiment regarding communication was also voiced by Lola who commented that:

The less knowledge you have about these policies, the less likely you are to adopt them. - Lola (interview)

Anita’s experience was somewhat different with her saying that:

I think the policies are used a lot. I’m job sharing. There is two colleagues in our Treasury team who are male who have taken paternity leave out of a team of 40. – Anita (interview)

Such contradictory remarks would indicate that usage of FFWPs at Big Bank depends on which area an employee works in. Darren’s experience was similar to Anita with him noting that:

Within our team the policies are used. Our boss does soccer training with his kids so he finishes early one day per week. Dave in my team goes and picks up his kids at day care or sometimes he works from home. Paul took 3 months’ paternity leave last year and Dave is doing that this year. This enables our gen Y to step into quite senior roles so it’s all positive. – Darren (interview)

In contrast, Ben stated that:

I don’t think men have used the policies in the past. I think they’re starting to. A lot of women have used the policies in the past because they are seen as the primary care giver. I hate to say this but sometimes you get full-time output and delivery from someone you are paying to work 4 days per week. But the idea is a bit slow in terms of thinking. The guys are a bit slow. – Ben (interview)

Jonathan’s comment was similar to Ben’s:

I think the policies are used more by women and probably because they’re considered the major care giver. So if a child falls sick it’s normally up to the mother to come home and look after the sick child. – Jonathan (interview)

The unequal usage between the genders mentioned by Ben and Jonathan is supported in the work and family literature internationally. Most Swedes support Swedish fathers taking parental leave and the majority of Swedish fathers now use some of
this leave. However, despite government efforts, Swedish fathers still take a small proportion, about only 12 per cent, of all leave days available (Haas et al. 2002: 322). An increase in Swedish fathers’ participation in parental leave will depend on fundamental changes in organisational culture, that is, the assumptions, expectations and norms in the workplace to (Haas et al. 2002).

Findings from these interviews supported the work and family literature about the usage of FFWPs which suggested that women are more inclined to use FFWPs than men. Similar to the reasons cited in the literature, the key reason given at Big Bank was that women are still considered the primary care-giver to children and to elders in the family. These comments indicate the usage of FFWPs at Big Bank is not consistent across the whole organisation with some areas using more than others. The reasons behind this are explored in later sections of this chapter and include the level of managerial support provided to employees to use FFWPs.

The second theme from the theoretical model, the nature and impact of FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs, is now explored.

**The nature and impact of family-friendly work culture on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Big Bank**

As described in Chapter 4, the development of the theme relating to a type of organisational culture, FFWC originally emerged from an analysis of pilot interviews during the first phase of this investigation. In reading these interviews it became apparent that organisational culture played an integral part in the family-friendly relationship. As participants revealed the various FFWPs available in their workplaces it became evident that many of them and their colleagues were less likely to use these polices due to unsupportive workplace cultures and specifically FFWC. This idea is supported in the literature as authors have suggested that the mere existence of formal FFWPs in an organisation may not be enough (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005; Bradley et. al 2010).

The term FFWC has been used to describe a particular aspect of the more general, and more frequently discussed, organisational culture. FFWC has been defined as ‘the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family
lives’ (Thompson et al. 1999:394). This definition is consistent with Schein’s (1985) definition of culture and is the one used in this thesis.

While there are many different conceptualisations of organisational culture, common to many is the view that culture consists of value-driven, normatively-based and often symbolic aspects of organisational life that are shared by a significant number of organisational members. Culture is defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein 1985:9).

It is important to consider that the interviews at Big Bank were conducted during February, 2010 and, as noted earlier in this chapter, the Fair Work Act (2009) Cth became effective in January, 2010. Thus the new right to request flexibility arrangements incorporated in this legislation was already in effect at the time the interviews took place. Comments made by the participants in many instances supported the FFWC framework proposed by Thompson et al. (1999) McDonald et al. (2005). Lack of support from the manager was cited as a major reason why staff would not use FFWPs. This combined with the fact that employees would not be considered to be working when they were working at home contributed to the lack of usage of FFWPs.

Shaniqua explains this idea in her following comment:

I think there is still more education to be done so that people will be accepted to work from home. We had someone email that he doesn’t believe that we should work at home. Then two weeks later he did it himself. There is still that attitude of looking at the hours not the output. – Shaniqua (interview)

Shaniqua’s comment indicated that there is a FFWC dimension of ‘double-standards’ as well as ‘non-acceptance’ of work and family issues at Big Bank. These dimensions have not previously been identified in the FFWC literature. These are new dimensions of FFWC and need to be included in the discussion.
When Eliza was asked about Big Bank’s organisational culture she stated that she had experienced quite a lot of flexibility, although she had experienced some difficulties when returning from maternity leave:

I have been in the organisation for just over 22 years and I have never had a problem with any of the management or leadership being restrictive or anything. The only time I had a bit of a hiccup was returning from maternity leave with my daughter. Due to a restructure I was not going back to the office that I had come from. That was resolved really quickly in my favour. It was definitely a miscommunication issue. – Eliza (interview)

In sharing her experiences, Eliza has highlighted the importance of communication of FFWPs as discussed earlier and has been written about by various authors (Lockwood 2003; Wise and Bond 2003; Waters and Barodoel 2006). Eliza also discussed structural factors as an issue. This aspect has been previously explored in the work and family literature (Budd and Mumford 2006: 38; Burgess et al. 2007a: 426 and Burgess et al. 2007b: 109).

Eliza said:

My comments relate to the nature of the job. I was involved in a project for about 18 months a couple of years ago and that was the only time I hit a bit of ‘double standards’. The woman I was working for had remote access and she could work from home. There was one instance where something happened on the way to work and I had to go home and I said I will work from home for the rest of the day if that is OK. There was a bit of an issue with it where we can’t be seen to be abusing the privilege. There is a bit of a perception that if one person in the team does it then everyone will want to do it. So there was a cultural aspect of ‘double standards’. It was like you can do this but keep it quiet. – Eliza (interview)

Eliza’s experience identifies the nature of the job. She also mentions ‘double standards’, as did Shaniqua earlier on. Eliza elaborated further about how the nature of the job can affect implementation and usage of FFWPs when she said: In operational centres remote access just doesn’t happen. Purely because of the nature of the operation and the business that it is. – Eliza (interview)

Anita spoke about a similar issue when she said that:

The type of job determines flexibility. Some jobs are very difficult. – Anita (interview)
These comments indicated that flexibility is not the same for all jobs at Big Bank. In fact some jobs are not as flexible as others, for example, operational centres. The explanation given for this was that operational centres had a vast amount of contact with Big Bank’s customers. This required them to be open during normal customer service hours. Participants pointed out that in other jobs, such as managerial jobs at head office there was greater opportunity for flexibility. This was because these jobs tended to focus on ‘getting the job done’ rather than ‘when the job gets done’. The impact of the job characteristics is explored further when investigating the core and periphery idea.

Anita also discussed:

The stigma thing. It’s not an issue in my team, but it may be in some teams. It may also be an issue socially in Australia. I mean it is unusual for men to be the stay at home husband, you have to acknowledge that – Anita (interview)

The concept of a FFWC dimension of ‘stigma’ has also not been previously acknowledged in other FFWC studies. This is a new dimension requiring further research. Anita indicated that stigma for men to take flexible work practices, goes beyond Big Bank, and she believed it may be an issue for the whole of Australia, and thus a current social trend.

Lola spoke about:

The key reason that always comes up in our audits is that taking family-friendly work practices is career limiting. I’ve found that, coincidentally or otherwise, I dropped a level when I came back the first time and I almost dropped two levels when I came back the second time. So it’s just an interesting dynamic that it’s not a deliberate thing but it can end up being quite career limiting to be absent and to be back in a part-time capacity. – Lola (interview)

Lola’s experiences supported the previously identified dimension of perceptions of ‘career consequences’ by Thompson et al. (1999) and Jones, Burke and Westman (2006). Two other FFWC dimensions, managerial and co-worker support (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005) were mentioned by Brigita in this comment:

I think that the attitudes come from two places, they come from the management team and they come from your colleagues and subordinates. So if the attitude of your colleagues and subordinates is not supportive of you working part time, even if your management supports it, it is really hard to
make it work. In fact, that was one of my problems at my previous role. It wasn’t so much that management had a problem, but the whole culture of that little team is completely different to the team that I have now. I think some of that is around the fact that the team I am now working is hard dollar. So you earn a certain amount of money per year. Who cares if you come in at 8.30 and God forbid leave at 5.30. – Brigita (interview)

Similar ideas were discussed by Darren when stating that:

We’re more concerned that people are doing their job which is to support their customers. If somebody does arrive at 9.30 and also leaves at 4.30, people notice and it’s more a case of courtesy that people just say look I’m not feeling very well. We don’t fight about it and say you’ve got to stay. If you’ve done the job you’ve done the job – Darren (interview)

Ben also commented that:

It’s a culture that is actually focused on achievement and performance. My supervisor understands that I have got family needs and where I need to work flexibly. She is very supportive of that. – Ben (interview)

These comments indicated that managerial support, as previously identified by Thompson et al. (1999), is an issue of importance as is co-worker support (McDonald et al. 2005). The existing co-worker support dimension (McDonald et al. 2005) is further developed by Bradley et al. (2010:19) who identify a new dimension of co-worker consequences which relates to how workloads are shared. This was not known at the time of the empirical research for this thesis and is recommended for future research. Bradley et al. (2010) also suggest that co-worker support requires further investigation which is addressed in this thesis. It is interesting to note that these last three comments were made by employees working in head office at Big Bank, rather than in operational centres. The comments indicated that family needs are understood by management, and that the culture is ‘focused on achievement’. This supported the previous view that structural factors, such as whether employees work in operational or head office roles, have an impact on the way their work and family balance concerns are handled by both management and peers.

The next theme, understanding the style of HRM at Big Bank, is now considered.
The style of human resource management at Big Bank

The soft and hard HRM model (Legge 1995) was utilised in this thesis in order to explore the style of HRM in place at the case study organisations. Legge’s (1995) model was also used as a schema to investigate Lepak and Snell’s (1999) heterogeneity argument. This assessment continued the evaluation of the soft and hard HRM model to determine if it is too simplistic. Furthermore, in the discussion chapter connections are made between the style of HRM in place at the four case study organisations and the availability and usage of FFWPs.

When asked:

Where do you see Big Bank, soft HR, hard HR or a combination of both? – Researcher (interview)

Jackson commented that:

It’s profit motivated. It’s not so much about people; that is secondary. It’s about getting money in the door. – Jackson (interview)

Why do you think they adopt this approach? - Researcher (interview)

Jackson said:

Cause they are a company for profit and not a charity. – Jackson (interview)

When Brigita was asked she said:

I think they’re a combination. I would say they are soft in terms of looking after their people. – Brigita (interview)

Ben agreed by saying:

Probably in between because we believe we get the best of our people by engaging the individual. What that means is, not going to be soft and fluffy with those individuals, sometimes you have to be quite direct and to the point. So my role, when people come to me to talk to me about problems, I am very quick to say my role is to work with the leadership team about moving forward to deliver on the business strategy. – Ben (interview)

This comment was backed up by Lola who said:

I would probably describe it as somewhere in between. I think that is probably an area that we could strengthen our capability as a HR function in terms of providing the business benefits on what we deliver. But we’re kind
of limited by industry being able to, or even society being able to often justify the value of soft HR. – Lola (interview)

Darren commented that:

There’s a lot of emphasis on people management and a lot of it works and a lot of it perhaps doesn’t work. So to a degree it comes down to individuals and who want to participate and there will always be people who won’t participate. – Darren (interview)

Shaniqua agreed when saying:

I would say more people management because they do have the policies in place. You do have those opportunities to work flexible hours and job-share. I think they believe it will affect their bottom line. – Shaniqua (interview)

The above responses indicated that, on the whole, participants felt that Big Bank adopted a combination of soft and hard HRM. Only one participant perceived that Big Bank adopted a hard approach and three perceived a soft approach. Therefore, these findings supported Lepak and Snell’s (1999) heterogeneity argument. There was a perception that by adopting a combined HRM approach Big Bank was able to get the best out of their people by engaging the individual.

The final theme is now discussed. This further explored Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model and investigated the impact of job characteristics on the provision and utilisation of FFWPs.

The impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Big Bank

Following Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument around the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ differentiation in the human resource architecture model, consideration was given to whether the organisation adopted a different style of FFWPs for different job categories.

When Jackson was asked:

Are certain occupational groups treated differently at Big Bank with work and family issues?

He said:
Yes, I think so. I find that senior people have more flexibility. – Jackson (interview)

Eliza stated:

I think that depends on who you happen to be reporting to. My Manager is close to retirement so he is quite old school. Flexible working arrangements and working from home was a big hurdle to overcome with him when I came into the role. I think those in senior roles and those who are probably more senior probably feel they have earned a little bit more flexibility. When you are in a more junior role you have to let them know where you are and why. – Eliza (interview)

Brigita commented that:

Yes I think certain occupational groups get treated differently with work and family practices. I think that for me the closer you are to the money the more flexibility you are going to have. If you can say I’ve made you $x million this year, OK I’ve done that on 9.00am – 4.00pm, 4 days a week or whatever, they are going to agree to that, whereas if you are writing reports and you are doing a really diligent job, but you don’t have any hard dollars and you say I want to work 4 days a week, they will say well I’m not too sure if that will work for us. So I don’t think workers are equally valued. I think they definitely value highly people who contribute significant income. – Brigita (interview)

Jackson replied:

I think that senior people have more time. – Jackson (interview)

Robby agreed when he said:

Normally, I think senior people seem to have much more flexible working arrangements than junior people. – Robby (interview)

Contrasting to this Anita said:

I haven’t seen it. I’ve seen some very senior people work with the flexibility and some junior people. I haven’t seen the seniority as being an issue. – Anita (interview)

Shaniqua agreed when she replied:

I don’t think employees are treated differently but I can’t speak for the retail groups. – Shaniqua (interview)

The comments at Big Bank indicated that workers were not all treated equally regarding FFWPs. Overall, it was thought that senior people had more flexibility.
When asked:

Do you feel that workers are considered equally valuable?

Shaniqua commented:

Um, probably no. – Shaniqua (interview)

Eliza replied:

Um, yes to a point. I think you need to, if you look at a business unit, you are always going to have performance differences and attitude differences. So the way a person operates may be in a very diligent fashion and you might have somebody else who comes in a bit later and doesn’t apply themselves as well. I don’t think if you have two people of equal attitude I don’t think there will be too much difference. – Eliza (interview)

Jonathan indicated a level of favouritism existed when he said:

Where I’ve noticed it in the past is when there are sales people and you tend to find the sales people are given a lot of glory and a lot of accolades and the administrative team behind them are kind of forgotten. – Jonathan (interview)

Brigita supported Jonathan’s view when she said:

No. I don’t think workers are equally valued. – Brigita (interview)

What’s that based on and why? – Researcher (interview)

A number of things. Who do they value highly? I think they definitely value highly people who contribute significantly to income. Whether they are male or female I think generally for whatever reason women aren’t attracted into those roles. – Brigita (interview)

There were some similarities to Brigita’s comments in Jackson’s response:

Depends on the individuals, some people are based on relationships and so on. I think overall though people are seen as being replaceable. – Jackson (interview)

Overall, the comments at Big Bank pointed to the perception that workers were not all treated equally. The comments indicated that more senior roles, which would be classified as core workers, were able to exercise more flexibility in their work options. The rationale for this was that these workers contributed more to company profit, were thus valued more highly and consequently received greater flexibility in managing their work and family lives. This finding supported Lepak and Snell’s
(1999) arguments around core and periphery differentiation in the human resource architecture model.

Chapter conclusion

When combining the two data sources to compare the espoused availability of FFWPs at Big Bank with the participants’ lived experience of the usage of FFWPs, the findings supported the importance of FFWC. A number of the previously identified FFWC dimensions were confirmed in the participants’ comments, including the importance of managerial support and co-worker support (Thompson et al. 1999; Mc Donald et al. 2005). Three new FFWC dimensions were identified: the FFWC dimension of ‘stigma’ around work and family issues, a FFWC dimension of ‘double standards’, and a FFWC dimension of ‘non-acceptance’ of work and family issues.

The analysis of the documents indicated that an extensive range of FFWPs was in place at Big Bank. However, the data from the interviews indicated that there was a gap between formal policies provided at Big Bank and the usage of these FFWPs. The participants indicated that there were fragmented experiences regarding work and family balance between people in diverse jobs. Differences were evident between operational versus managerial job types. Disparities occurred also in different departments with different teams having dissimilar expectations and performance indicators. A suggestion for this is provided by Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model. Comments in the interviews supported the core and periphery idea that the more senior a worker was the more likely they are to benefit from FFWPs. The usage of FFWPs was more prevalent amongst women at Big Bank than with men.

An insight from the HRM literature important to this thesis was the concept of soft and hard HRM (Legge 1995). The majority of participants described Big Bank as implementing a combination of these HRM approaches. This finding supported Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument that HRM tends to be heterogeneous and also confirmed the mounting criticism of Legge’s hard and soft HRM model as too simplistic in its binary nature. It was also noted that a different style of HRM was used for different employees. Reinforcing Lepak and Snell’s (1999) idea that not all
workers are considered to be treated equally, it was perceived by participants at Big Bank that more senior workers, who were likely to be considered core, were more highly valued and were able to exercise more flexibility in their work and family arrangements.

These factors are explored in the following three chapters. The next chapter continues the discussion with a focus on the findings at the second case study organisation, a private sector organisation, Cost Centre.
CHAPTER 6: Cost Centre

Everyone has family demands on them. I feel these demands now as opposed to before I had children. If I was more junior I would probably be more reluctant and less prepared to stick my neck out and say I’m doing this—but that’s probably just a bit of age, experience and all those things. – Olivier (interview)

Introducing the organisation

Cost Centre is a large private sector organisation. Information available on Cost Centre’s website indicated that the organisation is industry-focused in assurance, tax and advisory services for public and private clients in: corporate accountability, performance and process improvement, risk management and structuring, and mergers and acquisitions. Cost Centre have over 100 years of experience and their website stated that the company believed that their industry leadership and strong client focus was demonstrated by their many awards for being a market leader. Cost Centre provides services to most of the ASX top 100 listed and the IBIS top 1,000 listed companies. Their client list also includes many federal and state government agencies. Cost Centre employs over 6,000 people in eight cities around Australia. According to their publicity, Cost Centre invests in their people and nurtures a vibrant culture of teamwork, excellence and leadership, a policy which is said to also benefit their clients. Cost Centre stated that they are aware that it takes more than rhetoric and good intentions to fulfill their mission to be the professional services firm of their time. They indicated that they require the highest standards of work and behaviour in the delivery of their services. This is a core value requiring ongoing dedication and investment in their staff and a key commitment to their clients (Cost Centre 2011).

Cost Centre’s 2010 annual review included a focus on providing flexible working arrangements for their staff. The review indicated that their FFWPs included 18
weeks of paid parental leave policy. They also provided a reduced hours policy for staff with family commitments, nine-day fortnights, job share opportunities, working from home and career breaks. The annual review reported that most of their employees desire a holistic approach to their work and family responsibilities that provides opportunities to explore different career paths (Cost Centre 2010: 29). Cost Centre stated in the annual review that ‘a large number of our staff believe they have the appropriate support to access our flexible work options. This is a key reason why most of our staff return after parental leave’ (Cost Centre 2010: 44).

It was confirmed by email from a Senior Manager at Cost Centre on 9 October, 2011 that their staff were all on individual above-award agreements. As they were confidential they were not available for analysis in this thesis. In terms of award coverage, staff at Cost Centre are covered by the Professional Employees Award, 2010. The relevant sections of this industrial award are similar to the Banking Finance Insurance Award 2010 described in the previous chapter. Therefore, the Professional Employees award does not cover work and family matters in great detail.

The family-friendly policies at Cost Centre are paraphrased below. Appendix 8 provides a fuller description.

Parental leave permits employees to take 14 weeks’ parental leave on full pay for the primary care giver of a newborn or adopted child. There is up to 90 weeks’ available for unpaid parental leave. Males are eligible to take paternity leave even if they are not the primary care-giver.

Cost Centre provides a free child, elder and dependent care referral service. Cost Centre also provides rooms on their premises for staff and visitors with babies. The room has equipment and facilities to enable breast milk to be expressed and stored as well as baby change facilities. Cost Centre also provides networking opportunities for parents during lunch-time informal meetings. Parents are able to discuss their experiences of child-rearing with each other, as well as listening to guest speakers on parenting related matters. Cost Centre also conducts family events such as arts days.

Cost Centre has received some public recognition for the work they are doing regarding work and family balance. These include AHRI and ACCI/BCA awards and
commendations in achieving work/life balance (Cost Centre family-friendly policies and initiatives 2010).

Table 3 below classifies the FFWPs available at Cost Centre according to Kirchmeyer’s (1995) typology.

Table 3: Typology of FFWPs at Cost Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology according to Kirchmeyer</th>
<th>FFWPs at Cost Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible working conditions</td>
<td>Right to request flexible working arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 day fortnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job-share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and dependent care benefits</td>
<td>On site carers’ facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paid parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual family events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information services</td>
<td>Care for Kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child care, elder and dependent care service – families at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunchtime networking for parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and leave options</td>
<td>Paid parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational cultural issues</td>
<td>Teamwork, excellence and leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introducing the participants

In this section, an overview of the key demographics of this group of participants is provided. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Ten employees were interviewed at Cost Centre. Five were male and five were female. All were partnered and all had children. Eight participants had tertiary qualifications.
They were working in a range of job categories at varying levels within the organisation. These jobs ranged from more junior roles such as Switchboard Operator to more senior roles such as Director – Corporate Advisory. As in all of the case study organisations, the participants were deliberately selected from varying levels within the organisation. This was because one of the aims of this thesis was to explore the influence of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs. Participants worked a combination of hours, ranging from full-time, being five days in the office, to three or four days in the office with none of them working from home. An overview of their personal and employment details is provided in Table 4.
Table 4: Participants personal and employment details at Cost Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Number of days worked per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business and Post Graduate Degree in Accounting</td>
<td>Partner Core</td>
<td>3 days per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janine</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce and Chartered Accountant</td>
<td>Director Core</td>
<td>3 days per week – 25 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanessa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Switchboard Operator Periphery</td>
<td>3 days per week – 22 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elanisa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child Care Diploma</td>
<td>Personal Assistant Periphery</td>
<td>3 days a week – 24 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Executive Assistant Periphery</td>
<td>4 days a week – 30 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business and Accounting and Chartered Accounting in UK</td>
<td>Senior Manager Core</td>
<td>5 days 8.30am – 6.30-7pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financial Credit Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>Accountant Core</td>
<td>5 days – 40 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Geography</td>
<td>Director – Corporate Advisory Core</td>
<td>5 days per week from 9.00am-6pm. Other weeks it could be 90 hour weeks for 3 weeks in a row.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>Senior Manager Core</td>
<td>4.5 days per week- paid for 33 hours per week but works more. Some weeks works 50 hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce and Chartered Accountant</td>
<td>Director – financial services area Core</td>
<td>5 days – when busy works up to 60 hours a week, but other times works 40 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in the table, each participant has been given a category of either core or periphery as originally identified by Lepak and Snell (1999).

An important theme from the theoretical model, exploring the difference between the availability and usage of FFWPs, is now explored.

**The availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Cost Centre**

As discussed in Big Bank’s chapter, it is important to compare the FFWPs available within an organisation with those that are actually used. This is because this comparison provides understanding concerning the rhetoric versus the reality of FFWPs. To gain insight into this provision/utilisation theme, the following question was asked:

> To what extent do you think FFWPs are implemented? – Researcher (interview)

Some interesting comments were made, indicating a mixed response concerning the usage of FFWPs, with more women than men using them.

Lana commented:

> I think widely. When I went through the partnership process I had only just had a baby and I had to take her with me. But, I don’t think everyone shares that same view of involving the children. Not that the children are really involved, they’re just kind of, you know, they’re just kind of there. Everyone kind of knows about my children and they know that’s why I’m not always here. I think that people have different views on that you know. That you either—that that’s one part of your life and this is another part of your life and that the two shouldn’t be together. For me, though, compartmentalising my life and compartmentalising my brain has been more difficult. I find it easier to deal with the stress of the work and family situation if I’m all of the time all of the person. – Lana (interview)

Janine said that:

> Yes, I think we’re – people would definitely be using the policies where they want to. I don’t know if they would be making decisions because the policies are there. I don’t know if you would say I might have a baby because I can get paid maternity leave. I think there are probably other considerations that go into that decision. So I think the policies are definitely being used. But as I said before there is not a lot of people doing it just in terms of the dynamics
of our firm, as a lot of us are very young. When they want to they support them. – Janine (interview)

Vanessa agreed when replying that:

They’re implemented quite well. They get the information out to you and whether you choose to participate is again up to you. – Vanessa (interview)

Elanisa said:

I don’t know. I don’t know. I can only answer for the majority, yes they are used. I know there have been people who have used carer’s leave when their children are sick. They can take working from home options which are a great advantage in this field. Yeah. – Elanisa (interview)

When asked the question regarding usage of FFWPs, Olivier replied:

The big one I have taken advantage of is the parental leave policy where we get 16 weeks’ paid leave. I’ve used it twice. I didn’t experience any real negativity from any level. I don’t think that many people would get up and use it. I did ask someone how many people actually took it and there was no answer. But I took it and I was a bit apprehensive but it went very well. – Olivier (interview)

Why were you apprehensive? – Researcher (interview)

I suppose I wasn’t sure what the reaction was going to be to it. I didn’t know anyone else who had taken it so I had no one to gauge their reaction. I think there’s still a reluctance to use these policies. But then again, it’s up to the individual if they want to use it. Some blokes may not want to stay at home with the kids. It’s hard work. It’s nicer to come here and sit with your coffee at your desk. – Olivier (interview)

Are there any dismissive comments made regarding family-friendly concerns? – Researcher (interview)

Yeah, you get different kinds of jerky comments like ‘yeah, have you been on holidays for three months?’ You expect that cause everyone have been at work so there’s a bit of jealousy. I think there’s still a reluctance to use these policies – Olivier (interview)

Justin commented on the fact that he felt these FFWPs were used more widely by women than men. He said that:

From a female perspective I think the practices are used a lot. It is about getting the message out there to the males in the firm. – Justin (interview)

Jane said:
Some people are using them, but um … I think people were made to take three weeks’ unpaid leave last year. – Jane (interview)

The three weeks’ unpaid leave was as a financial imperative rather than a FWP. This was as a result of the global financial crisis in the previous years.

Nathan added:

They are being used enough I think. – Nathan (interview)

Ryan commented:

I would expect most people use them. – Ryan (interview)

These responses indicated that some participants felt the policies were widely used, while others were not too sure. It was also mentioned by some participants that the FFWPs were widely used by women and that this was more readily accepted by employees at Cost Centre. The wider acceptance of women using FFWPs compared to men flows out into society as a whole so it is not an attitude unique to Cost Centre. The work and family literature indicated that although paid parental leave is mandated in Sweden and there is a strong emphasis on advocating that both men and women take leave, there is still a significant gender gap in take-up rates. A major reason for this is the failure of organisations to adopt active measures to encourage men to use their parental leave rights (Haas and Hwang 1999).

The second theme from the theoretical model, the impact of FFWC on the uptake of FFWPs will now be examined. This section explores reasons why employees may feel reluctant to use FFWPs at Cost Centre. Possible explanations for some of the findings related to the first theme are provided.

**The nature and impact of family-friendly culture on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Cost Centre**

It is relevant to note that the interviews at Cost Centre took place during February, 2010, which was just one month after the *Fair Work Act 2009* (cth) was implemented in January, 2010. The implication of this new legislation is that at the time of the fieldwork, the case study organisations were required to offer a new level of flexibility to parents to help them with their family responsibilities. Despite this potential for new flexibility, the findings indicated that many employees still felt
reluctant to utilise FFWPs at Cost Centre. The reasons for this reluctance supported the FFWC dimensions of Thompson *et al.* (1999) and McDonald *et al.* (2005). The comments relating to this theme are discussed below.

When asked:

> Are there any reasons than an employee might feel reluctant to take advantage of family-friendly work practices? – Researcher (*interview*)

Lana replied:

> The big reason that comes to mind for employees feeling reluctant to use FFWPs is that they feel it would affect their career and their prospects for promotion. In our team we’ve done a lot of work around it. It’s not the quantity of the output that is important; it’s the quality of the output. There is the reality, however, that if somebody is here 5 days and you’re here 3 days that the person who is here 5 days actually has more of an opportunity to show their ability and may be promoted quicker. – Lana (*interview*)

Janine’s comments are in line with Lana’s when she comments that:

> I think the main thing is the timing in terms of how far you progress before you use FFWPs. You wouldn’t be discouraged but I think you would feel more comfortable if you had been here for a longer period of time. – Janine (*interview*)

Janine’s comments suggested that if you had not been employed at Cost Centre for an extended period that it may be not the best idea to apply to use FFWPs. This links in with the idea of negative career consequences (*Thompson et al.* 1999), in that if an employee feels anxious about taking time off to care for a child, for example, that they may also be nervous that on their return to work that their position in the career ladder may be altered.

Janine goes on to elaborate that:

> I think the supervisors understand that you might need to do a bit more at home, or whatever. But, I don’t think they understand the long term impact of what it might mean for your career long term. Obviously taking the time out interrupts what you’ve been doing. It takes you out of the zone, out of the picture, out of their mind. Coming back in, I think they almost expect you to pick up where you left off. I think they get you need to leave at 5.00pm and that kind of thing but they might not get the impact—the interruption to your career. – Janine (*interview*)
Nathan supported McDonald et al.’s (2005) contribution where they suggested that FFWC has a gendered nature of policy utilisation wherein FFWPs are designed for women rather than men.

Nathan states that:

I mean, I still think there is going to be a gender issue about men taking, for example, the 14 weeks’ parental leave. It’s pretty uncommon. They don’t question it for the mother. For a man it’s like ‘oh that’s a nice holiday’ That still happens quite a lot. It’s just universal. It would be looked upon unfavourably for a man; almost as it they are taking a free ride for a couple of months getting a holiday. But for mothers they don’t question it. – Nathan (interview)

Kevin’s comments are in line with Nathan’s where he suggests that:

We do have a policy where the father can take 14 weeks’ parental leave – and I do know two men who have done that this year – but I’m not sure how favourably that would get looked upon, because that’s another step from historical practices I suppose. – Kevin (interview)

Ryan identifies cost as issue in taking FFWP’s, in that if employees revert to part-time work for instance, their salary will be affected. This is an interesting idea which represents reality quite well. He explained this in his comment:

With Cost Centre, I think the staff are the only asset. But there is a cost involved in using FFWPs, so I would say that’s something that puts people off, you know. – Ryan (interview)

Ryan goes on to discuss a issue identified by Christine at Big Bank and that is the structure of the job. This is also supported in the work and family literature as being an important factor in the availability and usage of FFWPs (Budd and Mumford 2006: 38; Burgess et al. 2007a: 426; Burgess et al. 2007b: 109).

Ryan said that:

My group is different. We are a seen as a cost centre within the organisation, so I would say my perception is that they actually believe in the family values. For the groups that face clients, I think it is harder. I guess responding to the hours and the clients and those types of things. My perception is that they have always been supported in that area but it is just more challenging to be flexible in those roles. – Ryan (interview)

Managerial support is often an important FFWC dimension that may affect employees’ willingness to use FFWPs (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al.
To assess the importance of managerial support at Cost Centre, the following question was asked:

To what extent do you believe your supervisor supports the achievement of family-friendly work practices? – Researcher (interview)

Olivier replied:

I don’t think they are totally conscious of it. But I think if you go to them and say, I’m doing this or I’d like to do that, they’ll support you. So FFWPs are not promoted by the supervisor, the manager or management. They don’t promote it and send it down the chain either, so probably it could be a cultural thing. – Olivier (interview)

Olivier’s comments indicated that he perceived managerial support to be a ‘cultural thing’. This supported the work of Thompson et al. (1999); McDonald et al. (2005). Olivier suggested that supervisors and managers would not flatly deny their subordinates’ access to FFWPs but rather they do not actively promote these policies. By adopting this rather neutral approach toward FFWPs, it can be seen that managerial support is an issue at Cost Centre. If, on the other hand, management actively supported and promoted FFWPs, it would no doubt, be easier and more widely accepted for Cost Centre’s employees to access these benefits.

When asked the same question, Janine’s comments indicated that supervisors at Cost Centre do not always support FFWPs.

Janine stated that:

I don’t think they are so supportive when it affects them. – Janine (interview)

When Nathan was asked regarding supervisory support of FFWPs, he indicated a different experience to Olivier and Janine.

Nathan commented that:

I’ve got quite a number of supervisors as I take on different roles. I work in HR so they just know the importance of work and family balance, so it’s never been questioned ever. – Nathan (interview)

Lana concurred with Nathan when she said that:

I very much feel a supported attitude and they very much leave it up to you, the individual and that was how it was for me. So I hope that’s what we are
doing for the other staff in similar situations. When I first fell pregnant I did a business plan, it was probably not necessary but at the time it helped. It helped me gather my thoughts in terms of how it was all going to work and what I guess I was expecting from them and what we needed to make it work and they have been fantastic. From the time I had my first child to now, I’ve gone through the whole director/partner promotion process, so that’s all happened while doing part-time work. – Lana (interview)

In line with the findings of McDonald et al. (2005) Jane spoke about the lack of co-worker support.

Jane said:

I think if people did cut down their work hours, the other people would say … Other people judge you on what you’re doing. – Jane (interview)

These contrasting experiences suggested that the FFWC at Cost Centre is not the same in all departments and areas of the organisation. This is in line with Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument that not all workers are treated equally. The experiences of these participants suggested that despite the fact that Cost Centre has well established policies and procedures relating to FFWPs, that the actual implementation and usage of these policies is mixed, and is somewhat dependent upon the attitudes of the direct supervisors and co-workers. These attitudes do not appear to be consistent across the whole of the organisation.

Also, these comments supported the previously identified FFWC dimensions of negative career consequences and managerial support (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). The gendered nature of FFWPs as identified by McDonald et al. (2005) is also confirmed. Further to this, the nature of the job was considered an important factor in the provision and utilisation gap of FFWPs which supported previous writers (Budd and Mumford 2006: 38; Burgess et al. 2007a: 426 and Burgess et al. 2007b: 109).

When asked:

Can I ask you your general view of the organisation? If you had to describe to me a day in your life at Cost Centre, what would you tell me? – Researcher (interview)
Jane replied:

Yeah, I really like it. The people are really nice. (laughter) Just everything is well-organised, everything’s available. I’ve never worked in a large organisation before, only smaller organisations. It’s just … different here. You know? – Jane (interview)

Lana also shared her ideas on her general view of Cost Centre as follows:

I would say young and fairly dynamic. It’s adaptable. I think we offer our staff a good diversity of opportunities. I would like to think that it’s a consultative, collaborative environment as well. So I think it’s a great place to work in. – Lana (interview)

When asked about Cost Centres attitudes to work and family balance, Lana continued to say that:

It is very much a supported attitude and they leave it up to you, the individual and that’s how it was for me. I think you have to make it happen for yourself definitely, but you have to have the support. But it’s hard. I feel like it’s taken me a while to get here and definitely that first year when you’re back after you’ve had your baby, you’ve got to retrain your brain to be working. I felt like it took a few months to get back ticking. – Lana (interview)

A similar response was given by Janine who said:

I think they are pretty good at listening up front and trying to find something that suits you. – Janine (interview)

Likewise Ryan commented that:

My personal experience is that I’ve always been fairly supported in my work and family balance. In my group I would say that two-thirds plus do non-standard work whether that’s part-time or starting at 7.00 am and finishing at 2.00 pm. If people have family commitments, so long as they get the job done, they have always been able to introduce flexibility. – Ryan (interview)

Regarding Ryan’s opinion of Cost Centre’s attitudes to the relationship between work and family, Ryan noted that:

I’ve always been able to come and go, you know, to be able to flex my hours for commitments. I make a point of being home most nights, to have the children bathed. I see them every morning when they get up, so I’m fortunate. I’m able to balance my time and I don’t believe it has impacted my career. – Ryan (interview)

That’s good. No negative career consequences? – Researcher (interview)
In the conversations that I have with junior staff it’s never—it’s not something that I ever hear as an issue, you know for others. – Ryan (interview)

This is an interesting reflection by Ryan, and is quite different to the impressions given by Janine and Lana earlier on in this chapter.

When Kevin was asked about Cost Centre’s attitudes to work and family he shared the following:

It’s quite good. No one monitors where I am day to day. The only issue is what the client demands. I may or may not have to fulfil that demand in the short term. So if there was a huge deliverable that I would have to do then obviously it would be more difficult for me to just duck off and do something else or spend time at home. But aside from that if it was a reasonable request then I’m sure I would be accommodated. – Kevin (interview)

Olivier noted the same reticence that could exist with junior staff using FFWPs that Lana had when commenting:

Everyone has family demands on them. I feel these demands now as opposed to before I had children. If I was more junior I would probably be more reluctant and less prepared to stick my neck out and say I’m doing this—but that’s probably just a bit of age, experience and all those things. – Olivier (interview)

It is interesting to note that Olivier’s perceptions are similar to Lana’s, both are quite different from Ryan’s, who does not think that it is an issue for junior staff to use FFWPs at Cost Centre. These different perceptions are plausible when considering Lepak and Snell’s (1999) idea that not all staff is treated equally or considered to be of the same value to the organisation. The staff to whom Ryan refers are (in his words) ‘non-standard’ and getting the work done is all that matters. This was not how the other participants described their teams. Further to this, the difficulty of generalising over the whole of the organisation is described by Nathan:

From my experience the organisation is very supportive toward work and family balance. But I think it is hard to comment on the whole organisation, whether it is widespread or not. I see it working well for me absolutely—but for others I don’t see it working very well. – Nathan (interview)

Do you know why that is? – Researcher (interview)

I think it’s just that people’s expectations are not set right up front. You know, some people worry too much about not being in and not being
available or not doing full-time work. I see plenty of people at Cost Centre still coming in on their dedicated day off. I just don’t. I don’t tolerate it. I am very passionate when I am at work and certainly take it very seriously but not to the point where it takes over from a more important aspect of my life. – Nathan (interview)

Nathan’s observations highlighted the fact that sometimes it is due to individual differences that we see variations in the provision and usage of FFWPs. As Nathan pointed out, some of his colleagues come in to work when they should be at home. In many cases, this need to come to work on designated days off is not due to factors in the workplace per se, but is simply an individual’s own desire and aspects of their own personality driving them to make these decisions. Nathan’s comments have, therefore, brought attention to the importance of individual differences at the workplace and the tremendous impact of diversity.

Many of the FFWC dimensions identified by Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005), which are supported in the participants’ comments, go a long way to explaining the variety of experiences with FFWPs at Big Bank. However, as outlined by Nathan, not only these cultural dimensions are attributable to how employees experience their work and family concerns. Indeed, in many cases it is due to the employees’ own interpretation of the situation, their individual differences, and various personal factors. For example, Nathan pointed out that he sees people at Cost Centre putting their career as a higher level priority compared to others. So it would follow that these ‘career focused employees’ would be less inclined to utilise the FFWPs available. Therefore, it can be seen that we need to be mindful of the importance of individual differences when explaining the varying experiences of work and family balance. An aspect of these differences, the role played by the employee’s job, is explored when examining the core and periphery idea of Lepak and Snell (1999).

McDonald et al. (2005) identified the FFWC dimension of co-worker support. They argued that in many cases there was a negative backlash towards employees using FFWPs by those who did not have children. When asked about this idea, Nathan said that:

I have heard mutterings that, you know, we have a lot of policies for women and a lot of policies for families. I hear them saying what about the singles.
What do we get? But you know to me, I don’t buy into these comments. If I have to leave at 5.00pm, then I do. – Nathan (interview)

These findings indicated that, although no new FFWC dimensions were uncovered, a number of the existing FFWC dimensions were considered to be important by the participants.

The next theme, understanding the style of HRM in place at Cost Centre is now considered.

The style of human resource management at Cost Centre

An important part of the thesis related to the distinction between soft and hard HRM (Legge 1995) and examining the style of HRM employed by each organisation. The following question was asked to investigate how this model related to Cost Centre.

When asked:

How would you describe Cost Centre in terms of soft and hard HRM? – Researcher (interview)

Jane replied:

Definitely soft. – Jane (interview)

Why do you think that is? Do you have any idea? – Researcher (interview)

Jane replied:

I just think they’re very people based. If they don’t have the best people they’re not going to get the work from the clients. – Jane (interview)

Lana commented that:

I would say it has definitely gone in cycles and I can see some dramatic changes in the culture of the organisation over the last seven years. Definitely much more for the better and much more of that soft HR being offered to us in the last four years. They have been providing opportunities and really targeting female talent and identifying ways to promote and retain female talent. So I think there is a lot of soft HR here and I think they have recognised the greater importance of that whilst still maintaining the balance of hard HR as well. – Lana (interview)
This notion that there is a balance of soft and hard HRM is supported by Kevin when stating that:

I think the HR is probably somewhere in between soft and hard. So obviously they drive their staff quite hard here. Luckily everyone is intelligent and ambitious and after that challenge. People do have a financial matrix that they are measured against, but that’s also blended across other things that we get measured against such as how we communicate or connect with others in the group. So it is a bit of a blended approach really. – Kevin (interview)

Vanessa concurred that there is a mixture of soft and hard HRM when commenting that:

I’d say they’re a little bit of both. Obviously their main focus is the financial profit that’s why we’re a partnership rather than a business owner. But on the flip side, there is also soft HR because we have some benefits working for Cost Centre whereas a lot of companies don’t have half of the benefits that Cost Centre has. I’d say they’re probably more towards the soft side, but again, they do have that element of hard HR. – Vanessa (interview)

Elanisa also referred to a mix of both soft and hard HRM when she spoke of:

I think we’re a bit of both. I work in a HR department so I sort of see a lot of the policies because we put our people first and we want to make it the best for them to work here. But at the same time, I see limitations put on HR you know, you can’t do this and you can’t do that and head count this and budget that, you know. It’s sort of – you sort of feel like well what’s more important is the people. But the climate at the moment dictates what happens. That’s sort of unavoidable. – Elanisa (interview)

Janine acknowledged that there may be a mix of approaches but suggested that the hard approach is the more dominant when she said that:

Probably the hard approach. I suppose most of the key matrixes for an individual or a team are profit driven. There are probably some softer matrixes around, you know based around morale, but I think at the end of the day the dominant ones are the harder financial matrixes. – Janine (interview)

Nathan also agreed by noting that:

Definitely both. Yeah, we’ve got a pretty hard edge. We’re taught to do everything from a commercial perspective. But we also add value on the people and behavioural pieces. – Nathan (interview)

Justin noted a change had occurred when commenting that:
Overall, I’d say that it’s probably more soft, but having said that over the last twelve months there has definitely been a focus on the bottom line, and you know there’s been retrenchments. – Justin (*interview*)

Interestingly, Olivier has a totally different perception to those discussed above when he said:

I think it is soft. I think they do things which are not required. Their focus is not all about bottom line and profitability. – Olivier (*interview*)

This is in line with Olivier’s impression of his general view of Cost Centre.

When he was asked:

What’s it like to work here? – Researcher (*interview*)

Olivier stated that:

There’s a real focus on people. We are a sensitive people business because we sell our knowledge. There’s a big focus on people and our big HR teams look after us. You can get paid a lot more for doing something else, but, you know I think the people side of it is one of the benefits, I suppose of being here. Overall, I am happy. – Olivier (*interview*)

Olivier is a Director in Corporate Advisory and said that he mainly works from 9.00 am to 6.00pm. Other weeks it could be 90-hour weeks for 3 weeks. These hours did not suggest the ‘big focus on people’ that Olivier spoke about. Moreover, they indicated a definite focus on outcomes and getting the job done. These are more synonymous with a hard approach to HRM with it focus on the bottom-line rather than the softer employee oriented HRM approach. It is apparent that Olivier’s actual work life at Cost Centre contradicted his perception of what it is like to work at Cost Centre.

It is also evident that the most common perception was that Cost Centre employed a combination of both soft and hard. Three participants thought it was soft, Jane, Lana and Olivier. By contrast only Janine thought that the HRM was hard. These findings support the mounting critique of the soft and hard HRM model that it was too simplistic because organisations are likely to utilise bundles of HRM practices (Wright and Kehoe 2008: 13; Purcell *et al.* 2009: 45). Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument that HRM is heterogeneous in practice is also supported in these findings.
The final theme relating to the impact job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs is now explored.

**The impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Cost Centre**

An interesting insight from the HRM literature was Lepak and Snell’s human resource architecture model (1999) and its emphasis on the importance of job characteristics in terms of core and periphery workers. One of the aims of this thesis was to evaluate the capacity of the core and periphery model to explain the availability and usage of FFWPs. Participants were asked if they thought core and periphery workers were treated differently at Cost Centre with reference to accessing FFWPs. Participants were also asked if they believed that all workers were treated equally at Cost Centre. The answers to these two questions are provided below.

Regarding the availability of FFWPs for core and periphery staff, Lana replied:

> I don’t really know, but I do know that the policies are pretty consistent. And when I think about it—people in different kinds of roles, I would say that it’s fairly consistent. Lana – *(interview)*

Elanisa said:

> Yeah. Umm, I just think a lot of the part-time assistants in the firm, unless you get a job-share arrangement, it’s very hard to find something. So I did look within the firm when all the pressure was on me. I was looking within the firm if there were any other part-time roles and it was very limited. – Elanisa *(interview)*

So are workers considered equally valuable? – Researcher *(interview)*

> Oh, I don’t think so. No. I don’t feel that they are. I felt it was either, you know, you do this or you are out. I felt that. They may not have seen it that way but I felt it. – Elanisa *(interview)*

Jane shared a similar story when replying:

> Oh yes, occupational groups are treated differently. It just depends on what level you’re at. Obviously, a partner can do what they want, really! (laughter). – Jane *(interview)*

> Yeah, yeah. A lot of senior people get better treatment. So the next question is: are workers considered equally valuable? – Researcher *(interview)*
Hmm … Some people would say yes; I would say no. Like support staff, internal or food services staff. They’re replaceable-type people. – Jane (interview)

And yet the accounting staff … ? – Researcher (interview)

Yeah, they would be more flexible. – Jane (interview)

Janine noted that:

Some of the internal functions like PAs are quite good. The firm is trialling different sorts of ways that they can work around their role flexibly. The client practice staff such as the accountants don’t have any innovative things such as job sharing or working 3 days a week. I think it would be quite challenging for me to do a full client load on a part-time basis. Janine – (interview)

In contrast Ryan commented that:

I don’t think the opportunities are different. One of the partners I work for works four days a week. I think that there are more challenges with the partners, but I don’t think the perception is any different. Ryan – (interview)

Kevin’s view was different to Ryan’s. Kevin said:

If you divide the firm within the partners, they can basically do whatever, no one can question them. Then you’ve got the client based staff like myself and all the support staff and PAs. The support staff and the PAs can generally manage their time to start at 9.00am and finish at 5.30pm or earlier because they have to go and pick up their kids, or whatever, and push what they didn’t do that day into the next day, and that’s generally accepted practice. But for the client based staff we don’t necessarily have the ability to do that. It’s different, the expectations on us. But we are paid better. Kevin – (interview)

Olivier commented:

I think everyone is offered the same package and I’ve not seen any evidence of certain people or certain levels where the response is a bit different. – Olivier (interview)

Researcher:

So do the partners at Cost Centre get the same as admin? – Researcher (interview)

Olivier:

No they get more. They get a different offering altogether I think. I’m sure they’ve got better benefits and all that sort of stuff. – Olivier (interview)
Vanessa’s perception was similar to Olivier’s:

Certain occupational groups are treated differently with family-friendly practices. I’m on level 1 – level 1 have a different standard of even the toilets.  
– Vanessa (interview)

Yeah?  
– Researcher (interview)

Yeah. We don’t get the chocolate biscuits where everyone else gets the chocolate biscuits. You don’t get certain chairs that other people get. It’s actually quite embarrassing.  
– Vanessa (interview)

So you’re not treated as well?  
– Researcher (interview)

No, level 1 is not treated as well as all the other different levels. People think that because you work in a mailroom or you work on a switchboard that you don’t have any qualifications. They don’t realise that just because it suits at that time and there could be other priorities in your life that you are in the bottom. Which is really sad.  
– Vanessa (interview)

In contrast to the above, Nathan suggested that:

I don’t think groups are treated differently with their access to FFWPs. I wouldn’t have seen a big difference. Nathan – (interview)

Justin’s perception was similar to Nathan, when he commented:

I don’t think occupational groups are treated differently with family-friendly practices. Not that I’ve seen. Justin – (interview)

The comments indicated that the majority of participants felt that there was a difference in the way that core and periphery staff were treated regarding FFWPs at Cost Centre.

When asked:

Do you believe workers are considered equally valuable in this organisation?  
– Researcher (interview)

Lana said:

Yes, absolutely. Lana – (interview)

Janine agreed when saying:

Yeah. Janine – (interview)
Ryan elaborated by commenting:

I don’t think it is hierarchical and I would hate to think that people saw our support and administration staff as any less valuable. My experience would be no, but I’m sure that some people would do anything, but you know, from my experience we wouldn’t be able to do the client facing staff if we didn’t have the administrative staff supporting us. I’m sure there is some inequality but it’s not something that I overtly see. Ryan – (interview)

Jane replied:

Hmmm … Some people would say yes; I would say no. Rachel – (interview)

Nathan commented:

We’re not the traditional company that we used to be but that doesn’t mean that it is not in the minds of some of the partners. There’s still a little bit of inequality going around. Nathan – (interview)

Olivier replied:

No, because some people are more valued. It depends on how you classify value. If value is making money and how you contribute, some people would contribute more than others. So everyone is not going to be equally valuable and that’s the same in any population. Olivier – (interview)

Justin said:

I think that the practice staff are treated more valuably. They are the staff who are generating more revenue, like accountants and directors. This business relies on generating revenue through hours charged to clients and things like that so it’s important that they look after the revenue generating parts of the business. Justin – (interview)

Vanessa believed that:

No, people are not treated equally. Don’t get me wrong, that’s generalising. There are always some people that will make an effort but generally no. Vanessa - (interview)

Elanisa agreed:

Oh, no I don’t think so. No I don’t feel so. Elanisa – (interview)

Overall, the responses indicated that there was a difference in the way that core and periphery staff were treated concerning FFWPs. Supporting Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model, many participants felt that senior staff
could almost do anything they liked. As part of this question, participants were asked if they thought employees were considered equally valuable in the organisation. Again, the overall response indicated the perception that Cost Centre valued senior staff more highly than junior staff. This supported Lepak and Snell’s (1999) idea that core staff will be more highly valued by an organisation.

Chapter conclusion

Analysis of the findings from the documents and interviews at Cost Centre indicated that FFWPs are perceived to be more widely used by women. There was a mixed response regarding the overall usage of FFWPs, with some participants feeling that there was a reluctance to use such policies. A number of reasons were provided as to why employees at Cost Centre would be unwilling to use FFWPs. These included the previously identified FFWC dimensions of negative career consequences and managerial support (Thompson et. al 1999; McDonald et. al 2005) and the gendered nature of FFWPs and co-worker support (McDonald et. al 2005). No new FFWC dimensions were identified at this case study organisation. The findings at Cost Centre, as in the case of Big Bank, indicated that the lived experiences of the availability and usage of FFWPs are often different to the values espoused in company documents, such as company policies. This is due to the intervention of a number of FFWC dimensions.

The findings showed that the issue of whether an employee is considered core or periphery by the organisation is a key determinant of the employees’ perceived value in the organisation as well as the FFWPs they are likely to receive, supporting Lepak and Snell (1999). As described in Chapter 3, other writers have similarly indicated the importance of employee occupation as an important factor in the availability and usage of FFWPs within organisations (Bardoel and Tharenou 1997; Warhurst et al. 2008: 16). At Cost Centre it was found that employees in support functions were able to use FFWPs more than workers in client facing functions. Therefore the particular job makes a difference at Cost Centre with it being found that some employees needed to meet deadlines more than others. These employees tended to be regarded as core to the organisation and they were less likely to be able to access FFWPs. A combination of soft and hard HRM practices was implemented at Cost Centre. This
confirmed the view that to consider that an organisation would adopt only soft or hard HRM is too simplistic (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Legge 2005; Watson 2004; Keenoy 1999). This also supported Lepak and Snell’s (1999) notion that HRM is likely to be heterogeneous in practice.

The next chapter continues the discussion of the findings with a focus on the first public sector organisation, Service.
CHAPTER 7: Service

I think people are treated differently, yes. I think the more senior that people are in the organisation, the more there is an expectation that they are able to access flexible hours. The reality is, for a number of years, there have been people working excessive hours, and forfeiting their flexi hours because of perceived or real pressures to achieve outcomes. – Tegan (interview)

Introducing the organisation

Service is a large public sector organisation formed under the NSW Government program to reform corporate services across the public sector with the aim of improving their delivery. Service provides a varied range of administrative type activities such as finance to a number of NSW public sector agencies. This aims to allow for the more efficient consolidation, standardisation and streamlining of organisational processes so as to achieve greater public sector efficiency. The head office of Service is located in Sydney. It also maintains a regional presence with a number of offices located outside the CBD. Service employs over 700 staff and plays a vital role in helping its clients’ 18,000 staff deliver community services to the more than 200,000 people across NSW who are reliant upon them (Service 2011).

Service’s 2010 annual report consisted of 68 pages, of which nine related to human resource issues. These were equal employment opportunity, management and structure and the disability action plan. Service did not make a statement concerning their approach to work and family responsibilities in their annual report. Instead the annual report focused on core business issues. Service’s main purpose as stated in their 2010 annual report is to improve the delivery of corporate services, to leverage technology and to reduce costs, allowing its clients to focus on their key business objectives (Service 2010: 2). Service’s mission is to provide high quality, low cost services and to operate a financially sustainable business that is flexible and can readily expand to meet increased demand for its services. Service’s aim is to help
create a more efficient and effective public service so that the community receives the care and attention it needs (Service 2010: 10).

There is no enterprise agreement for Service (email from a Senior Manager dated 29 July 2011). All employees are covered by the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 and the vast majority of staff are award based. All Service employees except the Senior Executives are covered under the Crown Employees (Public Services Conditions of Employment) Award 2009. Awards for public servants are ultimately decided by the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission within the constraints of the Act.

The relevant sections of the Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award 2009 are provided in Appendix 9. These sections are summarised from the award in table 5. Comparing this award with the awards at Big Bank and Cost Centre, it can be seen that Service’s award has more provisions concerning work and family matters.
Table 5. Summary of flexibility provisions: *Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award 2009*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award Clause</th>
<th>Summary of provision paraphrased from clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.1 Part-time employment</td>
<td>Part-time staff receive full-time entitlements on a pro-rata basis calculated according to the number of hours worked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Flexible Working Hours</td>
<td>The parties to this award are committed to fostering flexible work practices with the intention of providing greater flexibility with workloads, work deadlines and the balance between work and family life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Flexible Work Practices</td>
<td>Nothing in this award shall affect the hours of duty of a staff member who is covered by a written flexible working hours agreement negotiated under the Flexible Work Practices, Policy and Guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Family and Community Service Leave</td>
<td>The Department Head shall grant to a staff member all or some of their family and community leave on full pay, for reasons relating to unplanned and emergency family responsibilities or other emergencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. Parental Leave</td>
<td>Parental leave includes maternity, adoption and other parent leave. A staff member who has been granted parental leave may request to the Department Head to extend the period on unpaid parental leave for another period not exceeding 12 months or to return from a period of full time parental leave on a part-time basis until their child reaches school age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76. Purchased Leave</td>
<td>A staff member may apply to enter into an agreement with the Department Head to purchase either 10 days or 20 days additional leave in a 12 month period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81. Sick Leave to Care for a Family Member</td>
<td>Where family and community service leave is exhausted or unavailable a staff member with responsibilities of care for a family member may elect to use available paid sick leave to provide such care when a family member is ill.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Service offers a number of relevant FFWPs which provide benefits over and above the prescribed legislative conditions. To protect the identity of Service, these policies
are paraphrased. The relevant policies applying to Service are similar to those applying to the fourth case study, Community, also a public sector organisation. Box 3 paraphrases policy relating to the nine flexible work practice options at Service. Appendix 10 provides a fuller description of these policies.

Box 3. Flexible work practice options at Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Part-time work:</strong></th>
<th>Part-time work allows flexibility for departments to better utilise employees and it also offers greater flexibility for employees in combining their work and family responsibilities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job sharing:</strong></td>
<td>Job sharing is an arrangement whereby one job is shared between part-time employees. Job sharing allows flexibility for managers and provides flexibility for employees to choose preferred work patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-time leave without pay:</strong></td>
<td>Part-time leave without pay provides an opportunity for employees currently working full-time to work part-time, with leave without pay for the balance of full-time hours for the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career break scheme:</strong></td>
<td>This scheme is available for any purpose, such as extending parental leave, study, travel, personal and professional development. In some cases work is available for several weeks each year to cover recreation leave of another employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part-year employment:</strong></td>
<td>Employees, by agreement with the employer, may elect to take a number of week’s unpaid leave in addition to their annual entitlement to recreation leave. For the employer an annual period of unpaid leave may be particularly suitable where workloads fluctuate. Employees may be better able to coordinate work and family responsibilities, for example, by taking leave during school vacation periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variable-year employment:</strong></td>
<td>Employees, by agreement with the employer, may elect to take a year of unpaid leave after working for a pre-arranged number of years. It differs from a career break scheme in that it is pre-planned a number of years ahead and is likely to be for a shorter period than a career break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Working from home:</strong></td>
<td>Working from home may suit the employer and the employees as a short or long term option. This provision could also be used by employees with a temporary disability, or whose disability fluctuates, which prevents their attendance at the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Varying hours of work:</strong></td>
<td>There are a number of options available which include the accumulation of flex leave, and varying core hours which can, for example, enable parents to coordinate their hours with school hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short term absences for family and other responsibilities:</strong></td>
<td>Flexible arrangements of working hours and a range of leave provisions, either separately or in combination may be used to enable employees to meet these needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another FFWP more recently introduced at Service is the purchased leave policy. The essence of this Leave is that the scheme explains how employees are able to purchase additional leave. Employees can apply for additional leave entitlements of either ten days or twenty days or the equivalent pro rata in a twelve-month period via a Purchased Leave Agreement. Purchased Leave must be taken in minimum blocks of five days (New South Wales Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet 2009).

Clearly, Service provides an extensive array of FFWPs to meet the needs of its employees. Table 6 classifies the FFWPs available to Service according to Kirchmeyer’s (1995) typology.
Table 6: Typology of FFWPs at Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology according to Kirchmeyer</th>
<th>FFWP available at Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible working conditions</td>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible working hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible working practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right to request flexible working arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and dependent care benefits</td>
<td>Part-year employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variable-year employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information services</td>
<td>Not available at Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and leave options</td>
<td>Family and community service leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchased leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sick leave to care for a family member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part time leave without pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career break scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational cultural issues</td>
<td>Not mentioned in documents at Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introducing the participants**

Before the discussion turns to participants’ experiences, it is relevant to consider their individual work and family situations. In this section, an overview of the key...
demographics of this group of participants including their age and job title is provided. Participant names are pseudonyms. Ten employees were interviewed at Service. In selecting the sample of participants, a range of positions within Service that meet the definitions of core and periphery workers (Lepak and Snell, 1999) was explored. Participants came from a number of different family types. Five participants were male and five were female, of whom all but three were partnered and six had children. Four of the participants had tertiary qualifications. They were working in a range of job titles from varying levels within the organisation. These jobs ranged from the more junior role of Payroll Records Officer, to middle management roles such as Manager Printing Services to senior roles such as Financial Accountant. Selecting a range of individuals in different jobs provided for a richness of data as well as the opportunity to examine how different jobs within organisations are valued by the organisation. This is in line with Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery notion. The participants all worked full-time in the office.
Table 7: Participant personal and employment details at Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Number of days worked per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Currently completing a Bachelor of Business in Accounting</td>
<td>Financial Accountant</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tegan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts and Psychology, Bachelor of Secondary Teaching</td>
<td>Senior Projects Officer – Employee Relations Core</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiersten</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Manager, Printing Services Core</td>
<td>28 to 40 hours (builds up flex-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Single mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School Certificate</td>
<td>Recruitment Officer Periphery</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joelene</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School Certificate</td>
<td>Payroll Officer Periphery</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Not at moment-to be married soon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Manager, Accounts Receivable Core</td>
<td>35 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bachelor of Business</td>
<td>Team Leader, Packaging and Benefits Core</td>
<td>37 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School Certificate</td>
<td>Registration clerk, credit cards Periphery</td>
<td>Between 35 and 38 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor in Business and Computing</td>
<td>Fleet Officer Periphery</td>
<td>Between 35 and 37 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryce</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Records Officer, HR Periphery</td>
<td>Between 35 and 37 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each participant has been labelled as either core or periphery as originally identified by Lepak and Snell (1999).

The first theme from the theoretical model, the difference between the availability and the usage of FFWPs, is now explored.

**The availability and the usage of family-friendly work practices at Service**

This theme investigated the reasons why a gap could exist at Service between the availability of FFWPs and the usage of FFWPs. The provision/utilisation gap in FFWPs was a key insight gained from the literature review (Bond 2004, Behson 2005, Jones, Burke and Westman 2006, Houkamau and Boxall 2011). To gain understanding into this aspect of FFWPs at Cost Centre, the following question was asked:

> To what extent do you think organisational policies regarding FFWPs are implemented and used by employees? – Researcher (interview)

The one that I’ve used, in fact now that comes to mind is the family and community service leave. For example, one of the things that is particular to my scenario is that my son has a disability, so I am able to take some of that leave towards taking him to his assessments. With my team it is quite common that people are away for various reasons whether it is to take time cause of the kids or there’s a family holiday and so forth. – Ethel (interview).

Alana brought up one of the previously identified FFWC dimensions of managerial support (Thompson *et al.* 1999) when she said:

> I, myself think it really depends on the manager that you’ve got. Like my manager he’s an older gentleman. He’s had his family and he’s raised his children, so he knows how much a family demands mean to you. Yet, on the other side, when you have a young manager who doesn’t have a family and things like that, I don’t think they can really contemplate, you know, that the kids get sick and things like that. – Alana (interview)

This interesting notion of managerial support was also mentioned by Jose when he said:

> I think in most cases staff use the policies. As I said, they’re made aware of them, they’re used to them like maternity leave, sick leave, FACS leave. I think they’re, in a lot of cases, made aware of the policies more by those around them than sometimes management would come up to them. – Jose (interview)
According to Jose, not all managers are effective at disseminating the availability of FFWPs to their subordinates. Jose believes that staff are often more likely to hear about the family-friendly offerings from their peers. This dimension was previously proposed by McDonald et al. (2005) when they identified the importance of co-worker support. Jose’s comment indicated that at Service, co-worker support is quite strong, whereas managerial support is not so supportive.

Joelene gave the impression that FFWPs were not widely used at Service. She commented that:

I think that just a few people use the family policies. – Joelene (interview)

Do you know why that might be? – Researcher (interview)

Normally, some people they use their own family leave if their mother died or their cousin, uncle, sister or brother. Normally if my dad or mum are sick I go with them. But as much as possible I don’t want it to interfere with my work. – Joelene (interview)

Ben tended to agree with Joelene. He stated that:

Information on family policies are not forwarded to us every day. It’s like a training seminar that you will go to. It’s all great and everything at the training but then it goes away after a few months. I think my unique position would be because I’m a contractor. It does change my thinking and my approach to work because I think I have to stay here and this and that—for me personally there is a pressure to perform really well because I feel I could get the flick any day—so I’m reluctant to take that leave. – Ben (interview)

When interviewing Derek, it was interesting to see that he had a very different view to Joelene and Alana. He said that:

I would say that they’re widely used, yeah. It would be a contradiction for me for everything I have said to say anything else. I think these policies are widely used. Every company has its down sides and its up sides. But absolutely Service should be looked at as a leader in this sort of area. It really does sort of grab the bull by the horns and run with this stuff and it means something. It’s not just lip-sync. It’s tangible. You can touch it and feel it almost. – Derek (interview)

Kiersten had a similar comment when stating:

Yes the policies are used. Yes, definitely. It’s definitely active. Yeah. – Kiersten (interview)
Preston replied that:

I’ve got nine in my team. Three of them work part-time, two of them are men, and that’s a sort of a life choice. So that’s just within my small team. I would think it is, you know, even across the board. It’s certainly available. I think more women would take part-time work and those types of things. – Preston (*interview*)

So it can be seen that Preston here has talked about more women than men taking part-time work. This perception supported the previously discovered FFWC concept of the gendered nature of family policies (McDonald et al. 2005).

Bryce was sitting on the fence regarding the usage of FFWPs at Service. He said that:

The polices are used to some extent, yes. Like, you know, it’s not bad here. Like if it was bad I wouldn’t be here. That’s for sure. Like, there’s obviously good and bad things. There are some practices that I haven’t used yet. The policies are on the internet and you have to read about it, you know. I think it should be more this sort of stuff where everybody implements the policies like in a big group. – Bryce (*interview*)

These comments indicated that there were different perceptions regarding the usage of FFWPs at Service. An explanation for the range of perceptions could relate to the important concepts of managerial support and co-worker support as previously identified by Thompson *et al.* (1999) and McDonald *et al.* (2005). An individual’s experience and concept of other staff members around them would be greatly influenced by both managerial and co-worker support. Both these sources of support could very easily differ within various parts of the organisation. It can be concluded that despite the fact that Service has well established and clearly defined FFWPs, the interpretation, implementation and usage of these policies was spread unevenly.

The second theme from the theoretical model, the impact of FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs, is now explored in further detail.

**The nature and impact of family-friendly culture on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Service**

The aim of the questions relating to this theme was to understand more about the existing identified dimensions of FFWC (Thompson *et al.* 1999 and McDonald *et al.* 2005) and to investigate if there were new dimensions to be revealed.
In order to find out participants’ views of their organisation the following question was asked:

What is your general view of the organisation, what is it like to work here? – Researcher (interview)

Ben highlighted the difference in benefits between employees and contractors at Service, with employees enjoying better work and family benefits. He said:

The environment itself, at Service is quite supportive of people’s needs. They have installed different policies such as flex time and rec leave. But for myself, I’m a contractor which does not entitle me to those sort of policies. If I take a day off, then I don’t get paid for it. That has some implications on my life style. It’s making me do more days than other people working here. Being a contractor there is a risk of job security and not being paid for the days you are not here. It does have some implications. – Ben (interview)

When asked the same question, Tegan replied:

Variable; it’s got good and bad components to it. I guess the organisation is very focused on its customer services, its external perception by customers and delivering efficiencies and effectiveness for the public sector. It’s a little bit less inwardly looking at its employees and how that’s a priority and that’s been reflected in a succession of HR directors and not a long history of strong leadership in that regard. Now, because the organisation views itself partly as a private sector model it engages a high proportion of the workforce from contractors who have different employment conditions and different reward remuneration and the whole thing.

Being public sector, there’s that framework, that background, you know, the legislation, the Act we’re employed under, the awards. Everything is quite prescriptive and being government is quite explicitly and transparently meant to be fair and I guess you’re talking particularly about family-friendly so there’s a lot of those mechanisms in place. This is a young organisation so it is open to improvement, but that’s probably in a theoretical or a conceptual way. We will say these words and we will publish the documents. But, I don’t know that the organisation is as good at making those practices into reality. Tegan (interview)

Delving more specifically to FFWPs, the following question was asked:

What are the organisation’s attitudes to the relationship between work and family? – Researcher (interview)

Jose noted that:

As I said earlier, having worked out in the private industry for 30 odd years, I can see the culture here changing probably from what it was 20 years ago.
They’re bringing in things now – which they probably need to – that I saw happening 15, 20 years ago in private enterprise. So it’s little things like that probably make people more aware of family issues and more aware of their responsibilities. – Jose (interview)

In contrast, Derek said:

I come from a private sector background where you’re expected to give the earth and, you know, you get very little back. My view of this organisation is that it is fantastic. Absolutely fantastic. There is a good culture and a good leadership team … For me it was quite a culture shock coming here because there is a lot of that family stuff that doesn’t get promoted as vigorously in the private sector as it does in the public sector. So it was a very quick mind shift that I had to go through. – Derek (interview)

Ethel elaborated as follows:

I can answer that question in two parts. Firstly, public sector, the culture and the environment in terms of a working mum is excellent. There is flexibility with the hours and leave entitlements. So in terms of the public sector and in terms of family and the entitlements that is the number one reason why I have come into the public sector. Prior to that I used to work for commercial, so that was one of the things that commercial was really bad at. I used to work in two accounting firms and there was very little flexibility in terms of supporting the work and family balance side. Service is on a journey and I’ve been with Service since the beginning of that journey and in my opinion it’s progressing well. – Ethel (interview)

Kiersten commented similarly when she said:

It’s probably the best organisation that I have worked for. I’ve had two other long-term jobs. One was in a private organisation then I moved into government. I worked at another public sector department then I moved here. I think for people who haven’t worked in the private sector, they don’t realise how lucky government employees have it. So I guess I can see it from both sides of the fence and, yeah, I really think that if you want to have kids they’d be open to giving you flexible working hours. Yeah, I really enjoy it. – Kiersten (interview)

When comparing the responses of Jose, Derek and Ethel different opinions concerning the comparison between FFWPs provided at public and private sector organisations are evident. The experiences that they have had in private industry were vastly different. Jose enjoyed far superior benefits in the private sector compared to Derek and Ethel.

Alana tended to agree with Ethel when she replied:
It is great to work at Service. With my two children having disabilities I realised when the children were very young that I could not actually work and have my primary caring role for the children as well. It wasn’t until I came into Service as a temp worker that I realised with their work life balance that they do have their flexible work practices, the flex leave and things like that. I could actually manage to hold down a full-time job as well as still having the children as my primary main focus. – Alana (interview).

When asked about the organisation’s attitudes to the relationship between family and work Alana commented that:

I couldn’t say I can arrive and depart whenever I want, but if it is a family demand my manager would definitely let me, yep. – Alana (interview)

Joelene said:

If it’s an emergency I think you can have time off, but as a policy we have core time. You can arrive between 7.00am and 9.30am and then you can leave no earlier than 3.30pm. But where I am, my Team Leader is pretty flexible. – Joelene (interview)

Bryce commented that:

Well, I think I can, like I come in the morning when I want. I usually come in earlier. But then I leave earlier. – Bryce (interview)

Preston replied that:

Yes, my manager understands my family demands. I mean, within the constraints of getting the work done and making sure that things are done. – Preston (interview)

When asked:

Are there any reasons that an employee might feel reluctant to take advantage of FFWPs at Service? – Researcher (interview)

Derek replied:

I’m sure there are. I mean, you know, as an organisation you can encourage your management and to some extent tell your management how to act, but we all apply it differently. You know, we’ve all got different management

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3 Note, Alana’s children’s disabilities which are severe were identified in the interview but have been omitted to maintain anonymity.
styles and I don’t know every manager in the organisation. I do know some who may be a little bit tougher. Also, I don’t know if there would be any scenario where an individual may feel that their manager was aware of all the policies and programs and the rest of it and doesn’t make someone feel a certain way when they are requesting things. I think it would be naive to say that these attitudes do not exist in this organisation. – Derek (interview)

So it can be seen from Derek’s comments that the FFWC dimension of managerial support (Thompson et al. 1999) was an issue at Service. Derek felt that managers could deal with FFWPs differently. Ben agreed with Derek’s view regarding the importance of managerial support when he commented that:

In my position I would feel reluctant to take advantage of FFWPs because I’m a contractor and I don’t like to take too many days off. For other staff, they may feel confronted about explaining to their managers about personal issues. They might not trust their managers. – Ben (interview)

Yeah, lack of trust. – Researcher (interview)

Yeah, lack of trust. Lack of trust sort of keeps the issues within themselves and they may not speak out. Which can I guess, affect their work performance, because the managers don’t realise what’s going through the minds of their staff. This could lead to further stress. I’m guessing that would be one of the reasons why they would not use the FFWPs. – Ben (interview)

Preston also spoke of the importance of management, when he replied:

Not any reasons that I can think of. I guess – but I don’t know whether there’d be any reluctance that employees might think management might think less of them. – Preston (interview)

Joelene also supported the importance of managerial support when she said:

Oh yes, because it depends on the supervisor. Sometimes you can bring your kids to work but some supervisors still don’t understand things like that. Especially if they have kids that are grown up or they have never been married, you know. So although there is a policy that you can have time off for family, but sometimes supervisors are still against it but they don’t show it to you because it’s discrimination but you know behind your back they are talking. – Joelene (interview)

Joelene has brought up an important point where she explained that sometimes there was a lack of support from managers for employees to take FFWPs, but in her experience they don’t come right out and express these feelings. She sensed that there was sometimes a more subtle lack of support by supervisors. She felt this could
be difficult for employees to deal with as they were not clearly sure if they had the support of their supervisors or not as their opinions were not clearly stated.

Ethel brought up an interesting idea that the lack of communication could result in a resistance to use FFWPs. This is what Ethel had to say:

The only thing that comes to mind is the lack of communication flow. If I’m not here I might miss out. I guess if I am not here every day, there’s I’m sensing that perhaps I might miss out on an opportunity to go to a meeting, to go to one of our client sites, which has happened. – Ethel (interview)

So communication processes are a reason that employees may feel reluctant to take days off in relation to family-friendly practices? – Researcher (interview)

Yes, I think if I worked two days from home that would isolate me. – Ethel (interview)

Alana identified the fact that there was sometimes a lack of staff to fill-in for those taking FFWPs. She said this could be a reason why an employee might feel reluctant to take advantage of FFWPs. She explained:

Well, I am just looking at the team I was in. Like yes, because even if you are in the office there are deadlines that have to be met and often there are no other staff to actually take over from your duties if you are away and things like that. – Alana (interview)

Kiersten brought up the previously identified concept of fear of negative career consequences, when she replied:

I can imagine that if you need to take time off, you’d probably feel that would jeopardise your role if you were high up in a managerial role. They would probably fear being knocked off their perch, so to speak. – Kiersten (interview)

The comments at Service indicated that managerial support (Thompson et al. 1999 and Mc Donald et al. 2005) and negative career consequences (Thompson et al. 1999) were important FFWC dimensions perceived by the participants to play a part in the availability and usage of FFWPs at Service. Also a new aspect of mistrust has been identified.

The next theme, understanding the style of HRM at Service, is now considered.
The style of human resource management at Service

The soft and hard HRM model (Legge 1995) was utilised in this thesis in order to explore Lepak and Snell’s (1999) heterogeneity argument. This assessment also continued the evaluation of the soft and hard HRM model. To better understand the relationship between the style of HRM and FFWPs, connections are made in the discussion chapter between the style of HRM at the four case study organisations and the availability and usage of FFWPs that were reported in the interviews.

When asked:

How would you describe your organisation’s HRM practices? – Researcher (interview) Kiersten shared her impressions in the following way:

Probably a bit of both soft and hard, 50/50 of both. I started off in a HR role when I was first employed here before I moved into the print room and I guess it was more the people focus side of things. I was doing recruitment and staff management issues for a particular unit. I guess depending of what unit you’re in. I guess if you’re in finance you might feel it a bit more, that they’re more dollar focused rather than people. But in the unit that I work in I feel that it’s definitely – you can definitely feel that they’re wanting the people to be happy and, at the end of the day, yes we’re here to make money. I guess we are meant to be a not-for-profit organisation. So yeah, they shouldn’t really be pushing that I guess. – Kiersten (interview)

Jose, who had previously worked in private enterprise which he described as ‘hard, kick-head all the way through’ has been working at Service for four years. He commented:

I’d say soft. Well soft working towards medium. Does that make sense? – Jose (interview)

More to the middle. Yeah? – Researcher (interview)

The culture’s very good here. I think management’s very good. But I think they need to bring in a bit more responsibility, accountability type of thing. I think that’s what they’re doing. – Jose (interview)

Bryce shared a similar view to Jose when he replied:

It’s semi. It’s semi. I would put it more as softer than rather hard. – Bryce (interview)

Preston who also had spent some time working in the private sector described the HR at Service as:
I haven’t had a lot of involvement but I wouldn’t think that they were terribly profit driven. Like I think they’re always friendly to deal with. They’re nice. My involvement from a HR perspective is probably more recruitment, and again they’ve been very good. They are happy to provide me with the assistance that I need. – Preston (interview)

Ben had an interesting response which was elaborated on when probed:

I reckon, it would be—I can’t quite comment. It seems both hard and soft. – Ben (interview)

Do you reckon they’re people focused or do you think they are all into profit and loss? – Researcher (interview)

I would say they are more people focused on the basis that they try and get the right candidate based on merit and this is based on overhearing conversations that our HR department have. They are next door to us. It’s quite a people focused impression that I have of what they do. They don’t just simply let them through—like factories, they just carefully select the candidates. – Ben (interview)

It was interesting to note that Ben’s answer focused fairly heavily on his impressions of soft or hard HRM as implemented by the HR department. He did not discuss his perceptions of soft or hard HRM in different parts of Service. It is true that HR will often design HRM programs whether they be soft or hard, but what is of interest is to find out how these programs are implemented across the organisation. Some of the other participants gave a sense of their impressions of this. It is likely that because HR is located next to where Ben sits that he was more aware of its members’ viewpoints.

Derek also spoke of a mixture between soft and hard HRM. This was reflected in the following response:

I’d say both. And that’s not necessarily a bad thing. I think that the public service itself encourages and at times, I use this word very loosely, so please don’t take it the wrong way, but forces those soft aspects because of the construct around employment with the public sector. But Service are quite unique because we’re considered to be a government department. While we’re not here to make a huge profit, far from it, we are here to be a, you know, driven by our success. That success is measured in a number of different ways. It can be how much money we are saving our client agencies by providing better corporate shared services. Ultimately, if we I guess make too much money it goes back into the client agencies to you know, to keep the services moving along. It is that really nice balance between the two, because if you don’t have that bottom line focus and it is all about being that soft HR approach sometimes you lose sight of what you’re doing is actually a
business. I guess being focused on any one aspect of anything can be a bad thing—got to have that balance is probably what I’m trying to say. – Derek (interview)

Tegan spoke about:

We are represented by intelligent, capable, knowledgeable people in our Union who have been able to get a good industrial relations environment that has made changes where necessary. So it kind of blunts off some of the hard edges of the hard HR. But then, there’s people within HR too who are more moderate, you know. – Tegan (interview)

Ethel’s view leant more towards a soft HRM approach:

It would be soft HR. I wouldn’t say that we’re in the middle. I’d say we’re more towards soft HR. – Ethel (interview)

Soft. Why do you believe that is? – Researcher (interview)

From my understanding in terms of the two definitions or the two examples you have just explained to me is that we’re not driven in terms of profit. The reason I can say that is my background is working in a profit driven environment where you don’t go home until certain tasks are completed, whereas in Service, there is support available and understanding and respect for family and work life. If things don’t get completed obviously there is a communication that kicks in to monitor why delays persist and so forth. In terms of the profit driven environment, it’s a lot harsher in that regard. – Ethel (interview)

Ethel’s comparison between Service and the ‘profit driven environment’ resonated quite closely to other participants at Service and the other three case studies. The comments indicated that there was a greater understanding and respect for the balance required between work and family at the public sector than at the private sector organisations. On this note, a difference which flowed from this idea was observed during fieldwork between the public and private sectors. The participants at the public sector organisations were all waiting prior to the commencement of their scheduled interview and were very happy to give up their work time to participate in the research. In contrast, a number of the private sector employees were late for their appointment times, so much so that a number of them were phoned to check if they were still coming to the interview. When they arrived they apologised and explained ‘they were flat out’. This feeling of working very hard, to meet key performance indicators, was commonly shared by participants at both private sector organisations.
Joelene described a similar ‘soft HRM’ perception as Ethel said:

I think this company belongs to the first one. – Joelene (interview)

Soft? – Researcher (interview)

Yeah, because I have seen some mothers bring their kids into work, especially on the school holidays. I think there is a certain room with the building that the kids are allowed to be. I just don’t know where it is, because I’m not interested anymore as I have grown up children. But I know it is somewhere in the building. – Joelene (interview).

It is clear from comments at Service that none of the participants believed their organisation was totally hard in its HRM. Instead, there was a fairly even balance between those who thought it was soft and those who believed it was a mixture. This was not surprising, as the Australian public sector is traditionally known to be a leader regarding the implementation of employment conditions in the workplace. This is an example of how the Government can make a difference in an indirect way rather than creating specific pieces of legislation. So, for example, if a Government department introduces a new family-friendly policy it often filters down to the private sector because they need to be competitive in the market. For this reason, private sector organisations such as Big Bank and Cost Centre often implement more favourable parental leave provisions that those required by legislation.

The final theme, which examined the influence of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs at Service, is now presented.

The impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Service

Job characteristics, whether the employee is core or periphery (Lepak and Snell, 1999) were considered in the theoretical model to play a significant part in the explanation of the difference between the availability and usage of FFWPs. The following questions were asked to understand how the Lepak and Snell (1999) model related to Service.

Do you think certain occupational groups are treated differently with family-friendly practices here? For example, professional compared to administration staff? – Researcher (interview)
Joelene spoke of the following:

Yeah and no. Within the organisation you can’t help it. Sometimes you can sense discrimination. – Joelene (interview)

How do you mean? – Researcher (interview)

I’ve been in the public service and I’ve been a victim of discrimination. – Joelene (interview)

In what way? – Researcher (interview)

This was way back when we just came from overseas. It doesn’t matter how long I stay in Australia, I will never have an Australian accent. – Joelene (interview)

Yeah? – Researcher (interview)

So, like language and expressing myself is sometimes difficult. I’ve never applied for a higher position because I don’t like to go to the interview. But it’s my fault. I only blame myself for that. – Joelene (interview)

Alana’s viewpoint was different from Joelene’s:

Not that I can really see. There are positions where—like I was actually in a different team last year, and there was a lot more focus put on that I had to be somewhere at a certain time. Like I was actually travelling out to assessment centres and things like that so it was difficult to be flexible. – Alana (interview)

Ethel had a similar perspective to Alana when replying:

No, I am not familiar with employees being treated differently. – Ethel (interview)

Derek also responded similarly:

No. I’m not aware of any discrimination, if that’s the right word. Everyone is treated respectfully right across the business. – Derek (interview)

Preston said:

I think employees are treated equally with family-friendly issues. But then, I deal mainly within my team. – Preston (interview)

So do you think say the CEO is treated the same as admin? – Researcher (interview)
I would think so, yes. I think in all organisations you have some people that are just harder workers and that sort of thing, but I don’t think they’re treated any differently as far as what they’re offered and the opportunities available.
– Preston (interview)

In stark contrast to the above comments Kiersten shared the following perspective:

I would think that employees are treated differently with family-friendly practices. I think maybe the higher you are up, the more maybe that you’re expected to not put it aside, but you’re at this level for a reason. So, I guess they expect more from you. I certainly saw that happen to my manager. I see him have things in his calendar that are booked like taking his son to the doctor and then there’ll be a managers meeting that he can’t get out of so he can’t take his son. So I think that level up have got it a lot harder then what we’ve got it. – Kiersten (interview)

Tegan shared a similar attitude to Kiersten:

I think people are treated differently, yes. I think the more senior people are in the organisation, the more there is an expectation that they are able to access flexible hours. The reality is, for a number of years, there have been people working excessive hours, and forfeiting their flexi hours because of perceived or real pressures to achieve outcomes.

So I mean, yeah, for example a more senior person who was returning from maternity leave and wanted to work part-time, her manager thought that it would be very difficult, if not impossible or impractical for this manager to work part-time. So the manager returning didn’t really argue or get engaged to create a separate role, like a project based role. So there’s a perception perhaps in some quarters that you can’t manager people on a part-time basis or that the role has to be five days a week to deliver. On the other hand, you could potentially share that job, if they were more creative and willing. – Tegan (interview)

Most of the above comments at Service indicated that participants felt that employees were not treated differently regarding FFWPs. However, a number of participants believed that the more senior employees were less able to access FFWPs due to issues such as pressure to perform.

To investigate Lepak and Snell’s (1999) idea that core workers would be more highly valued by organisations and would receive better benefits, participants were asked the following question:

Do you believe that employees are considered equally valuable by others in the organisation? – Researcher (interview)

Following are some of the replies to this question:
It depends where you are. Sometimes it doesn’t matter how much input you put in, sometimes the manager doesn’t like you or your team leader and you’re still no good. – Joelene (interview)

Derek responded similarly:

No I don’t think employees are equally valued. In an organisation you’ve got high performers, you’ve got your people that stand out.

Ben indicated that appearances may not always reflect reality when he replied:

They try to make it seem like employees are equally valued. That’s on the surface. I’m sure there’s favouritism amongst managers because either they get along with a person or not. If they start joking with them, people might not understand what their jokes are about because they come from different cultures and they have different interpretations of those jokes. Especially, jokes because they could be misinterpreted as a form of teasing. I think there would always be some favouritism. – Ben (interview)

Tegan replied this way:

Well, I think that’s hard to answer because management are a varied bunch of people and it’s going to be different in different places. Perhaps not; people who have a skill set that many other people may not have may be perceived as valuable as they cannot be replaced. Maybe people with unique skill sets are perceived as more valuable because they can’t easily fill the space if they’re not there. – Tegan (interview)

It is interesting to see that Tegan actually refers to skills as being ‘unique’. This is the same language that is used by Lepak and Snell in their (1999) human resource architecture model. Another notable issue from these responses is that both Joelene and Ben, who are from a non-English-speaking background, both bring up the idea of favouritism that may be exercised by managers towards certain staff. That they did this is likely to be because they have both had personal experience with this in the organisation.

A minority of participants perceived that employees were equally valued at Service. These were reflected in the following comments. Jose’s perception was:

I’d like to think that workers were equally valued here. When I started out here, I was a contractor at Bankstown. That was funny when I first walked in, because when you think data entry, you think young girl, single mother or whatever. Then you had me, a middle-aged man walking in, sitting down with all these people. Now they could have said, we can make it hard for this person, or they could have said, let’s see how they go. Which they did: they
gave me a fair go. I was pleasantly surprised. There were no dramas. – Jose (interview)

Kiersten shared the following account:

I hope people are treated equally here. I certainly don’t feel any unfair treatment. I’ve certainly been given a lot of opportunity. My bosses believed in my abilities. I haven’t had that previously. So yeah, they are the best employer that I’ve had. I think the opportunities are here if you want them and if you’re not in the mindset to just put blinkers on and ‘I’m just going to do this and that’s it’. If you’re willing to contribute a little bit extra, they’ll see that and they’ll give you more opportunity. But as far as I know, workers here are treated equally, but I – you know, you certainly hear things that people aren’t happy so it mustn’t be right, yeah. Kiersten (interview)

Kiersten discussed a number of interesting issues in her response to this question. Essentially, her perception suggested that a myriad of opportunities were available for employees at Service. Furthermore, the availability to access these opportunities, according to Kiersten, was fairly much related to the effort that a worker was prepared to put in. There was the idea that by ‘going the extra mile’ employees will be rewarded. However, Kiersten’s response was not totally positive. She acknowledged that she had heard that a number of workers were not happy. There was an implication that they were not being treated how they would like.

Comments at Service indicated that there was a mixed response concerning the question of employees being equally valued by the organisation. Only two participants stated that they were equally valued and three felt they could not generalise. Thus the comments from this research question indicated that there was mixed support for Lepak and Snell’s idea that workers will not be equally valued.

**Chapter conclusion**

Analysis from the findings from the two data sources, the interviews and the documentary analysis, indicated that we are dealing with fragmented experiences regarding FFWPs between different employees at Service. The documentary analysis revealed that a plethora of formal FFWPs was provided at Service. However, the comments indicated that there was a gap between the provision and usage of FFWPs. These findings are supported by the work and family literature (Haas et. al 2002; Eaton 2003; Bond 2004; Behson 2005; Mauno et. al 2005 and Houkamau and Boxall
Moreover, the perceived usage of FFWPs was more prevalent amongst women at Service than men. This finding was also seen at Big Bank and Cost Centre. Participants' comments supported a number of the existing FFWC dimensions, for example, the importance of managerial support and fear of negative career consequences (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). Also a new FFWC aspect of mistrust was identified which builds on the FFWC dimension of managerial support. An important insight identified from the HRM literature was the concept of soft and hard HRM (Legge 1995). The participants described Service as having a combination of these approaches. This finding supported more recent literature which suggested that either approach alone is too simplistic (Jenkins and Delbridge 2013; Legge 2005; Watson 2004 and Keenoy 1999). This also supported Lepak and Snell’s (1999) notion that HRM is likely to be heterogeneous in practice. Lepak and Snell’s (1999) idea of core and periphery workers being treated differently was not supported and the perception was mixed regarding whether employees were valued equally by the organisation.

The next and final findings chapter reports on the second public sector organisation, Community.
CHAPTER 8: Community

I originally thought Community was soft, because we always get these emails here that we’re family-oriented, and that we try to strike this fantastic balance between family and work. But recently they’ve changed that to hard. For example when I asked if I could transfer closer to home I was just basically told that we don’t have a transfer policy. – Bridie (interview)

Introducing the organisation

This chapter presents the findings on Community, the last of the four case study organisations. In addition to discussing the findings relating to Community there is a brief account, provided in the conclusion of this chapter, of how the findings of all four case studies relate to the key features of the developed theoretical model. The purpose of this explanation is to begin to consider the bigger picture of the significance of the findings beyond each case study. This analysis is then explored in depth in the following two chapters.

Community reported on its website that it provides safe and affordable social and human services for people in the community who are in need. The aim is that these people can live with dignity, find support if needed and achieve some independence. Community’s reported values are to make improvements; to be committed to achieving this with justice and integrity; to be dedicated to helping people in need; to work collaboratively; to be committed to treating everyone with respect; and to work within the community (Community 2011a). Community delivers a wide range of services to customers. Some of these services are provided 24 hours a day, every day of the year. These hours are relevant for the FFWC analysis and are discussed later in this chapter. The following table, which provides information of hours of operation, was compiled from Community’s website.
Table 8: Hours of operation at Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Hours of operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback: suggestions, compliments and complaints</td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Service</td>
<td>24 hours/7days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Assistance</td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Benefits</td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8.00am – 6.00pm Saturday 10.00am – 3.00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports of fraud or corruption</td>
<td>Monday to Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The 2010 annual report of Community reported minimally regarding HRM issues and focused on its core business of providing services to the public. One paragraph pertained to work and family and is paraphrased below:

The flexible work staff project group was formed to consult with staff on possible flexible options to help them balance their responsibilities outside of work. As a result of this consultation process a number of strategies were implemented including a system of purchased leave (Community 2010: 172).

All employees at Community are employed under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 and the vast majority of staff are award based. All Community employees except the Senior Executives are covered under the Crown Employees (Public Services Conditions of Employment) Award 2009. The chief executive and senior executives are engaged on a 3-to-5-year contract of employment. Their conditions of employment are specified in their employment contract and are somewhat similar to those for award based staff classifications. The
Salaries for senior executives are set by the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Tribunal. There is no enterprise agreement for staff at Community. This reflects the relatively centralised nature of the public sector with similar conditions across a number of agencies. The relevant sections of the *Crown Employees (Public Services Conditions of Employment) Award 2009* were provided in Table 5 in the preceding chapter.

Compared to the two private sector case studies, the award for public sector employees has much more extensive provisions around work and family. Further to these award provisions, Community also has a group of relevant policies regarding work and family balance. The names of each of the policies are very similar to those available at Service but Community has contextualised the content within each of the policies to suit its own organisation. The following is a paraphrased description based on Community’s current policy.

The policy states that flexible work practices not only assist Community in responding to the needs of clients but will also benefit employees by encouraging them to fully participate in the workplace. The changing nature of work and personal life has increased the need for effective policies that will assist employees to combine paid employment with other responsibilities such as family obligations. It was stated in the policy that Community is committed to the development of management practices that facilitate flexibility and assist employees to balance their work and family responsibilities.

It is also stated in the policy that flexible work arrangements are available to permanent employees. Temporary employees are able to seek family and community service leave, personal carer’s leave, varying hours of work and, if appropriate, working from home. It is claimed that Community understands that by being family-friendly it is better able to meet its objectives, including improved customer service. Participation in flexible work arrangements is by agreement, and must be documented in writing, signed by the employee and the approved delegated Community officer. Changes in working arrangements to increase flexibility are made by agreement between the employee and Community, and should be of mutual benefit to both parties, embodying fair and equitable practices. Flexible working
arrangements should be made available to all staff in all locations. The special cultural needs of staff will be taken into consideration when determining requests.

The current range of family-friendly provisions reported in Community’s policy documents include adoption leave, parental leave, and part-time work including job-sharing, family and community service leave, personal carer’s leave and leave without pay. However, these provisions were not generally designed to cover many situations which commonly arise, such as school vacation periods. In some policies Community may negotiate with employees to relinquish their substantive position at the beginning or after a twelve-month period has elapsed (for example job-share). The documentary analysis of Community’s FFWPs revealed a range of flexible options available to staff as summarised below. Information provided here is based on what was claimed in their policy documents. As in the case of the previous public sector organisation, Service, it is evident that Community also provides an extensive array of policies to meet the needs of its employees. Appendix 11 provides a fuller description of these policies.
Box 4. Flexible work practice options at Community

*Part-Time Work:* Part-time work is defined by Community as less than 35 hours per week. This could be a permanent or temporary arrangement with paid or unpaid leave for the balance of full-time hours for the classification. The policy stated that part-time work provides advantages to the organisation as well as to the employee. It allows Community to provide service delivery to its customers at the same time as offering greater flexibility for employees in meeting their family responsibilities.

*Job-Sharing:* Job-sharing is a voluntary arrangement whereby one job is shared between part-time employees. Job sharing allows managers to implement a greater variety of employment options and provides flexibility for employees to choose preferred work patterns.

*Career Break Scheme:* Employees can take up to three years’ leave without pay to undertake full-time study, child care or dependent care and then return to a job at the same level but not necessarily to the same location. Such leave may be in addition to or combined with maternity and parental leave.

*Part Year Employment:* Employees, by agreement with Community, may take a number of week’s unpaid leave in addition to their annual entitlement to recreation leave. Salary is paid for weeks worked and for recreation leave accrued and the remaining weeks are unpaid.

*Variable Year Employment:* By agreement with Community, employees may elect to take a year of unpaid leave after working for a pre-arranged period (minimum one year). Salary is paid for the year(s) worked and recreation leave accrued. The remaining year is unpaid.

*Working from Home:* Working from home is a special arrangement whereby an employee, with the approval of Community, carries out specified duties at their place of residence. The duration of such an arrangement is not to exceed two consecutive days and is subject to mutual agreement between the employee and Community in accordance to the specific policy.

*Varying Flexible Hours:* The pattern of hours worked may be re-arranged by agreement between the employee and Community (but within the prescribed limits under the proposed enterprise instrument i.e. 7am – 7 pm) in order to accommodate family and community responsibilities.

*Short term absences for family and community service responsibilities:* Flexible arrangements of working hours and a range of leave provisions, either separately or in combination may be used to meet family and community responsibilities.

A recently introduced FFWP introduced at Community is the purchased leave policy which is paraphrased below:

The purchased leave scheme allows employees to purchase additional leave. Employees can apply for additional leave entitlements of either ten days or twenty days or the equivalent pro rata in a twelve month period via a purchased leave agreement. Purchased leave must be taken in minimum blocks of five days (New South Wales Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet 2009).

Table 9 overleaf classifies the FFWPs available to Community according to Kirchmeyer’s (1995) typology.
Table 9: Typology of FWPs at Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology according to Kirchmeyer</th>
<th>FFWP available at Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible working conditions</td>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible working hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible working practices</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Right to request flexible working arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working from home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and dependent care benefits</td>
<td>Part-year employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variable-year employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information services</td>
<td>Flexible work staff project group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care and leave options</td>
<td>Family and community service leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purchased leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sick leave to care for a family member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part time leave without pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career break scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational cultural issues</td>
<td>Community’s reported values are to make improvements; to be committed to achieving this with justice and integrity; to be dedicated to helping people in need; to work collaboratively; to be committed to treating everyone with respect; and to work within the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants from Community are now introduced.

**Introducing the participants**

Before the discussion turns to participants’ experiences, it is important to consider their individual work and family situations. This section provides an overview of the key demographics of this group of participants including their age and job title. Participant names are pseudonyms. Ten employees were interviewed at Community. In selecting the sample of respondents, a range of positions within Community were chosen that meet the definitions of core and periphery workers (Lepak and Snell, 1999). As well, a number of different family types have been considered. Five respondents were male and five were female, of whom all but one was partnered and nine had children. Five of the participants had tertiary qualifications and they were working in a variety of job titles. These were from different levels within the organisation, ranging from the more junior role of Project Officer: Electronic Records, to middle management roles such as Occupational Health and Safety consultant and also senior management roles such as Practice Manager. Selecting a range of individuals in diverse jobs provided a richness of data as well as the opportunity to explore how jobs within organisations are valued by the organisation in line with Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery idea. An overview of the participants’ personal details from Community is provided in the Table 6 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Number of days worked per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts. Post Graduate Certificate in Social Policy</td>
<td>Manager – Fraud Unit Core</td>
<td>40-45 hours per week 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>School Certificate</td>
<td>Project Officer – Electronic Records Periphery</td>
<td>35 hours – 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts/Law Diploma in Quality Auditing</td>
<td>Practice Manager Core</td>
<td>28 hours – 4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Program Co-ordinator Core</td>
<td>21 hours – 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynette</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Bachelor of Economics with Honours</td>
<td>Change Manager Core</td>
<td>40 hours – 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>School Certificate</td>
<td>Finance Officer-Treasury Periphery</td>
<td>44 hours – 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>School Certificate Qualified carpenter and builder</td>
<td>Team Leader Periphery</td>
<td>40 hours – 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Masters in Occupational Health and Safety</td>
<td>OHS consultant Periphery</td>
<td>55-60 hours – 5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnold</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
<td>Asset Operations Manager Core</td>
<td>40 hours – 5 days (office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Masters in Public Administration-currently studying</td>
<td>Operations Manager Core</td>
<td>21 hours – 3 days (2 days office &amp; 1 day home)</td>
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</table>
The next key feature from the theoretical model, exploring the difference between the availability and the usage of FFWPs, will now be examined.

**The availability and the usage of family-friendly work practices at Community**

This feature explored the possible reasons for the gap that often exists between the availability and the usage of FFWPs. This examination provided insight into the difference between the rhetoric and reality of FFWPs at Community. The interviews at Community were conducted during May 2010 soon after the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) became effective in January, 2010. It is important to be mindful of the impact that this legislation would have had on employees’ increased right to request flexibility at their workplaces.

To gain insight into this feature, the following question was asked:

To what extent do you think organisational policies regarding family-friendly work practices are implemented? – Researcher *(interview)*

Iris replied:

Yeah, they are well accessed. You just put a leave request through our ESS system. All different types of leave codes come up and you can always ask about them. – Iris *(interview)*

Similarly, George said:

I think they are quite widely used. I know just in our business unit, and we’ve got 10 people, about half of us are doing part-time work at the moment. I don’t know how widely that’s replicated across the organisation. – George *(interview)*

Lynette replied:

Certainly in my division, in my experience, they are well known and being used widely. – Lynette *(interview)*

Erin asked:

How do you mean, like refer to them or? – Erin *(interview)*

Are they used? Like if you’ve got job share available, is it widely used? – Researcher *(interview)*
Yeah, I think they’re being used, but I just don’t know if they are necessarily being encouraged to use them. With the people that could work half a day or whatever whether they’re really exploring the potential of that or whether they just go ‘oh that all sounds just too hard for a management point of view.’
– Erin (interview)

Erin’s comments are interesting in that she acknowledged that the FFWPs are in place but that, due to the fact that they are not being encouraged by management, fewer staff utilise them. This falls in line with Thompson et al.’s (1999) findings that managerial support is an important FFWC dimension that often affects employees’ willingness to utilise FFWPs. Though FFWC was not specifically mentioned in this question, it is significant to note that managerial support was raised by Erin. This solidifies the importance of FFWC as an important influence in how FFWPs are actually implemented in the organisational setting. An organisation may have an impressive range of FFWPs available although this does not guarantee successful utilisation due to the intervention of FFWC. This idea is explored further in the next section.

Owen raised the same issue regarding lack of promotion of FFWPs when he says:

I don’t think the policies are widely used. I don’t think they’re basically promoted enough. They are on the intranet for sure, but I don’t think … I think a lot of times people are only using these policies by referral in their own workplace. The supervisor won’t actually promote it because it’s not in their vested interests. – Owen (interview)

Darcy shared the following perception:

It’s an ad-hoc thing. Family-friendly policies are just like OHS. – Darcy (interview)

In what way? – Researcher (interview)

We have to do ’em. – Darcy (interview)

Mandatory? – Researcher (interview)

We don’t like ’em … – Darcy (interview)

You don’t want to implement them? Like training and development? – Researcher (interview)

Correct, yes. True. We don’t like doing them, but we have to do them. We’ll just do them as little as possible. – Darcy (interview)
Is that to look good? – Researcher (interview)

Correct. That’s exactly. … – Darcy (interview)

Is that like when you have a motherhood statement? – Researcher (interview)

Yes. And OHS is a motherhood statement. We’ve got an OHS policy. ‘We will do this’. – Darcy (interview)

Yeah. – Researcher (interview)

But nothing is that simple. – Darcy (interview)

The rhetoric versus the reality? – Researcher (interview)

Correct. – Darcy (interview)

In the same view, Bridie said:

I don’t see a lot of part-time people here. I know only a limited amount of people who work in any part-time capacity. Really, I can only think of myself and one other person. And even then, I think that’s only because that person lives a long way from the office. So I think that’s the only reason. – Bridie (interview)

Stella identified problems between the existence and usage of policies when she explained:

The policy can be there and it can look fantastic, but it may not be suitable to the sort of work that you are doing on a daily basis. But I do think that a lot of people use the practices. I hear quite often people who say, you know, that they work part-time on a shared-work agreement. In our branch, we have quite a number of people who do that. But if you were working on a transaction-based matter, where you would receive calls all the time or clients coming up to see you, the flexibility doesn’t really work. So, if you’re working on a project where you don’t need continuous feedback and discussion and workshops and meetings, then you could do that. You know, if you’re trying to write a report or numerous things like that, that’s fine for flexibility. But if you have a consistent workload, if you have consistent instructions being given to you and people coming to see you all the time, then you need to be in the office. – Stella (interview)

As previously mentioned by participants in the other case study organisations and also as previously identified in the work and family literature (Budd and Mumford 2006:38; Burgess et al., 2007a:426 and Burgess et al. 2007b:109), the nature of the work, that is the nature of the job, can affect how easy it is for staff to actually use
the FFWPs. The findings at Community indicated that it was more difficult to build flexibility into those roles with a customer service element, where staff are required to be available to the public. As was shown in Table 8, this is a significant factor at Community as many of its services are provided 24/7.

Brandon indicated that the usage was not as widespread as it should be when he said:

Not everyone uses the policies as they should. Sometimes they’re too busy to think, to try and look … yeah sometimes they’re just too busy to worry about their children. They’ll do their job and they won’t always know what’s available to them. So as a manager sometimes you have to tell them. ‘You know, you’ve got access to this’. So, they’re ignorant about some of the policies sometimes. It’s not because they haven’t been told about it. It’s just that they forget. And then you’ve got those who just take it to the extreme and take every little thing available to them. And they really test you! – Brandon (interview)

Brandon’s account indicated that the usage of FFWPs at Community was not evenly spread amongst workers. A range of experiences is demonstrated from those who are too busy to think about the policies available to those who use every single policy available to them.

Arnold only spoke of his own usage when he replied:

I think … well, from my experience I certainly use the flexible work practices. – Arnold (interview)

Overall, the usage of FFWPs is not consistent across the whole organisation with some staff using more of the practices than others. However, the majority of responses indicated that the policies are not as widely used as they could be. The reasons behind this included the level of managerial support given to employees to use these FFWPs. These factors are explored in the next section of this chapter.

The second key theme from the theoretical model, exploring the nature of FFWC and its impact on the availability and usage of FFWPs, is now discussed.

**The nature and impact of family-friendly culture on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices at Community**

To begin to gain an understanding of experiences of working at Community, the following question was asked:
What is it like to work here in terms of the culture of the organisation? – Researcher (interview)

Darcy replied:

There are two types of cultures. I look at the safety culture and that’s all part of my job. Then there’s the people culture, I suppose, as such. Um … to be honest, I think this is a good organisation to work for. The people generally, uh, consider this organisation a good place to work for. But that’s with a proviso, though, because the organisation itself is now going through a great deal of change. – Darcy (interview)

In what way? – Researcher (interview)

Due to restructures, um, the government has put through a number of strategies that require super departments to be formed. They have now been formed. And of course, now they’re looking at removing some of the functions of the department and replacing it with the services of another service provider who will provide services for a number of agencies, rather than each agencies individually looking after their own. Um, Community itself has used that service provider. – Darcy (interview)

Brandon’s response reflected a level of dissatisfaction when he said:

I like the work that we do, but I feel that they don’t understand what is required to work with the people at the coal-face. – Brandon (interview)

In a similar vein, Owen commented that:

It’s very tetchy in lots of places I find. – Owen (interview)

In what way? – Researcher (interview)

You know, it’s like that at all places. Everybody has favourites, and what might be the rules for one person aren’t necessarily the rules for another person. There are a lot of personalities involved. They treat people differently. I’ve found out that it can be race-related. So it’s just my own observation. I think that people from an ethnic background can be disadvantaged. I see it quite a lot. Lots of times, the troops, the staff, are left to run their own race. Basically, the management wants you to make recommendations to them rather than them liaising with you as to what they want you to do. – Owen (interview)

Erin responded as follows:

I joined Community just over two years ago now, so previous to that I worked in the private sector. – Erin (interview)

What brought you to the public sector? – Researcher (interview)
I came to the public sector so I could be in a position where I would be sort of helping people and dealing with people I guess.

Stella spoke of flexibility when she said:

It is a very flexible environment. That’s why I work here and why I travel so far every day. I started working two days a week in the office and I was working from home two days. Now I am working four days in the office with the option of taking flexi-time if I need it. There’s always the priority that if there’s anything, any reason of my own, like I need to take time for the family if they’re ill, or I need to care for someone, that is a priority. – Stella (interview)

Iris was very enthusiastic when she stated:

It’s great working here. I love it. It’s an organisation with a clear purpose and a role. I like the values of the organisation and I think they’re clearly articulated and I think they’re lived by senior managers. – Iris (interview)

What are the values? – Researcher (interview)

Care and consideration for our clients. Making a difference in people’s lives. Fairness and equity because we have a very strictly rationed benefit that we can provide to individuals, so there’s a real issue around equity and ensuring that those restricted resources are allocated properly. I think there is a value for the people, the staff of the organisation and there is a recognition that a lot of our people, not me particularly, but or front line staff do a really tough job and I think there’s a recognition that they do that under quite difficult circumstances. – Iris (interview)

Probing further on the organisation, Iris was asked:

Generally, what are the organisation’s attitudes to the relationship between work and family? – Researcher (interview)

Iris replied:

I do have some flexibility but I am restricted by commitments to meet people or interview clients or whatever. Deadlines and all that kind of stuff. But yes, where possible I have some control over those flexible hours, yes. – Iris (interview)

Lynette also spoke of another aspect concerning the organisations’ attitudes to work and family balance when she said:

If there’s a school accident or parents need to go home in the middle of the day, you do that, but there needs to be communication with their line manager and it’s not a matter of a ‘free-for-all up-and-run’ approach. – Lynette (interview)
George further explained another organisational norm in his following comment:

I can arrive and depart to a degree when I feel like it, but I think it comes back to the give and take in that – particularly in my situation when I’m in 2 days a week. I feel that the days that I’m in I need to be here for enough time so that I can catch up with the people I need to catch up with. Particularly my manager, yes. When I’m here, I tend to be here for longer days. – George (interview)

Erin indicated a fairly supportive attitude to the relationship between work and family when she responded as follows:

My supervisor understands my family demands. I don’t however arrive whenever I want. I do, however, have a say about where I do my work, so long as I am working with the rest of the team. Knowing that well today I’m going to start here – especially working on a project it tends to be a bit less flexible—because often we are working in all different places as well. – Erin (interview)

Owen shared a similar experience when he described that:

Yes, I do have a say about how I manage my time at work. Also, on agreement with my supervisor I am able to arrive and depart from work when I need to. – Owen (interview)

Darcy also described a flexible attitude by the organisation to work and family, as follows:

I think my supervisor understands my situation. Um, and I’ll explain to you where that’s coming from. Um, I can depart when I want to. Also I am my own manager and I don’t have any staff, so I am autonomous. I think my manager understands me because I come from the private sector. I don’t come from the government sector. – Darcy (interview)

Arnold replied:

Um, that’s a little tricky for me to answer because I’m under a new supervisor. – Arnold (interview)

How about your previous supervisor? – Researcher (interview)

With my previous supervisor I had a great say about how I managed my time at work. I could arrive and depart when I wanted. – Arnold (interview)

Bridie’s response also suggested a sense of flexibility when she replied:

I think I’ve been lucky in terms of my boss has the understanding that all I needed was a computer and a phone on the odd occasion when I needed to
work from home, so that’s really helped out. But then again, how it affects the rest of the team, I’m not sure yet. – Bridie (interview)

Though Bridie’s response suggested that her boss is quite flexible, she also spoke about the effects that her flexibility may have had on the rest of the team. This supported the notion of co-worker support (McDonald et al. 2005) where, in its absence, flexible arrangements may become difficult to sustain as the issue of peer pressure plays a part. The importance of peer pressure is brought up by other participants at Community later in this chapter. As acknowledged previously, the existing co-worker support dimension (McDonald et al. 2005) is further developed by Bradley et al. (2010:19) who identify a new dimension of co-worker consequences relating to how workloads are shared to compensate for employees using work-life policies. This new dimension was not known at the time of the current empirical research. Bradley et al. (2010:22) also suggest that co-worker support requires further investigation, and this is addressed in this thesis.

Overall, the comments at Community revealed that participants perceived that the organisational culture at Community supported a healthy and flexible approach to work and family matters.

To discover specifically about FFWPs take-up at Community the following question was asked:

Are there any reasons that an employee might feel reluctant to take advantage of the family-friendly work practices, or are they encouraged to take advantage of these programs? – Researcher (interview)

The main reason why an employee would feel reluctant would be the work; the work overload. – Darcy (interview)

Does that mean they’ve got too much work to do? – Researcher (interview)

Yes, because at the moment Community are not employing support staff. When people leave they are not being replaced. The work still has to be done. So by giving those people more work, there’s less opportunity for those people to have a day off. – Darcy (interview)

So would you describe that as a culture of ‘work overload’? – Researcher (interview)

Yes. Definitely ‘work overload’. There’s no doubt about it. And it is a culture and it is deliberate. – Darcy (interview)
By whom? – Researcher (interview)

By the government. – Darcy (interview)

So it’s not your CEO or manager. It’s external? – Researcher (interview)

It’s external. It’s external pressure. You’ll find that with most public sectors. – Darcy (interview)

Are there any other reasons you can think why people won’t use these policies? – Researcher (interview)

I think it’s the old teamwork mentality. It’s that if I’m off work for any reason, that the work has to be done, and someone else has to do it. – Darcy (interview)

So it’s a culture of ‘not letting the team down’? – Researcher (interview)

Don’t get me wrong. Community is not the only government department who do this. It’s that they use that culture; they use teamwork to get advantage. It’s a control mechanism. It’s just rotten. It’s totally rotten. And it is here. And people don’t want to admit it’s here, but you can see it. – Darcy (interview)

Darcy is quite distressed by what he is discussing in terms of reasons why staff feel reluctant to use FFWPs. He has identified a dimension of FFWC of ‘work overload’ caused by people not being replaced. He also spoke about the peer pressure of ‘teamwork’ and how it can control individuals. This can be described as a new aspect to the existing co-worker support FFWC dimension.

George said:

This probably stems from the attitudes of managers and that sort of thing, but there are unrealistic demands. I mean, one of the things that can happen is that you’ll—say you’re working three days and you keep getting requests to attend meetings on the day’s you’re not at work. I think that’s very difficult. I think you’ve got to be able to establish a pattern of when you’re working and when you’re not. – George (interview)

Set boundaries? – Researcher (interview)

Yeah, set boundaries. That’s right. – George (interview)

So you could say an impediment to staff taking family leave could be a culture of … uh, non-boundaries? What’s that word for when you don’t have boundaries? – Researcher (interview)
Yeah, I know what you’re saying. It’s really open. – George (interview)

Boundary-less-ness … I’ll have to look up the word for that. Non-boundaries? – Researcher (interview)

Yeah. We’ve got the concept. (laughter) – George (interview)

George’s comments indicated the existence of a FFWC aspect of ‘no boundaries’ in certain parts of Community which contributed to staff feeling reluctant to use FFWPs. The FFWC aspect of ‘no boundaries’ is related to the existing FFWC dimension of organisational time demands (Thompson et al. 1999).

Arnold shared his experience as follows:

There are no reasons why staff would not use family-friendly practices within my group because they’ve seen that I’ve allowed that. Some of them have even approached me and said I’m doing a half-day flexi day today. – Arnold (interview)

Are you aware of anyone in your department that may feel a bit nervous about using the policies? – Researcher (interview)

Um … It was interesting. I was in a committee where there were people from elsewhere in the organisation – Newcastle and places like that – they were saying that ‘I’ve tried to get working from home and flexible work practices happening, but my boss won’t let me have them and would not consider them.’ – Arnold (interview)

Did they say why? – Researcher (interview)

They felt they were being discriminated against and they’ve taken it further up through HR. – Arnold (interview)

What happened when they took it up with HR? – Researcher (interview)

Well, they didn’t support her. And that’s why she was quite hurt. – Arnold (interview)

Do you think it is policy to provide flexible work practices? – Researcher (interview)

That’s what I’m saying. In a big way, this work from home thing is not really a formal policy. That’s what they’re trying to develop into a policy. It’s an informal policy at the moment, and your manager says it’s okay, but there’s no formal … yeah. But she was probably in a position – maybe, I don’t know the full details – but they couldn’t afford to have her work from home. – Arnold (interview)

What was her role? – Researcher (interview)
She was a Client Services Officer. So that was the front line of people dealing with the calls coming in and the clients coming to see her. In client services, if someone’s not there in the office, that means someone else has got to cover for them. And then there are all those issues and then if you get three or four of them asking for the same thing it can get out of control. – Arnold (interview)

Arnold has highlighted that the work from home policy is currently informal at Community and it is up to the manager to decide if staff can take advantage of it or not. We see from the story Arnold has shared that in some instances this informality and managerial discretion has lead to discrimination. A similar sense of discrimination was noted by Joelen and Ben at the other public sector organisation, Service.

Owen’s response highlighted further issues that have arisen even if policies are formalised:

There are some procedural things that would cause problems in that you need people to sign things. I’m sure in some areas there would be some reluctance. But for me, I’m okay at the moment, given the job that I’m in. But I can see in other areas there most probably would be pretty big concerns about people wanting to work from home. I know there was one senior person who wanted to leave at 3 o’clock every day to pick up her children. The manager made her stay to 3.30 every day. So my situation is not reflective of a lot of actual supervisors that are here. – Owen (interview)

Owen’s comment indicated that he has quite a good arrangement regarding his work and family issues compared to others in the organisation. He doesn’t really explain why this is so but he goes on to say:

Some supervisors don’t promote the policies. So I suppose it could be called ‘secrecy’ or maybe just ‘nondisclosure’. (laughter) – Owen (interview)

A culture of ‘nondisclosure’: I’m just writing that down. Didn’t you say that there are different policies for different people? So it’s a culture of … what would you call that? – Researcher (interview)

I just think it’s sort of like … um, I’m just thinking, like some of the Asian people they’re very hard on their own people. I’ve found that some of the supervisors they are very, very hard on them. And in lots of ways, the actual person that they are being hard on is very subservient. – Owen (interview)

What would you call that? – Researcher (interview)

I would call it a ‘cultural/ethnic subservience’. – Owen (interview)
From what Owen described, there are two new FFWC aspects being identified at Community. These are the FFWC aspect of ‘non-disclosure’ and the FFWC aspect of ‘cultural/ethnic subservience’. These new FFWC aspects, as well the FFWC aspects and the FFWC dimensions identified at the other three case study organisations, will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Erin spoke about some difficulties she experienced in taking some of the leave:

As I said with the FACS leave, I think it’s because sometimes it just gets too hard. I don’t know that the policies are really totally clear, so, but you know … – Erin (interview)

What do you mean by unclear policies? – Researcher (interview)

You sort of look at your situation and it is not always easy to work out if it falls into the right category. So then you apply for the leave and they say ‘no you can’t have the leave because of this or that’. Like one day I applied for FACS leave because I had a meeting at the school that the principal requested. So I applied for FACS leave and they said you can’t apply for FACS leave ahead of time, so it’s almost like unless this is an emergency you can’t use it. – Erin (interview)

So what is FACS leave used for then? – Researcher (interview)

I don’t feel that is clear. So since then I don’t know if I’m going to bother with it because if they are going to make it a hassle. You know I think it just needs to be pretty clear and I don’t think most of the bosses understand it either. – Erin (interview)

Was there anything else? – Researcher (interview)

I found previously when I tried to use FACS leave there was a particular person in admin that I went to and she didn’t have children so she seemed pretty negative about it. She was a bit indignant that it was something that I shouldn’t access. Yeah it was kind of a bit of an attitude like ‘you people and your bloody kids’. – Erin (interview)

From what Erin has described it is apparent that her experiences in applying for FACS leave have been difficult and fraught with negative attitudes from others in the organisation, especially those without children. On top of this, it seems that many of the managers do not fully understand the purposes and criteria involved in applying for FACS leave. This indicated that there is a need for awareness training within the organisation so that the roles, rights and responsibilities relating to FFWPs are fully understood by managers and their staff.
Similar issues were raised by Iris when she explained:

I think there are some managers or supervisors in the organisation who are not supportive of family-friendly policies and they think that parents get an unfair advantage. I’ve heard some comment from people such as ‘well I’m a sports person and I don’t get time to do this or that. My extracurricular activities are frowned upon, but if you’ve got children you can get away with anything’. So I think the attitude of an individual manager and supervisor makes a big difference. I also think the nature of the work makes a difference. I think some people are in areas where it’s harder to have more flexibility. – Iris (interview)

What do you mean by the nature of the work? – Researcher (interview)

Well, as I’ve mentioned before, if you’re at the front counter then you have to deliver between fixed hours certain services. A lot of our staff move between offices particularly in the country areas, so that entails a lot of travel. I just think that anyone who is a single parent raising children on their own deserves a medal full stop. People’s circumstances can make things difficult. In the organisation what else makes it difficult to access these policies? I think it’s attitudinal things and I think the attitude is coming from the top that it is Okay to consider your family and you don’t have to feel guilty about it. For me, that was one of the really big things because coming from private enterprise to the public sector, it was that I didn’t have to feel guilty anymore about using the policies, or explaining to my peers or managers. I think the family-friendly policies in this Department are lived out and there’s a strong commitment to them. – Iris (interview)

Iris’ perceptions are in line with the two family-friendly work studies that informed this thesis when she mentioned the importance of managerial support (Thompson et al 1999) and co-worker support or lack thereof (McDonald et al 2005). Iris also discussed the difference that the ‘nature of the job’ can make regarding employees ability to access flexibility. This was mentioned by previous participants at the other organisations, in that some jobs require a lot of face to face contact with the public. This promotes the importance of being present at work. Iris also mentioned the differences she has experienced between previous private sector jobs with her current public sector role. Like most other participants at the other organisations, Iris indicated that the public sector is more favourable in terms of the availability of FFWPs. However, as is explored in the next two chapters, this does not necessarily mean that these practices will be more likely to be used in the private sector.

Brandon raised an issue relating to peer pressure in the following comment:
I don’t know if there would be any reasons for an employee being reluctant to use any of the family-friendly policies here. You know, I’ve heard of instances where people don’t take things because their peers may not agree to it. You know how there are people who have families and those that are single. These differences create pressure between each group. Because, um … at Christmas time, you know, when you’re taking leave, the staff who have kids always want to take their holidays during the school holidays. This creates conflict with the other staff who want to take their holidays at the same time. They say ‘you can’t discriminate on me if I want to take it at that time’. Then you have the ones with families who think they have a right to leave at that time because of school holidays and they say ‘Well, I want to take the leave at that time!’ So it’s a balancing act you know? Sometimes you’ve just got to have a group discussion about leave. And really, you’ve got to leave it up to the team to work it out. – Brandon (interview)

Are there any other reasons that you can think of, for yourself or for others that you have worked with for people feeling reluctant to use family-friendly policies? – Researcher (interview)

Well, the working from home policy … sometimes people will be negative about that. – Brandon (interview)

Why? Why is that? – Researcher (interview)

Well, I think sometimes, you feel you’re sort of, not doing your job. How can you be monitored? Well, there’s no problem with being monitored, because anyone can run a report to see if you’ve logged on, or they can see how much work you’ve cleared by email and in TRIM and things like that. So there’s no issue there, but it’s not, you know – I haven’t really had a negative experience but I can see that it could be that way. – Brandon (interview)

Lynette talked about the impact on the team, when saying:

Sometimes, staff won’t use the policies because they do not want to let the team down, or that sort of thing. So that probably creeps in. But we’ve had job-sharing as an option and that’s pretty good. Job-sharing is okay when you can chop and chunk the work that is to be done. So I think on a team level our section has been successful with job-sharing. – Lynette (interview)

Lynette’s reply backed up the notion of the importance of co-worker support (McDonald et al. 2005).

George explained his perceptions in the following comment:

I can arrive and depart to a degree when I feel like it, but I think it comes back to the give and take in that – particularly in my situation when I’m in two days a week. I feel that the days that I’m in I need to be here for enough time so that I can catch up with the people I need to catch up with.
Particularly my manager, yes. When I’m here, I tend to be here for longer days. – George (interview)

It is evident from the above comments that the FFWC dimensions of managerial support (Thompson et al. 1999 and McDonald et al. 2005) and co-worker support (McDonald et al. 2005) are confirmed. Furthermore, four new FFWC aspects have been uncovered: a FFWC aspect of ‘non-disclosure’, ‘cultural/ethnic racism’, ‘no boundaries’, and ‘peer pressure from teamwork’. These build on existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). Further to this there is a new FFWC dimension of ‘work overload’.

The next key feature from the theoretical model, examining the style of HRM utilising the soft and hard HRM models (Legge 1995) in place at Community, will now be explored.

**The style of human resource management at Community**

An important part of the thesis related to the distinction between soft and hard HRM (Legge 1995) and this section examines if Community is perceived by participants to use these HRM approaches separately or in combination with each other.

To find out more about this relationship this question was asked:

> How would you describe your organisation’s HR practices? Would you describe them as soft or hard? – Researcher (interview). An explanation of both these HR terms was provided to all participants.

Darcy shared his impressions as follows:

> It is soft and hard. I think that it’s a NSW government initiative. It’s based on reducing the amount of funds coming from the NSW government. So it’s forced its agencies to look at ways of coming up with money so they can continue doing what they’re doing. – Darcy (interview)

Brandon shared a similar viewpoint as Darcy when he said:

> Well, they're in between. Because they do recognise that they have to cater for a work-life balance for the employees and that a lot of the people can work from home for different things. But I find that if you’re a client service based employee, you’re less important than if you were a head office type employee. And with head office, you’re working on programs and you have
deadlines and things like that, but you’re not bothered on a day-to-day basis by staff asking you questions or clients ringing you up. – Brandon (interview)

Owen had a similar impression when replying:

I think it’s a combination. – Owen (interview)

Why is that? What makes you say that? – Researcher (interview)

I don’t know. They seem to have a bit of a moveable feast, really. They seem to create their own plans for staff, and the outcomes they want for every plan. But they seem to sort of change it midstream and then the priorities change, and it just keeps on changing all the time. There’s no sort of … (pause). There doesn’t seem to be any sort of staffing issues. I don’t know if it’s the same with everyone, but it just seems to be in turmoil all the time. And once you finish, say, a review of staffing, they could have another review mid-term through their current review! – Owen (interview)

What things would they be reviewing? – Researcher (interview)

Oh, just the actual workload that is required. I mean, the point in case is we’re all up in the air now because of the new super-departments. I don’t know if you’ve heard of that, but they’re amalgamating a number of agencies. They’re talking about 500 job losses, because they’re hoping to bring it all under one banner. That’s disruptive to people and they don’t know whether they’re going to keep their jobs. – Owen (interview)

Owen’s response revealed the potential for downsizing of Community and merging that department with other NSW public sector organisations. He indicated that people feel unsettled and morale is not good. This is an important organisational contextual factor to be considered when analysing Community. Darcy also spoke of this downsizing.

Erin shared her perceptions about Community’s HR as follows:

My personal views about HR is that we started with this HR model that we really like you know, like the concept of developing people but in reality I don’t know whether it sort of has followed across to the other side because I think then the HR department gets busy with you know the payroll stuff and the day to day stuff. – Erin (interview)

Erin’s comments indicated that Community may be well-intentioned to implement soft HRM but often that gets lost in the day to day operational aspects of HRM. This would then reduce the opportunities for developing people and other soft HRM interventions.
Bridie’s comments are in line with Erin’s when stating:

I originally thought Community was soft, because we always get these emails here that we’re family-orientated, and that we try to strike this fantastic balance between family and work. But recently they’ve changed that to hard. For example when I asked if I could transfer closer to home I was just basically told that we don’t have a transfer policy. They’re not willing to help. However, they said if I was in a dire situation, and they used the example of if you were in domestic violence, we would move you, because we’ve had a case like that before. – Bridie (interview)

In direct contrast to this attitude, Iris suggested that:

Definitely a soft organisation – Iris (interview)

And do you know why that would be? – Researcher (interview)

I think a lot of it is historical. We’ve come from a social services and human services background. Even though it might sound trite we are really here to help people, it’s what we’re here to do. – Iris (interview)

Iris’ comments reflected the fact that Community is a non-profit public sector organisation. This viewpoint is shared by Stella who said:

I’m quite confident that it wouldn’t be for profit, because being a government agency and the work we do is not profitable. We’re here to provide a service to the community and we’re not meant to be making a profit. So I would say it would have to be soft. Working in government, we’re always the first to go through changes because they’re always implemented in government first, they have to be seen as doing it, you know? – Stella (interview)

Arnold held a similar perception when he shared:

I’d suggest that they’re probably somewhere on the softer range. They try and look at ways of making work life better and they offer days off for sick spouses and children and things like that. – Arnold (interview)

Why do you think they have this approach? What is their motivation? – Researcher (interview)

I guess, it’s about trying to retain staff and ensuring there is some balance in the organisation. The ability to take flexi-leave really eliminates a lot of people taking sick days for no reason, because you’ve got the ability to take a day off if you wanted the leave. – Arnold (interview)

The responses indicated a mixed approach between soft and hard HRM in practice at Community. This finding supported the idea put forward by Lepak and Snell (1999) and others, for example, Purcell et al. (2009: 45), that much of the strategic HRM
research is overly simplistic as it ignores the possibility that organisations could use clusters, bundles or combinations of HRM practices. Leading from this viewpoint, the concept of core and periphery workers and how they are treated regarding FFWPs (Lepak and Snell 1999) was investigated at Community and is explored below.

**The impact of the job characteristics on the availability and usage of family friendly work practices at Community**

After explaining the meaning of the terms core and periphery to participants, the following question was asked:

_Do you think core workers and periphery workers are treated differently regarding work and family policies at Community? – Researcher (interview)_

Stella replied:

_It applies the same across the whole organisation. It doesn’t matter who you are. – Stella (interview)_

Erin replied:

_There are no differences that I’ve seen. – Erin (interview)_

Darcy replied similarly but with a reference to the role of management:

_I think it would be equal. – Darcy (interview)_

Yeah? – Researcher (interview)

_Umm, I don’t think there’s any distinction. I mean, if there’s a policy there everyone would get the same benefits. – Darcy (interview)_

And so, it’s not up to the manager’s discretion? – Researcher (interview)

_It is, in regards to the way the business is run. It’s still up to the managers. Everything really is subject to management discretion, of course. – Darcy (interview)_

Brandon resonated with Darcy’s emphasis on the role of the manager, as follows:

_Well, it depends on who … it depends on the dog who’s doing the trick, really. Uh … (pause) I think it depends on the manager. Some are on contract and some are on salary, so I think it depends on where you are as to how you will be treated. I can only speak for my immediate managers, and they’ve_
been fairly reasonable with all staff request. But you’ve got to maintain a level of service to the public as well. So I think it’s a bit easier in Head Office. So I think in Head Office there’s really a bit more flexibility again whereas it can be quite rigid here because of the fact that you need to have offices open and phones open at certain times. – Brandon (interview)

Owen also felt that workers were treated differently when he explained:

I think sometimes the secretaries do get more of a better deal. Often they get a bit more leeway. But with accountants and the accountancy side of things we’re coming up to a time now when extra work is coming through and there are big demands. – Owen (interview)

Similar to Owen, Iris sensed that there were some differences in the way people were treated regarding FFWPs. She said:

I think there is less capacity for flexibility in smaller offices where you’ve got front face to face contact and you’ve got less staff. So there are certain rostering practices that have to happen in order to be able to make sure you’ve got someone there to open the door. – Iris (interview)

George also perceived there were differences when he responded:

One of the things I find really difficult around here is that the expectations that are put onto directors or even managers. A lot of them have to work really late hours. I mean my manager works four days a week technically, but she actually works six days a week. So, I think that when you get to a manager or director level it’s really hard to feasibly operate family-friendly work practices. – George (interview)

Both George and Owen perceive differences exist, and that as you go up the corporate ladder there is less opportunity for flexibility.

Arnold also expressed that there is a difference in the treatment when he said:

You can’t treat all workers the same. I mean, I couldn’t allow my technical officer to work from home for weeks at a time. I can allow them to work from home for a day or two, but they’ve got to be out there to do fieldwork and inspections. But then with the admin officer, I was able to let her work from home for weeks. It’s the nature of the job that determines the outcome. – Arnold (interview)

The comments at Community indicated an even mix between those participants who believed that staff were treated differently and those who felt that staff were treated the same regarding FFWPs. These findings both support and refute the claims made by Lepak and Snell (1999) that core and periphery workers would be treated
differently in an organisation. The idea that there would be less capacity in some jobs and offices supported Lepak and Snell’s view. However, the perception that there is no distinction between workers refuted Lepak and Snell’s model.

Participants were also asked if they believed that employees were considered equally valuable by others in the organisation. This is also in line with the ideas of Lepak and Snell (1999) who argue that employees will be valued differently by the organisation based on the uniqueness of their skills.

Arnold responded as follows:

Well, I don’t agree with that. From my experience every role is reliant on each other. – Arnold (interview)

Are they interdependent? – Researcher (interview)

Yes, they are interdependent to get the jobs done. My admin assistant people do work that helps the others keep on top of their jobs. Without their assistance they will struggle. And actually what I have seen, is actually my administrator is rated by others as highly as I am. If she says ‘do it’, I will do it and that’s the way it sort of pans out. And I’m quite happy with that arrangement. – Arnold (interview)

George’s answer was more complicated than Arnold:

I think it operates on different levels. I think the fact that it’s more difficult to implement family-friendly work into your role if you’re a manager or a director indicates that there is a difference in terms of how work is valued. So I think that’s a fact. But you know, on the other hand, I don’t think that people interact with each other that way. I mean, I think this is a bit off topic, but I think one of the things we’re lucky with here is we’ve got a Chief Executive who’s sort of one of the hallmarks in the way he leads. He knows just about everybody in the organisation and can talk to anybody. But I think the fact that it’s more difficult to do family-friendly work if you’re a manager or a director indicates that work is valued differently. – George (interview)

Stella’s perception indicated that workers are valued differently as follows:

Well, definitely. Across the organisation there are different, you know, groups and there is a ladder. That’s right. – Stella (interview)

Okay. So some people are looked up to more than others? – Researcher (interview)

Yes, there is a distinction. We do have a pretty distinct grouping – different sets of groups working within the department unit. You have to organise senior officers, and high managerial at one end of the scale, then you have
your middle-managers and you have your team leaders down to your officers and you know, your counter staff. So across the organisation there are distinct groups. – Stella (interview)

Is there a ranking? – Researcher (interview)

Yes, definitely. – Stella (interview)

In contrast to Stella, Brandon was quite emphatic and succinct in his response. When asked if workers were equally valued, he simply said:

Yes. – Brandon (interview)

Iris was a little less sure when she replied:

I don’t know that I can generalise about that. I hope they are treated equally by me. I think they are by most people. But I’m sure there are some individuals that think some staff are worth more than others. – Iris (interview)

Do you think there is class stratification? – Researcher (interview)

No, I don’t think there is. But I have heard client service staff speak very discouragingly about the staff at head office here. – Iris (interview)

Why would that be? – Researcher (interview)

Some staff, and I think there is an element of truth to this, they think we are too far removed from what actually happens at the coal face and that sometimes policy development and the procedures that go with it are developed in isolation of the reality of what happens on the ground. I don’t think that belief is unusual just to this organisation. – Iris (interview)

Erin’s response was mixed as she said:

Yeah, I guess workers would be equally valued. But there is different treatment with flexibility. When you’re the manager, you’ve got better control of your own times and you have more flexibility about being able to work from home or other locations. I guess that’s contradictory really isn’t it? So I suppose, they are not really equally valued if they get different opportunities. – Erin (interview)

Similar to Erin, Owen’s reply indicated that there may be different values placed on employees when he answered:

I think the secretaries sometimes get a better deal. With the accountants we are coming up to a busy time now so there are extra demands on us. So I don’t think workers are treated equally valuable here. There are a couple of accountants that I know who are both equally proficient as each other, but
because one gets on better socially than the other, they are treated differently.

– Owen (interview)

In contrast, Lynette replied:

I think all of the members of staff are valued for what they can do and what they can contribute here. It’s a strong message coming down from leadership.

– Lynette (interview)

Darcy said:

I haven’t heard of staff being valued differently. But I would imagine, realistically you’d have to say yes. I think that you’ll find that if you have a knowledge-base and if you have experience and you are necessary to the department, you are valued.

– Darcy (interview)

The comments at Community reflected a mixed response with some participants perceiving that workers were equally valued with others thinking that value related to the contribution the individual made to the organisation. Therefore, these findings both support and refute Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument that core workers will be more highly valued by their organisations. The idea that there are different groups across the organisation and there is an organisational ladder supported Lepak and Snell, whereas the view that all members of staff are valued for what they can do refuted Lepak and Snell. Further to this, the perception that secretaries sometimes get a better deal and that it is difficult to implement family-friendly work into managerial roles contradicted the argument that core workers would be more highly valued.

Chapter conclusion

The findings from the documentary analysis and the interviews indicated that despite the plethora of policies in place at Community, some staff were using more FFWPs than others. There was a perception that the policies were not used as widely as they could be. This informed us that the rhetoric of extensive provision of FFWPs is not matched with a reality of widespread usage of these policies. The participants described Community as implementing a combination of soft and hard HRM approaches (Legge 1995) which supported the mounting criticism that to utilise either of these in isolation is too simplistic (Lepak and Snell 1999: 45; Legge 2005; Purcell et al. 2009: 44). Participants’ perceptions were mixed regarding whether they thought core and periphery workers were treated differently concerning FFWPs.
There was also a mixed response regarding whether participants felt that workers were equally valued at the Community (Lepak and Snell 1999). This finding informed us that the Lepak and Snell’s model is not a robust predictor concerning how employees are valued and how they are treated regarding FFWPs.

The importance of FFWC was highlighted in respect to the availability and usage of FFWPs, with confirmation of two of the existing FFWC dimensions. These FFWC dimensions were managerial support (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005) and co-worker support (McDonald *et al.* 2005). One new FFWC dimension was identified being the FFWC dimension of work-overload. A number of FFWC aspects were uncovered that add to the existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005). These were the FFWC aspects of cultural/ethnic racism, non-disclosure and no boundaries.

The findings at Community indicated it is not just whether an employee is considered to be core or periphery (Lepak and Snell 1999) that will determine the availability and usage of FFWPs. It was found that some periphery staff who worked on the front-counter had difficulty in accessing flexibility in their working arrangements. It was also found that some management roles which would be considered to be core also experienced such difficulty due to the need to meet clients and meet deadlines. In fact, in line with Service, the findings indicated that the core and periphery model was not a robust predictor of the availability and usage of FFWPs at the public sector organisations. On the other hand, FFWC (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005) was confirmed as playing an important part. Importantly, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the core and periphery model was a strong indicator at the private sector organisations. Thus the findings indicated that the core and periphery model applied differently in the private and public sector organisations. This is an important new point of distinction for the core and periphery model which has been uncovered in these findings. The significance of this finding is discussed in the final chapter.

The second key new point of distinction of these findings for the core and periphery model is that organisational culture and FFWC have been confirmed as important features in understanding the availability and usage of FFWPs. Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery model does not recognise organisational culture and specifically, FFWC. This limitation has been addressed in the new theoretical
framework for studying FFWPs developed in this thesis. This is discussed in the last chapter. Finally, the findings from all four organisations supported the importance of the role of FFWC in shaping the availability and usage of FFWPs.

The next chapter, the discussion chapter, revisits the literature review and compares insights from the work and family and HRM literature to the findings from the four case study organisations. This chapter also compares and contrasts the findings from the various case study organisations. Moreover, it continues the exploration of the implications of these findings for the three theoretical models that informed this thesis. These were the existing FFWC dimensions framework (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005), the soft and hard HRM model (Legge 1995) and the human resource architecture model (Lepak and Snell 1999).
CHAPTER 9: Discussion

These five dimensions of organisational work-life culture which we suggest account for the gap between work-life policy provision and utilisation … remains to be tested in future research, but may be a useful starting point from which to explore this important phenomenon in contemporary organisational environments (McDonald et al. 2005: 49).

This chapter draws together the findings of the literature review and the fieldwork at the four case study organisations. The research questions were informed by the fact that few researchers have examined the availability and usage FFWPs from the viewpoint of family-friendly work culture (FFWC). There was one principal research question with five sub-questions under investigation within the context of the case study organisations as follows:

Principal Research Question: What is the difference between the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations?

Sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of FFWC at these organisations?
2. What is the impact of FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs at these organisations?
3. Are there any new FFWC dimensions to be revealed at the case study organisations?
4. What style of HRM is in place at the case study organisations?
5. What is the impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs at the case study organisations?

It has been argued that one reason employee benefits such as FFWPs are not used can be explained by FFWC (Thompson et. al 1999; McDonald et. al 2005; Bradley et. al 2010) or by characteristics of the employee’s job (Lepak and Snell 1999). This
thesis suggests that these two perspectives are richer when used in combination with each other. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to combine the three bodies of theory: FFWC, soft and hard HRM and human resource architecture. It suggests the addition of new FFWC aspects and dimensions to the existing FFWC measure (McDonald et al. 2005) as well as considering the type of job characteristics and the style of HRM in place. In line with institutional theory, type of organisation was important. All of these aspects are critical. This is because the findings indicated that all of these factors had the ability to play a part, often with differing outcomes. To begin, we now draw on the findings of each of the research questions and consider how these findings resonate with the literature. Comparisons are also made between the various case study organisations concerning each of the research questions. This assessment provides insight into the role that the organisation played in explaining the availability and usage of FFWPs. The first research question will now be discussed.

**What is the difference between the availability and the usage of family-friendly work practices at the case study organisations?**

An emerging concern in the diversity management literature is the gap between rhetoric and reality in organisational HRM practice. There appears to be limited understanding of what actually happens at the workplace level within organisations. Thus diversity management is an area which is ‘ripe for research’ (Kramar 2012a: 257). The following section discusses how the findings shed light on the impact of the institutional environment including legal compliance, unionisation and public sector employment modes. In this examination, a particular focus is given to the difference between what is espoused, that is, the rhetoric, and what is actually experienced at the workplace, that is, the reality, referred to in this thesis as the lived experience.

Participants were interviewed from varying levels within the organisations in order to examine the perceptions of the usage of FFWPs from a range of different job categories. Asking ‘To what extent do you believe organisation policies regarding family-friendly work practices are implemented?’ it was found at Big Bank that the usage of FFWPs was not consistent across the whole organisation with some people using more of the practices than others. Participants indicated that there was unequal
usage between the genders. It was thought that women were perceived to be the primary caregivers and consequently utilise these policies more frequently. The responses at Cost Centre indicated there were mixed perceptions regarding the usage of the policies with the belief that FFWPs were used more widely by women. It was considered that more work needed to be done about getting the message out to the males in the firm. It was also thought that it might not be favourably looked upon for men to take paternity leave. This was because this was another step away from historical practice. At Service different perceptions were evident regarding the usage of FFWPs, with women thought to be negotiating more part-time work. At Community the participants’ perceptions indicated that the usage of the practices is inconsistent across the whole organisation with some people using them more than others. The majority of responses indicated that the policies were not as widely used as they could be. This was due to limited promotion of policy; some people were too busy to think about the policies available; and some jobs were difficult to build flexibility into them.

The findings from the case study organisations reinforced the work and family literature regarding the availability and usage of FFWPs in the following ways. The presence of work and family policies and programs does not guarantee that they will be used or work effectively (Jones et al. 2006). Previous studies also indicated that not all employees with access to FFWPs are able to use them because, for example, employees may not be aware of the benefits to which they are entitled (Lockwood 2003; Wise and Bond, 2003; Waters and Bardoe 2006). The finding that the usage of FFWPs was different between men and women was also supported in the literature where it was found that fathers tend not to use leave options because they experience a conflict of interests (Brandth and Kvande, 2002). Very few Swedish fathers actively use FFWPs (Hass and Hwange 1999) while, on the other hand, many female workers take advantage of career break schemes (Vandeweyer and Glorieux 2008). The findings are supported by McDonald et al. (2005) and Bradley et al. (2010) who view FFWPs to be gendered by nature developed with women’s needs in mind.

It is important to consider these findings in light of the profound change that has occurred in the Australian labour force which relates to the increase of casual and contract work (Perkins, Scutella and Flatau, 2008: 1). This has been a major feature
of labour restructuring in Australia for at least two decades (Burgess, Campbell and May, 2008: 175). Consequently Australia now has a very high proportion of temporary employees compared to other OECD countries, ranking second only to Spain (Burgess et al. 2008: 164). Despite this, the issue of casual and contract work was only raised by one participant at one organisation, Service. This participant spoke of a pressure to perform well due to feeling a lack of security of employment. He spoke of a subsequent reluctance to take leave. The idea that casual work is associated with various forms of insecurity such as income insecurity for affected families and communities is supported in the literature (Pocock, Buchanan and Campbell, 2004). Stemming from increased casualisation in Australia, many workers lack formal access to work and family programs, such as carers’ leave (Burgess et al. 2008: 162). Workers involved in casual jobs suffer a substantial deficit in their rights and benefits and it is clear that casual workers in general are far more vulnerable to practices such as variations in hours and schedules (Burgess et al. 2008: 171). This finding, made at Community, which is supported by the casual work literature, indicated that workers who are employed on a casual basis are less likely to utilise employment benefits such as FFWPs due to employment insecurity.

An institutional factor that has been written about in the work and family literature is the rate of unionisation. As explained in Chapter 3, whether or not unions have a presence in the workplace has been found to have an impact on the availability and usage of FFWPs (Liddicoat 2003). The role that unions have played negotiating FFWPs for employees was explored in the introduction (Chapter 1). The documentary analysis indicated that both public sector organisations had extensive family-friendly provisions in their awards. This shows the influence their unions have had regarding the availability of FFWPs. It is interesting to note that Big Bank has a union-negotiated enterprise agreement but no one specifically referred to the union during the interviews at Big Bank.

Another important aspect found in the literature and the findings relating to the availability and usage of FFWPs was the nature of the work and the workplace. This was discussed by participants at Big Bank who mentioned several times that at the operational centres it was much harder to be flexible with employees. This was because there was a demand to be available to customers for extended hours. In some
workplaces it was very difficult to introduce flexible arrangements. This factor was also quite dominant at Community where their many staff worked in a branch dealing with the public, sometimes open 24/7. In contrast, the findings from the other public sector organisation, Service, and the private sector organisation, Cost Centre, did not point to the nature of the work or the workplace as a key determinant of flexibility. It was considered that this inconsistent variation in findings between the public and private sector organisations justified further investigation. Consequently, enquiries were made and are reported as follows. A Senior Manager of Service was contacted. He confirmed by telephone on 26 June, 2013 that, in the public sector, the larger the group of employees and the more homogenous they are, the easier it is to provide flexibility. He added that it is often harder to provide flexibility for more senior the roles with more unique skills. He explained that because of the size of Service some jobs are the same and many of them are needed during normal office hours. Therefore the negative impact of staff requiring flexibility is reduced. He also explained that they do have a call centre operating a high volume customer service area from 7a.m to 8p.m, but it is effectively managed through appropriate rostering of two part-timers.

A Senior Manager at Cost Centre was also contacted. He explained by telephone on 23 July, 2013 as follows:

We have a nimble approach to resource management. We will never overextend people. We don’t stipulate the hours are between 9 and 5 and we are working toward activity based working where you don’t have to be in the office. This means we are moving to flexible time, flexible location, and flexible hours. That can be negative in that we will be at the beck and call of our clients but we are lucky in that we don’t have a shop front. We have created a culture where it is OK to leave at 3 o’clock and log on later at night. To log on at night is seen as normal here and if you have a role where you need to interact with a global colleague you may have to be on call at 9pm at night.

These case study findings supported the literature that argued that the nature of work or the workplace might affect the availability and the access of FFWPs (Budd and Mumford, 2006; Burgess et al. 2007a: 426 and Burgess et al. 2007b: 109). Employees feel that a policy is not available or accessible because of work requirements such as their particular role, the company they worked for, their manager or the goodwill of others (Burgess et al. 2007b: 108). These writers,
identifying the importance of work requirements such as the nature of the job, have views similar to Lepak and Snell’s (1995) model. However, they are not exactly the same. They do not delve into the core and periphery ideas or the idea of a human resource architecture. Budd and Mumford’s (2006) investigation into perceived access to FFWPs left the question of the actual usage level to future research. This thesis provides answers to fill this gap by investigating the availability and usage of FFWPs, incorporating these workplace factors previously written about from a core and periphery perspective.

What is highlighted in the findings from the case studies in this thesis is that, with appropriate management, and despite apparent restrictions of the nature of the work, flexibility is still possible. An example of this is the rostering of two part-time positions to cover the extended hours at the Service call centre. A discussion concerning the specific research question investigating the impact of job characteristics is provided later in this chapter. This draws on the findings in regard to Lepak and Snell’s (1995) core and periphery model.

Other important factors hinder the usage of FFWPs, for example, workers being unaware of the benefits to which they are entitled. This can be due to poor communication of policies (Lockwood 2003; Wise and Bond 2003 and Waters and Bardoel 2006). Poor communication was an issue raised at Big Bank. The findings indicated that more education needs to be provided so that working from home will become more acceptable. Some employees felt that workers were not using the policies simply because they did not know about them. In contrast to Big Bank, at Cost Centre it was felt that the organisation disseminated the FFWP information quite well.

Despite the plethora of family-friendly information available by way of awards, agreements and policies at the public sector organisations, its communication was not regarded as positive by the participants in this thesis. There was a perception at Service suggesting that information concerning FFWPs was not widely communicated. Information was available on the intranet, but participants felt that more action could be taken to promote their availability. Likewise, some of the
responses at Community suggested that there was an impression that the less knowledge there was of the policies, the less likely staff would adopt them. There was also a sense by many, but not all, that the policies were not widely used and not promoted well enough. A common reason was thought to be that supervisors often avoid actively promoting policies because it is not in their vested interests to do so. FFWPs were described as being just like Occupational Health and Safety policy. The perception held by a number of participants at Community was that the managers did not like implementing these policies, and being mandatory, they did as little as possible about them. It was felt that FFWPs were implemented for the organisation to ‘look good’. They were perceived as somewhat of a ‘motherhood’ statement. These comments highlighted the difference between the reality and rhetoric in terms of some of the perceptions held at Community. On the other hand, FFWPs were believed by some participants to be used by some staff in the organisation. The mixed response at Community may be explained by Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model. The idea is that core workers are generally more highly valued than periphery workers and would therefore have greater and more favourable access to FFWPs. This idea is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

The research findings generally confirmed that the employees at the case study organisations were concerned about the impact on their careers of using FFWPs. It was seen at Big Bank that FFWPs could be very career limiting and could result in employees dropping a level or two on their return to work especially if they were part-time. At Cost Centre the general feeling was that employees would be reluctant to use the policies as they thought doing so would affect their prospects of promotion. Similarly at Service it was felt that taking time off could jeopardise an employee’s role if they were in a managerial position. This is an interesting distinction: that taking leave might only affect an individual’s role if they were in a managerial position compared to a junior role. This observation was not made at the other organisations. Once again, this fits in with Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model that workers could be treated differently if they were core or periphery. In contrast to the other three organisations, the findings at Community did not indicate negative career consequences as being an issue. This will be further explored in the next research question concerning the nature of FFWC.
Based on the overall findings in respect to this research question, it is apparent that when employees return to work it is difficult for many of them to reacquaint themselves with their working conditions which have often changed in their absence. This frequently results in the employee feeling that they are left behind and, as described by the participants at the case study organisations, can result in them returning to work at a lower level. Important implications for organisational stakeholders and particularly for human resource practitioners stem from this problem and will be discussed in the conclusion (Chapter 10). The case study findings for this research question regarding the use of FFWPs being career limiting is supported by Thompson *et al.* (1999) and Jones *et al.* (2006: 237) who argued that ‘employees may not use particular programs because of the potential impact they believe using them will have on their careers’.

The assessment of Big Bank’s FFWPs required a review of their stated aspirations in these areas. Big Bank’s annual report (2010) clearly stated their aspirations to have a flexible and diverse workforce. So this statement indicated that the ‘official line’ of Big Bank was one that was supportive of diversity. The other private sector organisation, Cost Centre, also highlighted family-friendly values in their annual report (2010) commenting that most of their employees desire a holistic approach to work and family responsibilities. In contrast, Service’s annual report (2010) made no direct reference to work and family balance. Instead, the annual report focused on core business issues. Similarly, the annual report of the other public sector organisation, Community, also reported minimally on HRM issues and focused on their core business of providing services to the community. Only one paragraph was dedicated to work and family issues, and it referred to the flexible work staff project group. This group was set up to consult with staff on possible flexible options. Community’s annual report which consisted of 28 pages did focus on other employment relations issues. Two and a half pages covered topics such as Indigenous staff initiatives, the fast track graduate program and organisational reform. Service’s annual report of 68 pages gave a greater focus to employment relations issues, nine pages in total, on topics such as management and structure, human resources, equal employment opportunity and a disability action plan.
The reason for the differences in the reporting of family-friendly issues between the private and public sectors, as confirmed by telephone by a Senior Manager at Service on 15 April, 2013, is that public reporting of various human resource initiatives in the NSW public sector is prescribed in the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985* (NSW). Flexible work practices are not necessarily recorded in individual department’s annual reports. Family-friendly work policy in the NSW public sector is not mandatory but is strongly recommended; with the result there are no statutory requirements to report on it. Each of those practices has different applications under the various awards.

An important aspect of the institutional environment in understanding the differences between the availability and usage and FFWPs relates to the particular award that the case study organisation was a respondent to. Big Bank’s award was the *Banking, Finance and Insurance Award 2010*. As required by the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) this award incorporated provisions of the National Employment Standards (NES). Together with other modern awards, the NES provides a right for employees to request flexible working arrangements if they have the responsibility for the care of a child under school age. The relevant award at Cost Centre was the *Professional Employees Award 2010* which stated that the relevant conditions were those provided for in the NES. Both of the public sector organisations were covered by the *Crown Employees (Public Services Conditions of Employment) Award 2009*. This award was much more detailed concerning work and family matters than the previous two.

These industrial awards and annual reports need to be contextualised in terms of current enterprise agreements at the case study organisations in order to complete the account of the regulatory framework. The enterprise agreement for Big Bank was called the Big Bank Group Enterprise Agreement 2010. The Agreement included the following work and family arrangements: parental leave, individual flexibility arrangements, flexible part time trial and working from home arrangement. Employees at Cost Centre are on individual above-award agreements rather than enterprise agreements. These contracts are confidential and were unavailable for examination in this thesis. Employees at the public sector organisations Service and Community are employed under the relevant award and there is no enterprise
agreement. Salaries for senior executives are set by the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Tribunal. To sum up Big Bank was the only case study with an enterprise agreement though there was only a brief coverage of work and family matters in their award, that there was wider coverage in their enterprise agreement.

An important aspect of the relevant regulatory framework is the various organisational policies that are implemented to ensure that employment rights and responsibilities are understood. Some entitlements are codified by policy. Family-friendly policy also provides organisations the opportunity to go above and beyond the mandatory regulatory requirements. Big Bank had an extensive range of policies including childcare, eldercare, flexible work arrangements, becoming a parent, telecommuting and women’s initiatives. Similarly, the other private sector organisation, Cost Centre, had a number of policies including parental leave, childcare and eldercare. In fact, both organisations have received public recognition for the work they are doing on work and family balance initiatives. Both the public sector organisations had a similar set of policies, both of which were more comprehensive than the private sector organisations. They included: part-time work, job-sharing, part-time leave without pay, a career-break scheme, part-year employment, variable-year employment, working from home, varying hours of work, short term absences for family and other responsibilities and a purchased leave scheme.

When comparing the private sector organisations with the public sector organisations on their family-friendly policies, it is can be seen that the public sector organisations are slightly more detailed in their coverage. This is supported by Houkamau and Boxall (2011: 456) who, in their New Zealand study, found that public sector organisations and other large organisations espoused a higher level of formal policy in diversity management. In this thesis, when examining the policies, enterprise agreements and awards, it is obvious that the private sector and public sector case study organisations respond differently to their work and family responsibilities. The private sector organisations were more vocal in their annual reports regarding family-friendly issues. However, the public sector organisations had more detailed awards and slightly more detailed policies than the private sector organisations on family-
friendly issues. When comparing the two sectors to see how this may translate to differences in actual usage of FFWPs, the overall findings from the interviews indicated that there was no clear difference. This finding supported previous studies (Bardoel and Tharenou 1997; Houkamau and Boxall 2011) which found that public sector employees are no more likely to receive leave benefits than private sector employees. This is despite there being a greater availability of such benefits in the public sector.

That some of the findings indicated the absence of a uniform pattern only highlighted the diverse nature of exploring the availability and usage of FFWPs. Furthermore, it illuminated the complexity of FFWC and suggested that there were likely to be many intervening factors to be explored. This affirmed the need for this thesis and for future research to advance our knowledge on this topic.

A focus is now taken on the findings relating to the second research question which also related to the availability and usage of FFWPs. This question explored more deeply into this provision/utilisation gap by examining the possible impact of FFWC.

**What is the nature of family-friendly work culture and what is its impact on the availability and usage of family-friendly work practices?**

When reviewing the literature it was evident that the term ‘family-friendly work culture’ (FFWC) has been used to describe a particular aspect of the more general, and more frequently discussed, organisational culture. FFWC has been defined as ‘the shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees’ work and family lives’ (Thompson et al. 1999: 394). This definition is consistent with Schein’s (1985) definition of culture and was the definition utilised in this thesis. While there are many different conceptualisations of organisational culture, common to many of these is the view that culture consists of value-driven, normatively-based and often symbolic aspects of organisational life that are shared by a significant number of organisational members. Therefore, culture is defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. This has worked well enough to be considered valid and,
therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein 1985: 9).

This thesis investigated the ideas about shared assumptions, beliefs and values regarding FFWC through the use of the interviews with organisational members. Organisational members were able to reveal insights regarding FFWC with respect to both the organisation generally and with respect to their supervisors, managers and peers. The documentary analysis enabled the identification and examination of the assumptions, beliefs and values that underpin organisational policies and procedures. Further, the interviews enabled evaluation of the rhetoric of assumptions, beliefs and values against the reality of organisational practices.

Issues related to organisational culture and work life balance have received limited empirical investigation. Parker and Hall (1992: 443) first noted that culture is an idea ‘that almost begs to be used in work-family inquiry’. Subsequent to this, Thompson et al.’s (1999) study identified three FFWC dimensions: managerial support for work-family balance, career consequences associated with utilising work-family benefits and organisational time expectations that may interfere with family responsibilities. Thompson et al.’s (1999) study was among the first to research the nature of FFWC dimensions. In 2005, McDonald et al. extended the previous three FFWC dimensions by adding two more, the gendered nature of policy utilisation and co-worker support. At that time, McDonald et al. (2005: 37) argued that the development and validation of the organisational work-life culture construct required further empirical research. Also in 2005, a study by Lyness and Kropf (2005) found that their ‘data seemed to reflect this distinction between formal policies and informal cultural norms’ (Lyness and Kropf 2005: 55). Similarly, Bradley et al. (2010: 7) point out that ‘despite the increased awareness and public rhetoric about men’s use of workplace flexibility, utilization rates have changed little in the past twenty years’. Bradley et al. (2010) empirically tested the five FFWC dimensions identified by Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005). The results confirmed that the measures were robust and Bradley et al. (2010: 23) proposed that the measures be used in future research.
The aim of this research question about the nature of FFWC and its impact on the availability and usage of FFWPs was to understand more about these cultural dimensions and to investigate the possibility of identifying new ones. Valuable insights regarding the FFWC of the case study organisations were gained by analysing their annual reports. The 2010 annual report at Big Bank stated that the bank considers its staff to be an important part of the competitive edge achieved by having a flexible and diverse workforce. Its goal is to have the most skilled and engaged employees who are passionate about their customers, their community and their business (Big Bank 2010: 9). When comparing this espoused culture to the cultural dimensions that were raised in the interviews, it is interesting to note that a number of new FFWC dimensions were identified at Big Bank which were considered to be impediments to the usage of FFWPs. These were the FFWC dimensions of non-acceptance of work and family issues, double standards, and stigma. It was concluded that men were stigmatised for taking flexible work practices and that it went beyond Big Bank. Participants also discussed that a key reason for not utilising FFWPs that is identified in Big Bank’s audits is that it is career limiting supporting Thompson et al. (1999: 395). The new FFWC dimensions are further explained at the end of this section relating to this research question. What is important to note here, before moving on, is that the espoused culture of staff being an important part of Big Bank’s competitive edge of a flexible and diverse workforce does not match up entirely with the perceptions of FFWC experienced by individual participants.

Cost Centre emphasised their focus on providing flexible working arrangement for their staff in their 2010 annual report. They stated that most of their employees desire a holistic approach to their work and family responsibilities and work that provides opportunities to explore different career paths. In the interviews at Cost Centre, the issue of negative career consequences was identified as a major reason that employees would feel reluctant to use FFWPs. There was also a sense of isolation from the organisation while taking time out and that employees who were not at work were out of the picture. Participants also discussed that on returning to work there needed to be an adjustment period rather than bosses expecting workers to pick up where they left off. This perception of ‘negative career consequences’ supported
the work of Thompson et al. (1999) and Jones et al. (2006). It can be concluded that
the ‘fear of negative career consequences’ was an important concern at the four
organisations as it was mentioned by participants in this research question and the
previous one.

The issue of managerial and co-worker support was also identified at Big Bank. It
was thought that if the attitude of the participants’ colleagues and subordinates is not
supportive of FFWPs even if management is, then it is difficult to utilise them.
Managerial support was also talked about at Cost Centre where there were mixed
responses. It was thought by some that managers did not actively promote these
policies. Others felt that they were well supported. The importance of managerial
support is confirmed in the FFWC literature (Thompson et al. 1999: 395; McCarthy
2013: 1268; Allen et al. 2014: 6). Regarding co-worker support, the feeling was that
if employees cut down their work hours their peers would judge them negatively.
The idea was also raised of negative backlash by people who did not have children
towards employees who used FFWPs. Comments were raised asking what benefits
were available for single employees. This is supported by McDonald et al. (2005).
As previously discussed, Bradley et al. (2010: 22) propose that co-worker support
requires further research. Their empirical study identified a new related dimension
called co-worker consequences which focuses on how workloads are shared. This
was not known at the time of undertaking the fieldwork for this thesis.

At Cost Centre, it was considered that the ‘gender issue’ may be a deterrent to using
FFWPs. It was thought that it may be looked upon unfavourably for a man to take
parental leave and it was considered to be distant from historical practice. However
for a woman it was a socially acceptable practice. Such perceptions were in line with
McDonald et al.’s (2005) notion that FFWC is gendered and that FFWPs are
designed more for women. This also more broadly supported the literature that
indicated that the presence of a particular FFWP does not necessarily mean that it
will be utilised (Jones et al. 2006; McDonald et al. 2005 and Thompson et al. 1999).

At Service there is information regarding flexible work options in the relevant award
and the policies, although very little of the 2010 annual report is about these flexible
options. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this is because public reporting of
various human resource initiatives in the NSW Public sector is prescribed in the
Accordingly, specific work practices are not necessarily recorded in individual annual reports. Each of the FFWPs has different applications under different awards. The combination of awards and policies contributed to the sense that Service had quite a strong family-friendly culture.

An interesting idea was brought forward by the participants at Service concerning managerial support and that was that various managers could quite easily deal with FFWPs in different ways. This was explained by the fact that individual managers have unique management styles and that some are tougher than others. The idea that managers treat employees differently was also present at Community where it was thought that favouritism existed and different rules applied for different employees. This concept supported the theory of Lepak and Snell (1999) in that employees are being treated differently at the same organisation. This is explored further in the next section which discusses the next research question. Furthermore, at Service it was perceived that there was a subtle covert lack of support by managers and supervisors. Instead of managers clearly stating their opinions they sometimes keep them hidden. It was stated that this can make it difficult for employees when they are not sure if they have managerial support or not. Stemming from managerial support was the concept of ‘trust’. It was thought that some employees may feel confronted about explaining to personal issues to their managers and may not trust their managers. Consequently employees may be reluctant to apply for family leave. This idea was identified as a FFWC aspect of ‘mistrust’ and has not been previously identified. Another important factor that was identified at Service was the ‘lack of communication’. It was explained that, by taking time off, staff would miss out on important information and opportunities to attend meetings and attend client sites.

Community is also a public sector organisation and, similar to Service, reporting on flexible working practices is not a statutory requirement in its Annual Report. As discussed earlier, the public reporting of various human resource initiatives in the NSW public sector is prescribed in the Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985 (NSW). Therefore, flexible work practices are not necessarily recorded in individual department’s annual reports. Despite the minimal reporting concerning FFWPS in its annual report, Community does offer extensive flexibility provisions under the
Crown Employees (Public Services Conditions of Employment) Award 2009. Moreover, like Service, a number of flexible work practice options were provided in its policies. The award and policy provisions indicate a fairly strong family-friendly culture at Community. A number of the participants indicated that there was quite a healthy and flexible approach to work and family matters at Community. However, when questioned further, managerial support and co-worker support were identified as impediments to staff utilising flexibility options.

As can be seen, in many cases the findings supported the FFWC literature. A number of new FFWC dimensions and aspects have also been uncovered to add to the existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). These dimensions are complex and because culture is unconscious, they cannot easily be articulated (Linstead 2009: 157). Despite these difficulties, the following components of FFWC could be identified at the case study organisations. These have been discussed in this section and are highlighted below:

New Dimensions of FFWC:

A belief of non-acceptance of FFWPs. It was felt that there was a need for more education at Big Bank to increase acceptance of FFWPs. Furthermore, it was suggested that work and family issues were not considered seriously by senior organisational members and staff were not well informed on the matter.

A value of double standards. At Big Bank different rules were being exercised for different levels of staff within the organisation. This view connects with insights from Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery model although it did not specifically study FFWPs.

A belief of stigma. Stigmatisation has been acknowledged in the work and family literature previously but has not routinely been discussed in the FFWC studies and is hence a new FFWC dimension requiring further research. At Big Bank, it was noted that a stigma attached to men who take flexible work practices. It was perceived the stigma went beyond the organisation, and it was thought that it might be an issue for the whole of Australia, and thus a current social trend.
An assumption of work overload. At Community they are currently not employing support staff so when people leave they are not being replaced. As the work still has to be done, more work needs to be done by fewer people which means there is less opportunity for those people to have a day off.

New aspects that relate to existing dimensions of FFWC:

A belief of peer pressure from teamwork. At Community, it was believed this culture most likely stemmed from the attitudes of managers and their unrealistic demands. It was considered to be linked to no boundaries and work overload. It was also thought that teamwork was being used at Community as a control mechanism. For example, if someone is off work for any reason, their work still has to be done. Therefore, people will stay back later to complete the work because they don’t want to let the team down. This belief of peer pressure from teamwork extends the previous dimension of co-worker support (McDonald et al. 2005) by incorporating the control exerted by organisations of their employees through peer pressure.

A belief of no boundaries. At Community, staff can be asked to attend meetings on the days that they are not rostered to be at work. This builds on the organisational time demand FFWC dimension identified by Thompson et al. (1999: 394). Organisational time demands relate to expectations that employees will prioritise work over family. These demands create norms concerning expected hours of work (Thompson et al. 1999: 394). In the case of Community, the organisational time demands have ‘no boundaries’. In other words, expected hours of work may extend into an employee’s designated days off.

A value of cultural/ethnic racism. At Community, some supervisors treated their staff differently with FFWPs depending on the employee’s cultural background. It was perceived that staff from certain cultures were treated in a less favourable manner regarding FFWPs. This explanation builds on the managerial support dimension (Thompson et al. 1999: 395) by incorporating issues of cultural/ethnic discrimination.

A belief of non-disclosure. At Community, it was said that, in some cases, managers did not promote the policies because they perceived that it was not in their vested interest to do so. This new culture also builds on the managerial support dimension
of Thompson et al. (1999: 395) by emphasising the role managers can play in discouraging employees to utilise FFWPs.

Assumption of mistrust. At Service, it was thought that some employees feel confronted about explaining personal issues to their managers. It was felt that employees might not trust their managers. This assumption builds on the managerial support dimension of Thompson et al. (1999: 395).

As can be seen from the above discussion there are various assumptions, beliefs and values that existed at the four case study organisations which explain why employees would be reluctant to use FFWPs. These assumptions, beliefs and values can be described as dimensions of FFWC (Thompson et al. 1999: 394 and McDonald et al. 2005: 41). The findings indicate that there are four new FFWC dimensions. There are also five new FFWC aspects which build on the existing FFWC dimensions previously identified by Thompson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005). As explained earlier these existing dimensions were empirically tested and confirmed by Bradley et al. (2010). This important work suggested that the FFWC dimension of managerial support be split to include an extra dimension of organisational support. They also proposed a new co-worker consequences support dimension and recommended the existing co-worker support dimension requires further research (Bradley et al. 2010: 20-23). The existing McDonald et al. (2005) FFWC framework was utilised in this thesis as the Bradley et al. (2010) study was not available at the fieldwork stage. However, the current research did incorporate questions to ascertain general organisational support although it was not seen as a separate dimension at that time. Pre-empting Bradley et al.’s (2010) recommendation for future research concerning co-worker support, this was included in the empirical research. Thus a valuable contribution made by this thesis is to confirm what was already known concerning FFWC at the time of the investigation (Thompson et al. 1999: McDonald et al. 2005). This is achieved by learning more about the role of FFWC in facilitating or impeding employees’ use of FFWPs by way of a different research method to that of previous work (Thompson et al. 1999; Bradley et al. 2010). In addition new dimensions and aspects were uncovered. These new and existing dimensions and aspects will provide a useful framework for future studies in FFWC. The implications of these new dimensions and aspects are discussed briefly in the
conclusion of this chapter and more fully in the following chapter. The third research question is now examined.

What style of human resource management is in place at the case study organisation?

This thesis explored Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model to assess if it was empirically and theoretically sound. Interview participants were provided with a description of soft and hard HRM and were then asked to describe which model their organisation was using. This section will compare the answers to this research question from the case study organisations. It will also link back to the first research question which provided answers about the availability and usage of FFWPs at each case study organisation. The purpose of this is to conclude whether a difference was evident between the availability and usage of FFWPs based on the style of HRM in place.

At Big Bank responses indicated that the organisation’s HRM was a combination of soft and hard HRM. Similarly at Cost Centre, most responses suggested a mixture between soft and hard, with only one participant perceiving it to be moving towards the hard approach with a focus more on the bottom line evident in recent times as well as retrenchments occurring. Service was described as being a hybrid model but tending to the softer side. This was thought to be a result of the organisation being public sector and thus not being driven by profit. An interesting perception was shown at Community where a number of responses agreed that, due to the current restructure, the review of staff and reduction of funds from the Federal Government, Community was becoming harder in its HRM. It was also felt that the HR model contained a concept of developing people but often in reality it did not follow through. Comments were also made that priorities often changed midstream. In contrast, a number of responses indicated that Community was still quite soft, a reflection of its core mission which was to provide social and human services to the community.

When comparing the above descriptions of the case study organisations with the perceived usage of FFWPs as indicated in the first research question, the following
conclusions can be made. At Big Bank, which had a mixture of soft and hard HRM, the findings indicated mixed perceptions concerning the usage of policies except that it was agreed that they were not used frequently by men. Cost Centre was also perceived to have a mixture of soft and hard HRM, though it was considered to be moving towards the hard approach. Findings from the first research question indicated the perception of fairly wide usage but, once again, more so by women. Service was a mixture of soft and hard HRM, but slightly softer. The comments there indicated a variety of perceptions indicating uneven utilisation across the organisation. Finally, Community was also a mixed HRM model but one that was experiencing restructure due to budgetary cuts by the Federal Government. Responses indicated inconsistent usage of FFWPs across the whole organisation with some people and departments using more than others.

Overall, the findings from the four case study organisations indicated that there was a mixed usage of FFWPs together with a mix of soft and hard HRM. This conclusion is an important one as the relationship between the adoption of soft and hard HRM on the uptake of FFWPs has not been previously explored in the FFWPs literature. Therefore, this part of this research question has made an important contribution by addressing a gap in the current body of knowledge relating to FFWPs. Further to this, the findings indicated that at the case study organisations there is no perfect model of HRM. Rather a mixture of models is employed depending on the part of the organisations being examined. This finding supported the literature which argued that, in reality, organisations use a variety of approaches simultaneously when managing human resources (Lepak and Snell, 1999: 32; Legge 2005; Wright and Kehoe 2008: 13, Purcell et al. 2009: 45). The simplicity of Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM dichotomy was confirmed with organisations using a mixture of HRM practices characteristic of soft HRM (emphasising high-commitment) and hard HRM (emphasising high performance). However, as has been explained, it was in fact due to its simplicity that the soft and hard HRM model was considered a suitable heuristic device for participants to conceptualise their organisation’s HRM.
Furthermore, over time it has become apparent that there are potential tensions in the normative models of HRM, expressed in this hard and soft dichotomy, and these are indicative of contradictions in these models expressed even by Legge (2005: 106) herself. There are also problems in the conceptual language of both the hard and soft models; for example, the term integration appears to have two meanings, referred to as the external and internal fit of HRM policies (Legge, 2005: 106). It is important to note that Truss et al. (1997: 70) analysed the practice of soft and hard HRM on the basis of an empirical study and concluded that even if the rhetoric of HRM is soft, the reality is almost always hard, with the interests of the organisation being considered in preference to the individual employee. They also found in all organisations that a mixture of soft and hard approaches was used which depended on the organisation’s strategy, culture and structure. Based on their study, they argued that we need to retain the distinction between HRM at the rhetorical level and the reality as experienced by the individual in our conceptualisations of HRM if they are to be both empirically and theoretically sound. This approach was undertaken in this thesis by comparing the lived experiences of individuals at their workplaces with the organisational rhetoric by means of an examination of organisation documents. The findings indicated that the rhetoric of soft HRM was espoused, with a mix of soft and hard HRM in reality and mixed usage of FFWPs too. To overcome the weaknesses of the soft and hard HRM model, this thesis concludes that it be utilised in combination with other bodies of theory. For the purpose of studying FFWPs this is recommended to be FFWC, the employee’s job, and the type of organisation, as explained later.

What is the impact of job characteristics on the availability and usage of FFWPs?

This research question relates to the impact that job characteristics (that is, whether it is considered to be core or periphery) has on the availability and usage of FFWPs. This follows from Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resources architecture model which states that core workers would possess unique skills, would be more highly valued by the organisation and would thus receive better benefits. To find out more about core and periphery workers at the case study organisations, participants were
asked whether certain occupational groups were treated differently with respect to work and family issues.

At Big Bank the comments suggested that workers were not all treated equally regarding FFWPs. Overall, it was thought that senior people had more flexibility. The sole contradiction to this perception was the comment that seniority had not been an issue in extra flexibility for staff. The findings at Cost Centre indicated that there was a difference in the way that core and periphery staff were treated concerning FFWPs. By contrast, the participants at Service indicated that employees were not treated differently regarding FFWPs. However, a number of participants felt that the more senior employees were less able to use FFWPs due to issues such as pressures to perform. It was stated that, for a number of years, people have been working excessive hours and forfeiting their flexi hours because of perceived or real pressures to achieve outcomes. At Community the responses indicated an even mix between those participants who believed that staff were treated differently and those who believed staff were treated the same regarding FFWPs.

As part of this question, participants were asked if staff were considered equally valuable in their organisation. At Big Bank the comments suggested that workers were not all valued equally. It was suggested that the more senior roles, which would tend to be core workers, were able to exercise more flexibility in their work options. The rationale for this was perceived to be that these workers contribute more to company profit, are thus valued more highly and consequently receive greater flexibility in managing their work and family lives. Similarly, the responses at Cost Centre suggested the widespread perception was that the organisation had a tendency to value senior staff more highly. The comments at Service indicated a mixed response with only two participants stating that staff were equally valued although three felt they could not generalise. Similarly at Community, the comments reflected a mixed response with some participants perceiving that workers were equally valued with others thinking that value related to the contribution the individual makes to the organisation.
These findings both supported and refuted Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery idea. The findings concerning workers being treated equally regarding FFWPs indicates that participants at both the private sector organisations felt that workers were not treated equally which supported Lepak and Snell. Refuting Lepak and Snell, the participants at the public sector organisation, Service, perceived that workers were treated equally. However, there was a mixed response at the other public sector organisation, Community. Both the private sector organisations perceived that employees were not equally valued, supporting Lepak and Snell. On the other hand, both of the public sector organisations demonstrated a mixed response. Thus, the conclusion can be made that Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery ideas were only a key determinant of the perceived availability of FFWPs in the private sector organisations.

In describing their human resource architecture model, Lepak and Snell (1999) do not make any distinction between public sector and private sector organisations; they refer to both ‘organizations’ and ‘firms’. ‘Firms’ is commonly used to indicate commercial entities, such as companies, businesses and partnerships, and would not normally be used for governmental agencies. On the other hand ‘organization’ is a broader term that would be used to incorporate government departments. Since Lepak and Snell (1999) do not clearly stipulate it is difficult to assume whether they expected their model to apply to both private and public sector organisations. Based on the findings from the case study organisations, the Lepak and Snell (1999) model is of use to those who may study FFWPs in the future, particularly for those interested in studying private sector organisations. According to the findings at the case study organisations, the capacity of the model to assess practice in the public sector is less adequate. This leads to the universality of the model being questioned. The findings of this study indicated that the model better reflects practice in private sector organisations. However, other studies based on institutional theory indicated that factors such as the size of the organisation or the industry may also play a role in the model’s ability to assess practice (Bardoel and Tharenou 1997; Warhurst et al. 2008; Houkamau and Boxall 2011). Further to this, in order to ensure that the core and periphery model is relevant, robust and up to date, a greater focus is needed on how human capital resources are created. As argued by Ployhart and Moliterno
(2011: 127), this requires a deeper understanding of individual knowledge, skills and abilities. In its emphasis on the individual, this comment leads us to consider a weakness of the core and periphery model, namely, that it is individualised, yet it operates within a collective employment relationship.

A number of practical and ethical issues are raised by the human resource architecture model (Lepak and Snell, 2007). Uneven human resource practices between the core and periphery may hinder the dedication of employees. Furthermore, organisational decisions regarding employment options are not always based on economic rationality (Boxall and Purcell, 2003). Thus it is evident that the human resource architecture model has its limitations. To better assess practice concerning FFWPs this thesis suggests that Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model be combined with the existing FFWC framework (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). The type of organisation and style of HRM should be considered as well. In this way, sufficient dimensions are considered to allow a clearer, more realistic examination of the espoused organisational values and the lived experience of FFWPs. These findings are an important contribution to theory. This is because, as far as the researcher is aware, no previous studies have tested the combined relationship of the interplay between FFWC, job characteristics, the type of organisation and the style of HRM on the availability and usage of FFWPs.

Therefore, it is recommended that when investigating the influence of FFWC on the availability and usage of FFWPs that the employee’s job also be considered. Whether an employee is thought to be core or periphery to the organisation was considered a key determinant of the provision and usage of FFWPs at the two private sector organisations. This was not the case at the public sector organisations. It is recommended therefore that the type of organisation be taken into account when studying FFWC. The simplicity of Legge’s (1995) soft and hard dichotomy was confirmed, indicating that organisations engage in elements of both soft and hard HRM, rather than one or the other in isolation. This thesis recommends that the type of HRM being utilised at an organisation be considered in FFWC studies. This is because the findings at the four case study organisations indicated that the organisations were using a mixture of HRM practices characteristic of ‘soft’ HRM.
(emphasising high commitment) and ‘hard’ HRM (emphasising high performance) which coincided with a mixed usage of FFWPs. The significance of these findings is further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter conclusion

To sum up, a number of key findings are discussed in this chapter. The significance of their contribution will be explored in the following chapter. Firstly, it is only when combining the findings from the interviews and the documentary analyses that a better understanding of how the gap between the availability, that is, the rhetoric and the usage, that is, the reality of FFWPs. This idea of reality and rhetoric was explored in this chapter when examining the findings of all phases of the analysis of the fieldwork. Supporting the reality and rhetoric literature as outlined in Chapter 3, the findings from the case study organisations indicated that, despite policies and statutory entitlements being in place, FFWPs were often not used, for reasons varying from the nature of the work to poor communication of policies (Budd and Mumford 2006: 38; Burgess et al. 2007b: 109; Waters and Bardoel 2006). Some of the case study findings did not display a uniform pattern, highlighting the complex nature of the availability and usage of FFWPs and the role played by FFWC. This reinforced the idea discussed in the third and fourth chapters that researching culture and specifically FFWC has challenges because of the nature of the phenomenon itself. The notion of culture in this thesis is one that holds numerous interpretations for many individuals and as such was often difficult to delineate (Linstead, 2009: 154). Linking back to the critical analysis of culture provided in the literature review, culture is value driven and is a way that organisational members perceive, think and feel (Eldridge and Crombie, 1974: 89; Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo 1982: 126; Schein 1985: 9; Schwartz and Davis 1981: 33).

This leads to the second key finding that the existing framework for studying FFWC (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005) was confirmed. This framework is: managerial support for work-family balance; career consequences associated with using work-family benefits; organisational time expectations that may interfere with family responsibilities; the gendered nature of policy utilisation; and the lack of co-worker support (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). This thesis has also
suggested further FFWC aspects be added to the existing dimensions as well as new FFWC dimensions. This reinforced the complexity of organisational culture that has been previously written about (Schein, 1985; Linstead, 2009). The aim of these new FFWC aspects and dimensions is to advance FFWC knowledge by providing a framework that is more detailed than previously existed and suitable for future studies in FFWC relating to FFWPs. Ideas relating to how this framework could assist future research are discussed in the following chapter.

The third important finding flows from the previous two, which informed us that even when FFWPs are provided, the intervention of FFWC creates complex outcomes for each individual. However, the individual experience can sometimes be further influenced by job characteristics, such as whether the skills are considered to be core or periphery to the organisation as explained by Lepak and Snell (1999). Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model was found to be a robust indicator of the availability and usage of FFWPs at the private sector organisations but not at the public sector organisations. Thus the type of organisation was shown to be an important factor which indicates the importance of acknowledging institutional theory when studying FFWPs. The soft and hard HRM model (Legge, 1995) was confirmed to be too simplistic when used in isolation of other factors. This finding supports Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument that HRM is heterogeneous in practice.

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings as a whole, this thesis proposes that the FFWC framework and the human resource architecture model are richer when used in combination with each other. Furthermore, this thesis recommends that it is important as well to consider both the type of organisation and the style of HRM in place at the organisation. This confirms the proposed theoretical model that was developed in this thesis for studying FFWPs and provided at the end of the literature review (Chapter 3). The interplay of all these factors is critical as indicated in each of the findings chapters. Therefore, the proposed theoretical model is modified to demonstrate the interconnected relationship between FFWC, job characteristics and HRM. This is diagrammatically represented in Figure 4 in the next chapter.
In the following chapter a detailed explanation is provided of the significance of the conclusions drawn from these key findings and conclusions for the contribution to knowledge of FFWC and for the HRM discipline when studying FFWPs, the implications in terms of practice, the limitations of the findings and opportunities for future research.
CHAPTER 10: Conclusion

This thesis has found that the main factors that play a part in understanding the gap between rhetoric and reality concerning FFWPs are family-friendly work culture (FFWC), job characteristics and the style of human resource management (HRM). Type of organisation was also found to play a part. It is insufficient to look at any one of these in isolation. The most complete picture is found by looking at all of these factors combined. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 4, p. 239, the revised theoretical framework for studying FFWPs. A better understanding of FFWC is provided by considering nine FFWC dimensions, five of which are in McDonald et al.’s (2005) existing framework and four of which are revealed in this thesis. These nine FFWC dimensions are part of an extended FFWC measure as shown in Figure 3, p. 235, to explain the gap between the provision and utilisation of FFWPs.

Key contributions of earlier chapters

Chapter 1 introduced the research questions around usage and availability of FFWPs, FFWC, style of HRM and job characteristics. In this chapter it was established that culture is difficult to define and a term that is contested. It was explained that this thesis sits within the HRM discipline and is a diversity management topic, though the literature is drawn from a number of cross-disciplinary areas. The chapter introduced the theoretical frameworks that were utilised: the existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005), Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model and Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM approach. The rationale for the chosen methodology was then explained. The chapter concluded by justifying the need for this thesis. This was achieved by highlighting gaps in the previous research and summing up the contribution to FFWC and HRM knowledge,
theory and practice that the thesis aimed to make from answering the research questions.

The second chapter provided a discussion relating to context, legislation and institutions and introduced key stakeholders. The third chapter explored theoretical and empirical research concerning the rhetoric and reality of FFWPs currently available in the work and family literature. An explanation was provided of how this thesis aimed to utilise the current research to gain a better understanding of the availability compared to the usage of FFWPs at the four case study organisations. A research gap was identified and it was proposed that empirical studies were required to investigate the existing five FFWC dimensions (McDonald et al. 2005). It was demonstrated that this thesis would close the research gap by examining FFWC in an empirical and normative framework. This thesis argued that in previous FFWC research important factors like job characteristics, type of organisation and style of HRM had not been studied together. Therefore, the chapter concluded by providing the proposed theoretical model that was developed for the empirical research of this thesis. The aim of this theoretical model was to advance our understanding of the rhetoric and reality of the availability and usage of FFWPs.

In Chapter 4 it was explained that the methodology emerged from a questionnaire due to the complexity of culture (Linstead 2009: 157) and the challenge of distinguishing between the rhetoric and reality of FFWPs. The method and research design of case studies was chosen in order to tackle this task. The interviews were designed to shed light on the actual experiences, the reality, and the documents were expected to provide insight into the espoused values, the rhetoric. The utilisation of mixed data sources was a sensible choice given the task at hand.

The following four chapters presented the research findings. These chapters advanced the thesis because they presented the stories of individuals based on interviews from the four case studies regarding their experiences of FFWPs. The findings from the interviews which shed light on the reality was compared to organisational rhetoric as found in organisation documents. The findings from the documents and interviews indicated that despite all four organisations providing generous FFWPs that the usage was fragmented. Additionally, the findings confirmed the existing framework as suitable for studying FFWC (Thompson et. al
Reinforcing the complexity of FFWC, five new FFWC aspects and four new FFWC dimensions were also uncovered. The interviews indicated a mixture of soft and hard HRM (Legge 1995) was employed at the four case study organisations which coincided with a perceived mixed usage of FFWPs by employees. The core and periphery idea (Lepak and Snell 1999) incorporating job characteristics were considered a key determinant of the provision and usage of FFWPs at the two private sector organisations although these characteristics were not a robust factor at the public sector organisations. These findings indicate that to understand the availability and usage of FFWPs we must simultaneously consider the interplay between FFWC, job characteristics, the style of HRM and the type of organisation. This is because the findings indicated that all these factors had the capacity to play a part, often with differing outcomes depending on the particular individual, the job, or the organisation.

Drawing on the research questions and insights from the literature review, the discussion chapter (Chapter 9) made connections with the findings from the thesis. Theoretical conclusions were made in this chapter which supported the dichotomy of rhetoric and reality concerning FFWPs, confirmed the existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005), verified that FFWC creates complex outcomes for each individual and vary depending on the job (Lepak and Snell 1999), and established that the soft and hard HRM model (Legge, 1995) was not a robust model when used in isolation. Therefore, it was recommended that utilising the existing FFWC dimensions in combination with the Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model would provide a richer picture of experiences regarding the provision and utilisation of FFWPs. Furthermore, it was suggested that the four new FFWC dimensions and the five new FFWC aspects uncovered in this thesis, the type of HRM and a consideration of the type of organisation are important factors to be included in the existing FFWC measure (Thompson et al. 1999; McDonald et al. 2005). As far as it is known, this combination of theory together has not been considered before. This confirmed the proposed theoretical model with a slight modification made to incorporate the interconnection between the relationship of FFWC, job characteristics and the style of HRM. This revised theoretical model, it is suggested, will be robust for studying FFWPs in the future.
Contributions of the thesis to the body of family-friendly work culture knowledge

The existing framework of five FFWC dimensions was confirmed (McDonald et al. 2005). Furthermore, four new FFWC dimensions and five new FFWC aspects were identified. This is a significant contribution because McDonald et al. (2005: 49) stated that the validity of their existing model required testing in future research. Therefore, based on the previous research of Thomson et al. (1999) and McDonald et al. (2005), this thesis suggests an original theoretical framework that FFWC is underpinned by nine dimensions. This extended FFWC measure will provide an enhanced understanding of the provision-utilisation gap in FFWPs. Empirically testing the existing FFWC measure as well as extending it will be a significant contribution because the theoretical basis for organisational culture influencing the uptake of FFWPs is a relatively small area of the work and family literature and is under-developed and inconsistent (McDonald et al. 2005: 48).

These new FFWC dimensions and aspects reinforced the complexity of organisational culture that has previously been written about (Schein, 1985; Linstead, 2009). Therefore, the addition of these new FFWC dimensions and FFWC aspects will provide a more comprehensive framework for future studies in FFWC regarding the gap between the availability and usage of FFWPs. The extended FFWC framework is represented in Figure 3 (overleaf). The existing measure of five FFWC dimensions (McDonald et al. 2005) is displayed in normal font in blue boxes. The five new aspects from this thesis which build on the existing measures are displayed in italics in the blue boxes. The four new dimensions are shown in italics in orange boxes.
Figure 3. The extended FFWC framework: nine dimensions of FFWC that account for the gap between the availability and usage of FFWPs

This thesis revealed that the development of FFWC is a phenomenon that occurs at many levels or units of analysis. When more than one unit of analysis is included in the fieldwork, case studies may be layered or nested within the overall case study approach and the fieldwork often has a series of intersecting and overlapping units of analysis (Patton 2002: 298). It was noted in the methodology chapter that there were two different units of analysis in this thesis. An individual unit of analysis was implemented in the interviews during the first phase and an organisational unit of analysis was implemented in the case studies during phase two. This decision was
based on the motivation to explore the various levels at which FFWC existed at the case study organisations. To this end, the qualitative research at the individual and organisational level provided a rich depth of data enabling a fuller consideration of the relation between culture, FFWC, espoused values and practice. Furthermore, by enabling the understanding of the social world of those experiencing FFWPs, this thesis makes further significant contributions to the family-friendly policy research (Callan 2008: 79).

**Contributions of the thesis to the diversity management field and the human resource management discipline**

It was important to study human resource management (HRM) theory because these theories frame the thesis and it is this scholarship that is utilised to discuss the findings. Therefore, it is also important to consider the significance of this thesis relative to the HRM discipline. The examination of HRM theory has identified debates and evolution within those theorisations. There is a divide between the normative and empirical based approaches to HRM theory. Legge (1995) introduced the soft and hard approach as a way of demonstrating the lack of a universal HRM approach and to demonstrate that outcomes for workers were often less than ideal. The Lepak and Snell model (1999) offered a relevant example of a normative approach in HRM theory and it provided a useful framework throughout this thesis to assess some of the claims that HRM will have positive outcomes for both organisations and employees. Legge’s (1995) framework, by way of her soft and hard HRM dichotomy, was a useful schema for exploring Lepak and Snell’s (1999) heterogeneity idea around core and periphery workers and characteristics of their jobs. Purcell et al.’s (2009) causal chain model provided an example of a more empirically driven approach, allowing for the significant imprecision and debate in the literature between causal factors and outcomes. This frame enabled the findings of the thesis to be set against what are quite diverse approaches in the HRM literature and, in particular, to assess the connections between theory and practice.

This thesis was a continuation of the assessment of Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model and Lepak and Snell’s (1999) human resource architecture model. It was considered that they are too simplistic when utilised alone, as they see
employment in binary terms. This becomes apparent when, as discussed in the previous section, considering that FFWC is something that occurs at many levels or units of analysis. Therefore, Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model is limited because it adopts an individual approach. On the other hand, Legge’s model adopts an organisational approach. Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model, with an appreciation of the more sophisticated contemporary variants including high commitment and high performance HRM, was confirmed. In line with Legge (2005), the findings indicated that organisations engage in elements of both soft and hard HRM, rather than one or the other in isolation, as later acknowledged by Legge (2005) herself. The mixed usage of HRM also supports Lepak and Snell’s (1999) argument that organisations engage in different configurations. As suggested by Keenoy (1999) and Watson (2004), it is now recognised that it is now a question of using the soft and hard HRM and something else. This thesis recommended that the ‘something else’ is Lepak and Snell’s human resource architecture model. By utilising both models together, it is possible to capture both the individual and organisational aspects of FFWC. The individual aspects relate to Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery idea concerning the employee’s job and the organisational aspects relate to the type of HRM at the organisation. It is recommended that by incorporating Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model with Legge’s (1995) soft and hard HRM model a more realistic examination of organisational life concerning FFWPs is possible.

This thesis tested the utility of the human resource architecture model in predicting the availability and usage of FFWPs. It was found that Lepak and Snell’s (1999) core and periphery idea was a robust predictor in the private sector organisations. However, in the public sector organisations, job characteristics were not a strong determinant. This is a significant contribution because it adds a new dimension to Lepak and Snell’s (1999) model, namely, the importance of the organisational sector. This was ignored in the existing model that had the individual worker as the unit of analysis. This finding is important to the body of HRM knowledge as little is currently known about the differences between the public and private sector concerning the availability and usage of FFWPs. Further to this, the findings extended Lepak and Snell’s model by exploring the importance of FFWC, which was
also previously overlooked. It was found that FFWC made an important impact on an employee’s perceptions of the availability and usage of FFWPs. This is a significant contribution because it informs us that it is not just the employee’s job that determines their availability or access to FFWPs. As can be seen, it is the interplay between job characteristics and the FFWC present in the organisation.

An emerging concern in the diversity management literature is the gap between rhetoric and reality in organisational HRM practice. The literature acknowledged that there is limited understanding of what actually happens at the workplace level within organisations, thus diversity management is an area which is ‘ripe for research’ (Kramar 2012a: 257). This largely atheoretical area was addressed in this thesis. The findings in this thesis shed light on the impact of the institutional environment including the regulatory framework. An analysis of the findings enabled comparisons to be made between organisational rhetoric as espoused in organisational documents with the lived experiences of individual employees at the four case study organisations. Some of the findings did not display a uniform pattern. This is an important finding for the rhetoric and reality research concerning FFWPs because it highlights the importance of type of organisation. Furthermore, this finding also supported the idea that the nature of FFWC is complex and incorporates many intervening factors. Consequently, this suggested there were opportunities for future research to be undertaken to build the body of knowledge.

In previous FFWC research, the role of job characteristics, the style of HRM, and the type of organisation had not been empirically investigated as potentially interacting factors. In integrating three bodies of theory: FFWC, the soft and hard HRM model and the human resource architecture model, this thesis has suggested an original theoretical framework which was provided in Figure 1 in the beginning of the literature review (Chapter 3). This theoretical framework explained the interplay between the institutional environment, participant characteristics, the type of organisation, job characteristics, the style of HRM, FFWC, and the availability of FFWPs, the usage of FFWPs and work and family balance. It improves previous understandings because in combining three bodies of theory it is cognisant of the rhetoric and reality of organisational life from multiple theoretical perspectives. Based on the case study findings, the proposed theoretical framework has been
revised to put forward an original theoretical framework that more fully explains the
gap between the availability and the usage of FFWPs. Figure 4 presents the
redeveloped theoretical framework with interconnecting circles between FFWC, job
characteristics and style of HRM that appropriately reflects the interplay between
these factors.

Dissecting HRM theory has facilitated the analysis of the lived experiences of
FFWPs of the individuals compared to the rhetoric at their organisations. This has
included the workplace environments and systems in which these experiences are
contextualised. Thus, this thesis has enabled empirical work to challenge HRM
theories. The existing literature does not indicate how diversity has been managed
through HRM (Shen et al. 2009: 247). This thesis extended this literature by showing
that a mix of soft and hard HRM coincided with a mixed uptake of a diversity
initiative, that is, FFWPs, at the case study organisations.
Diversity management literature proposes that future research should examine diversity management from multiple perspectives. This is due to the fact that managers, employees and different groups within an organisation may have different perceptions of diversity management which can often be the result of poor implementation of HR diversity policies (Shen et al. 2009: 247). Therefore, future research should explore how senior management, their colleagues and subordinates impact on the availability and outcomes of work life balance programs (McCarthy et al. 2013: 1272). The current research has made a contribution to the understanding of the implications of diversity management and HRM concerning FFWC and FFWPs from multiple perspectives. This was achieved by interviewing participants who were employed in varying roles and levels within the case study organisations. It was uncovered that, despite the public sector case study organisations providing detailed FFWPs, their employees were no more likely to utilise them than the private sector organisations. The importance of this contribution is highlighted by Waters and Bardoel (2006: 80) and Metz (2011: 302) who both pointed to the value of future research including the analysis of industry contexts with respect to the reasons influencing employee decisions to use work-family policies.

**Contributions of the thesis to organisational practice**

The findings of this thesis will have significant practical implications for organisational practice. The contribution is that, if organisations are able to encourage men to use FFWPs, not just women, both men and women will be able to enjoy the role of parenting and also to better balance this role with their partners. This will involve reducing the cultural barriers preventing the use of FFWPs and subsequently increasing their uptake (McDonald et al. 2005: 50). This thesis provides more knowledge about the existing FFWC dimensions so that organisations will be able to better target specific strategies and polices to alleviate obstacles to the usage of FFWPs. At the same time, the findings indicated it is not just all about FFWC. For organisations to have an improved understanding of how to manage FFWPs well, they will need to consider the interplay of job characteristics, the style of HRM and the type of organisation they are running. This thesis confirms that all these factors will be critical if organisations are to be successful in not just providing the rhetoric of FFWPs but also enabling the usage of FFWPs, that is, the reality. This
will be important for organisations in the future, because unmet expectations regarding FFWPs lead to negative feelings and ultimately departure from the organisation (Metz 2011: 288). Conversely, if employees feel they are able to use FFWPs, there will be positive outcomes for individuals and for organisations. These include a better balance of individual employees’ work and family lives (Mauno et al. 2012: 132) as well as enhanced organisational results such as higher employee commitment (Thompson et al. 1999), job satisfaction and work engagement, and lower turnover intentions (Mauno et al. 2011: 161).

**Limitations of this thesis**

Despite the significance of the contributions of this thesis, it is acknowledged that it is still only an in-depth study into a very small aspect of the field. Being a qualitative study of four organisations it was not possible to make large-scale generalisations. On the other hand, the researcher was able to gain a great depth of information during the interviews and had the opportunity to probe the participants and allow the interviews to shed unexpected new light on the topic. This would not have been possible with the questionnaire which was originally planned for the research. The case study organisations were all located in Sydney. This provides an avenue for future research in other areas discussed later in this chapter.

It was acknowledged in the methodology chapter and during the analysis of the findings that throughout the interviews participants may have embellished a response to give a socially desirable answer (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 90; Fontana and Frey 2000: 650). It was because of this issue that time was taken to get to know the participants and to create an atmosphere in which they were likely to talk freely (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 92). Specific strategies were utilised to encourage participants to open up about their everyday experiences including reminding them that they would be de-identified, as would their organisation. It was also recognised that error may have occurred regarding actual interviewing techniques which may have impeded proper communication (Fontana and Frey 2000: 650). To avoid this inaccuracy the interview schedule was adopted, but at the same time a flexible approach was taken to allow for participants’ differences. This required a
combination of observation, empathic sensitivity and intellectual judgement (Gorden 1992).

The documentary data was particularly useful for this thesis as it grounded the investigation in the context of the problem being investigated. In adopting the exploratory approach for each organisation, the regulatory framework was considered because it provided information on what was legally mandated. The documents also provided a fuller understanding of how the organisations chose to create policy and how they marketed themselves in terms of being family-friendly. The only major limitation in this thesis was that some of the documents were unavailable for research as participants at Cost Centre were covered by individual above award agreements contracts which were confidential. However, participants at all case studies were covered by awards or enterprise agreements and as well as this a range of policies and legislation were available which provided concrete contextual information relevant to the case study organisations. The document analysis provided a behind-the-scenes investigation of family-friendly culture that may not have been observable or may not have been fully discussed in the interviews (Patton 2002: 306).

Therefore, by using a mixed methods approach this thesis was able to build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimising the weaknesses of any single approach (Patton 2002: 307). By utilising interviews and documentation this thesis was able to bring together multiple perspectives on the individuals’ lived experiences of FFWPs compared to the rhetoric espoused by the case study organisations. Such a multi-perspective approach was required given the complexity of the thesis topic as firmly established in the previous chapters, especially Chapters 1 and 3.

The empirical study of Bradley et al. (2010) was published after the fieldwork of this thesis. Therefore, it was not possible to incorporate their new dimension of co-worker consequences in the FFWC measure, nor was it possible to incorporate managerial and organisational support as two separate dimensions in the empirical work of this thesis. Bradley et al.’s (2010:23) study presents an extended scale to be used by other researchers.
Finally, due to restrictions of time the data that was collected relating to personal characteristics of participants, such as age, qualifications, family status and number of children was not analysed. This is something that is considered to be worthy of further research in the future.

**Recommendations for further research**

Additional research is required to test and refine the four new FFWC dimensions and five new aspects that were uncovered in this thesis. An avenue for further research arising from the new FFWC dimension of ‘cultural/ethnic racism’ which was found at Community would be to explore the different roles in families in people from different cultures. This is because they may have different FFWP preferences. It is recommended that the extended FFWC measure be studied in larger samples utilising quantitative methods similar to the approach adopted by Bradley *et al.* (2010). It is also suggested that the three new dimensions identified by Bradley *et al.* (2010: 21-22) which were: organizational support, co-worker support and co-worker consequences be examined in future research including qualitative studies. Particularly as Bradley *et al.* (2010:22) state that future research will be needed to further examine the new co-worker support scale. It would also be valuable to conduct a longitudinal qualitative study at the case study organisations over five- and ten-year periods to compare changes over time. No doubt there will be changes in employment relations legislation in that period which will impact on the case study organisations and it would be significant to examine the effect of these changes. Such research will recognise the importance of the institutional environment highlighted in this thesis. Further research on employees’ personal factors such as their age, qualifications and their family structure would be beneficial in understanding their usage of FFWPs. Finally, it would be beneficial to conduct national and international studies concerning the combined role played by FFWC, the type of organisation, job characteristics and the style of HRM on the availability and usage of FFWPs. These suggestions for future research will increase knowledge concerning the role that the various factors identified in this thesis play in explaining the availability and usage of FFWPs.
**Closing words: it is necessary to investigate the lived experience because examining policy alone is not enough**

To sum up, the research in this thesis indicated that even when organisational policies are available to support work and family balance, the intervention of FFWC (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005) created complex outcomes for each individual. The existing measure of five FFWC dimensions was confirmed (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005). An extended measure of FFWC was developed including four new FFWC dimensions and five new aspects. This extended measure will more comprehensively assess FFWC and its influence on work and family balance. However, as the findings indicated, it is not all about culture. The individual experience can be further influenced by job characteristics, such as the value and uniqueness of the job skills to the organisation (Lepak and Snell 1999). The role played by job characteristics varied between the public and private sector organisations. Thus, the type of organisation was shown to be an important factor to be included in the human resource architecture model (Lepak and Snell 1999). Organisations were found to employ a mix of soft and hard HRM (Legge, 1995), rather than one or the other. Thus, the relevance of Lepak and Snell’s and Legge’s models when utilised in isolation of other factors was brought into question by this thesis. This conclusion is supported by the continuing critique of these two models because of their simplistic and binary approaches (Keenoy 1999; Watson 2004; Purcell *et al.* 2009).

This thesis suggests a better understanding concerning the availability and usage of FFWPs is provided by combining the existing FFWC dimensions (Thompson *et al.* 1999; McDonald *et al.* 2005; Bradley *et al.* 2010) with the new FFWC dimensions and aspects from this thesis, the Lepak and Snell (1999) human resource architecture model, a consideration of the organisation and the style of HRM (Legge 1995). All of these aspects were found to be critical. Therefore, the proposed theoretical model provided in Chapter 3 has been confirmed with a modification of intersecting circles to incorporate the interplay between FFWC, job characteristics and style of HRM. This model contributes significantly to the FFWPs literature because it draws on well-established theories to incorporate the various factors to account for the gap between the availability and usage of FFWPs within a single framework.
All in all, this thesis has shown that, organisations may think they have made appropriate investments into diversity management initiatives by providing impressive FFWPs. However, they need to investigate the lived experience of individual employees to truly understand the difference between the rhetoric and the reality of organisational life, examining policy alone is not enough.
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Appendix 1: Interview schedule for the two preliminary interviews of the pilot study phase one

(Turn on the tape, rewind, and put watch on table)

Opening

… thank you for agreeing to meet with me – I really appreciate your time. Give brief background about my work experience and research. Ask … to sign consent form.

So that’s enough about me, can you tell me how long you’ve been working at …?

Where were you working prior to that?

- Was this also a HR role?

General HR practice

Where do you see HR fits into the rest of the organisation?

- Reporting relationships?
- Close to executive decisions?
- Global relationships with HO?

How important do you think your organisations HR practices with respect to attracting employees?

Work family programs (WFPs)

Moving now specifically to work-family programs (WFP) what would you say are the industry norms?

- Factors driving these norms? (Institutional/resource based/architecture model?)
- Can you tell me anything about the nature of these norms?
- Is there a prevalence of a particular type/s of WFP?
- Can you explain why there is such prevalence?
Where would you say your organisation sits with relationship to these industry norms?

How important do you think your WFPs are with respect to attracting employees?

– Can you tell me why you think this might be?

– What gives you this impression?

**Work family balance (WFB)**

I’d like to now talk particularly about WFB. I was interested in how you define work-family balance?

What do you think is important to your employees to help them manage work-family issues?

– Can you explain more?

– Does your organisation gather any information relating to what their employees think is important in helping them manage work-family issues?

– What type of information? What is done with this information?

How do you think work-family issues impact on your organisation?

– Do you think work-family issues have a major impact? Why is this so?

– Does your organisation gather information about the impact of work-family issues on their organisation?

How do work-family issues impact on your employees?

– Does your organisation gather information about the impact of work-family issues on their organisation?

– How is this done? Surveys/interviews?

– How important is this information regarding future decisions?

**Adoption of WFPs**

What work-family programs does your organisation currently offer?

Can you tell me about the way one of these was implemented?
- Were you part of the implementation process
- Who else got involved in the implementation process
- Was there employee consultation/participation
- Were there any difficulties
- How did you handle them?

Are there any WFPs that you were thinking of adopting but didn’t?
- Why? (prompt if needed: too expensive, not enough demand)?

Use of WFPs
Do many employees use the WFPs?
Is this right across the organisation or clustered within certain categories of employees, or certain departments?
Do you keep information relating to the usage of WFPs?
How do new employees find out about the WFPs?
Do you believe that there is any resistance to the usage of WFPs?
- Why do you think this is so?
- Do you think this would be similar in other organisations?

Culture
- Extent to which there are expectations for long hours of work
- The degree to which employees perceive positive or negative career consequences for using work-family benefits
- The extent to which individual managers are sensitive to and accommodating of employees’ family needs

Evaluation of WFPs
Do you evaluate WFPs?
- How?
- What do you measure?
– Are there any benefits?
– How do the benefits relate to the costs?
– Who gets this information?

Future plans
Do you plan to adopt any other WFPs in the future?
How will you decide which ones to adopt?
What might encourage you to adopt more WFPs?

Staff profile
Finally, I would like to understand more about the staff profile at your organisation:
Would you describe employee skills at your organisation as core to the organisation? By core assets, I mean that they are vital to the competitive advantage of an organisation?
– Why would you say this?
– Would there be any major exceptions to this?
– Are there employee skills that would be peripheral, which could easily be outsourced? Why/not?

Would you describe employee skills at your organisation as unique? By unique I mean firm specific skills that require tacit knowledge and expertise?
– Why/not?
– Would there be any major exceptions to this?

Is there a fairly equal balance between the number of male and female employees at your organisation?
– Do there seem to be concentrations of either male or female employees at particular levels of the organisation?
– Why/not?
– Do you think this would be similar in other organisations?
Closure

- Is there anything I haven’t covered that you would like to discuss?
- Would there be an opportunity for me to follow-up at a later stage?
- Would you be interested in me conducting surveys/interviews of your employees?
- Talking to managers about their experiences in working with WFPs?
- Is there anyone who you think I should talk to at your organisation?
- Is there anyone at another organisation who you think I should talk to?

Thank you for your time, … it’s been extremely informative.

My impression of the interview was:

The participant seemed to be:

The most important issue/s:
Appendix 2: Interview schedule for Pilot interviews Phase one

3-4 mins non related topic for ice-breaker/warm-up

Thank you for volunteering to participate in study, and a brief background about the research. Ask them to sign the consent form.

1. Details of the participant’s family and work situation. (gender, age, further education, family structure married, dual career partnership, number of children and responsibilities, position in the organisation, number of hours worked etc.)

2. The participant’s general view of the organisation and management – what it is like to work there (the organisation culture, HR’s soft or hard emphasis, etc.)

3. The issue of work-family balance or conflict – what is the participant’s experience on this? (Has it been an issue/problem for the participant?)

4. The HR Architecture model – peripheral vs. core workers?

5. What are the organisation’s family-friendly policies/programs/benefits that the participant is aware of?

6. Which of these have been, or are being taken advantage of, by the participant (and by others, to the participant’s knowledge)?

7. Are there any reason’s that an employee might feel reluctant to take advantage of the FFWPs, or are they encouraged to take advantage of these programs?

8. Generally, what are the organisation’s (management and employees) attitudes to the relationship between work and family

9. Are there specific organisational practices/norms/assumptions, that would lead to more or less work-family conflict (e.g. expectations to work back late without notice, to take home work at nights, etc)?

10. What are the attitudes of your family members towards your work?

11. Generally, can the participant suggest any changes to the organisation’s policies, practices, or cultural norms/attitudes that would lead to a better work life balance (or to less work-life conflict) for the participant or for other employees?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix 3: interview schedule for case studies phase two

Thank you for volunteering to participate in study, and a brief background about the research. Ask them to sign the consent form. Are you happy for me to tape the interview?

1. Details of the participant’s family and work situation. (gender, age, further education, family structure married, dual career partnership, number of children and responsibilities, position in the organisation, number of hours worked etc.)

2. The participant’s general view of the organisation and management – what it is like to work there (the organisation culture, HR’s soft or hard emphasis, etc.) Explain. (*see explanation at end).

3. What are the organisation’s family-friendly policies/programs/benefits that the participant is aware of?

4. How are you made aware of your organisation’s policies and procedures regarding family-friendly work practices?

5. Which of these have been, or are being taken advantage of, by the participant (and by others, to the participant’s knowledge)?

6. Generally, what are the organisation’s (management and employees) attitudes to the relationship between work and family? For eg My supervisor understands my family demands, I have a say about where I place my time at work and I am able to arrive and depart from work when I want.

7. Who are the most positive and negative contributors of this?

8. Are there specific organisational practices/norms/assumptions that would lead to more or less work-family conflict (e.g. expectations to work back late without notice, to take home work at nights, scheduling of meetings early in the morning etc)?

9. Are certain occupational groups treated differently re FFWPs? Are workers considered equally valuable?

10. What are the attitudes of your family members towards your work?

11. Generally, can the participant suggest any changes to the organisation’s policies, practices, or cultural norms/attitudes that would lead to a better work life balance (or to less work-life conflict) for the participant or for other employees?
12. Are there any reasons that an employee might feel reluctant to take advantage of the family-friendly work practices, or are they encouraged to take advantage of these programs?

13. To what extent do you believe organisation policies regarding family-friendly work practices are implemented/utilised?

14. Are there any dismissive comments made relating to family-friendly concerns? Are you made to feel guilty for going home early?

15. The issue of work-family balance or conflict – what is the participant’s experience on this? (Has it been an issue/problem for the participant?)

16. To what extent do you believe your supervisor supports the achievement of family-friendly work practices?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add?

*Soft HRM and hard HRM were firstly described to each participant. Soft HR was described as the organisation implementing HR for the benefit of its employees, with hard HR meaning they implement HR for bottom line profit. For example soft HR would mean that your organisation implements family-friendly practices because they are thinking of their staff. Hard HR would mean they only implement family-friendly practices because they are expecting profit. How would you describe your organisation?
Appendix 4 UTS ethics approval

UTS ethics approval HREC 2006-221 dated 6 October 2006

Appendix 5 UWS ethics approval

UWS ethics approval H7657 dated 11 December 2009
Appendix 6: enterprise agreement for Big Bank

Sections of the Enterprise Agreement for Big Bank pertaining to family-friendly matters are paraphrased below. This is to ensure anonymity of Big Bank. This appendix reports more fully than the summary provided in the Big Bank chapter.

Section 2 – Common Terms

10. Parental Leave

Paid Parental Leave

10.8 If an Employee takes parental leave to be the child’s primary care giver, the Employee’s first 13 weeks of parental leave will be paid leave. Alternatively, an Employee may take the first 26 weeks of parental leave as paid leave on half pay. Half pay is not granted for less than the full 26 week period.

Right to request

10.32 If the Employee is entitled to parental leave pursuant to the provisions of clause 10.3 or 10.4, the Employee may request the Employer to allow the Employee:

(a) to extend the period of Concurrent Leave provided for in clause 10.4 up to a maximum of eight weeks;

(b) to extend the period of unpaid parental leave provided for in clause 10.3 or 10.4 by a further continuous period of leave not exceeding 12 months provided that:

(i) where an Employee’s spouse is taking parental leave, the extended unpaid parental leave cannot exceed 12 months less any period of parental leave (including special maternity leave) that the Employee’s spouse has taken, or will have taken, in relation to the child before the request starts; and

(ii) an Employee is not entitled to extend the period of unpaid parental leave beyond 24 months after the date of the birth or placement of the child; and

(c) to return from a period of parental leave on a flexible basis (eg, on a part time basis) until the child reaches school age, to assist the Employee in reconciling work and parental responsibilities.

10.33 The Employer shall consider the request having regard to the Employee’s circumstances and, provided the request is genuinely based on the Employee’s parental responsibilities, may only refuse the request on reasonable grounds related to the effect on the workplace or the Employer’s business. Such grounds might include cost, lack of adequate replacement staff, loss of efficiency and the impact on customer service.

10.53 The Federal Government intends to introduce a statutory paid parental leave scheme, anticipated to be 18 weeks’ pay at the Federal Minimum Wage (Scheme) during the operation of this Agreement.

10.54 Following the commencement of the Scheme, the Employer will continue to provide the paid parental leave set out in clauses 10.6 to 10.11, provided that the Scheme will be implemented on a cost neutral basis to the Employer in that the total amount payable by the Employer in relation to paid parental leave for a particular
Employee as a result of clauses 10.6 to 10.11, will neither increase or decrease the following commencement of the Scheme.

31. Working from home arrangement

31.1 An Employer and Employee may make a written agreement which provides that the Employee will work from home in accordance with this clause 31(Working from Home Arrangement).

31.2 The Employer will provide to the Employee the terms to apply under a proposed Working from Home Arrangement including the following:

- The equipment to be provided or funded by the Employer, which will include technology the Employer considers is necessary to perform the role;
- Details of the expenses incurred by the Employee that will be reimbursed by the Employer to the Employee;
- The circumstances in which the Employee may be required to perform work from or attend work related meetings at the Employer’s premises during the Working from Home Arrangement;
- The circumstances in which the Working from Home Arrangement may be terminated without terminating the Employee’s employment and the Employee’s right or obligation to then work at the Employer’s premises; and
- Details of any other applicable arrangements.

(Big Bank enterprise agreement 2010) viewed 17 March 2011

Appendix 7: family-friendly policies at Big Bank

The policies examined were those that were updated 21 September, 2009; 24 November 2009 and 15 February 2010. The diversity framework and programs policy states that: ‘Diversity is not only about compliance and social responsibility; it is also about embracing everyone’s unique perspective and differences’. The policy goes on to say that the Big Bank Group helps diversity flourish in many ways including supporting employees in integrating their work/life responsibilities by offering choices. The appendix describes the range of programs, initiatives and benefits of the Big Bank Group relating to work and family balance: childcare, eldercare, flexible work arrangements, becoming a parent, telecommuting and women’s initiatives.

The eldercare policy dated 21 September 2009, states that the Big Bank Group recognises that employees have a wide range of family obligations that have an impact on their ability to manage both their work responsibilities and lifestyle. The care of an older relative or close family member is one of these responsibilities that are taken on by family members. Many employees need to access information and eldercare agencies and services – either now or in the future. Big Bank provides information designed to help their employees understanding the issues involved and to access the services they may need. They state that ‘People with responsibilities for dependents often feel isolated and reluctant to ask for help, even in an organisation that has a culture that recognises that employees have family responsibilities’. Furthermore they state that ‘The Big Bank Group considers that it is important for employees to be able to talk to their People Leader about their concerns, and is committed to providing options such as flexible hours, family leave or free counselling services to help them manage their work and life obligations.’

In the job sharing policy updated 15 February 2010 Big Bank affirm that ‘Job sharing is one of our flexible ways of working that can help you to balance your work and home life … We encourage job sharing- employees gain the flexibility they need and wider career options, and we benefit from retaining people in roles that suit them best.’ They go on to say ‘We encourage job sharing at all levels. Currently, over 400 jobs are being shared in units and at different levels’. The policy outlines the benefits for the employee including greater opportunities to suit employee priorities outside of work, as well as the business including attracting and retaining talented people who want flexible working arrangements that matches their skills and experience. They state that the benefits of job sharing generally outweigh any additional costs such as overlap in hours worked. Big Bank run a job share register which is an online database of people looking to do a job share role.

The parental leave policy updated 15 February 2010 recognises that becoming a parent is a significant event in their employees’ lives. As a leading employer of choice, they provide financial and non-financial assistance to their employees who are having children. The parental leave policy outlines the benefits of the policy including:
– Taking up to two years parental leave
– This includes up to twelve weeks of paid parental leave
– When employees return from leave they have the right to request part-time work until school age.

The policy defines parental leave as ‘leave that you take to look after your baby or your newly adopted baby’ and it can be a combination of the following leave types:
– Paid parental leave
– Unpaid parental leave
– Annual leave
– Long service leave

Parental leave can be taken for a maximum of 104 weeks until:
– Your baby turns two, or
– Your adopted child turns five.

They state that their employees are entitled to take up to 104 weeks of parental leave, including:
– 12 weeks paid parental leave
– Any annual or long service leave you choose to take
– Unpaid parental leave.

There is a section in the parental leave policy which allows employees to take paid parental leave flexibly. Though most people take their twelve weeks’ paid parental leave in one period, if the employee shares the role of caregiver, then the policy allows employees to take their paid parental leave flexibly. That is, they take paid leave for the days they are the primary caregiver and come to work on the other days.

As an indication of how Big Bank is ‘publically’ perceived as a family-friendly employer, note that it has won a number of national managing diversity awards. Details are withheld to maintain confidentiality.

Big Bank family-friendly policies, viewed 24 February 2010,
Appendix 8: family-friendly policies at Cost Centre

Provided below is a detailed version of Cost Centre’s family-friendly policies.

Parental leave

We are proud to provide parental leave that exceeds most industry benchmarks. Key components are:

- Parental leave which allows you to take 14 weeks’ parental leave on full pay if you are the full time primary care giver for a newly born or adopted child;
- 14 weeks is paid parental leave; and
- Up to 90 weeks is unpaid parental leave;
- Employees are entitled to parental leave only if you intend to become the full-time primary care giver of your child;
- Paternity leave is also available for males who are not the primary care-giver.

Care for kids

- Our success at work largely depends on our peace of mind relating to the child care we have in place for our kids. To give you information and resources to achieve this, Cost Centre funds Care for kids:
  - A comprehensive online child care directory – easy access to thousands of reputable child care centres, carers and agencies through the microsite;
  - Useful tools, information and resources such as a nanny interview guide, child-care checklists and relevant articles.

Child care/elder care service – families at work

Sometimes our caring responsibilities include other members of our family. To support this, Cost Centre also funds a service called families at work. This is:

- A free child, elder and dependent care referral service
- Available 24 hours a day – families at work consultants can be contacted by calling 1800 731 094 [number has been changed]

Cost Centre parents’ gift

The arrival of a new addition to the family is a happy time in our lives. To celebrate we would like to gift you with:
– A twelve month subscription to ‘Practical Parenting’ and a surprise gift after the birth of your child.

On site carers’ facilities

At times a private, clean and pleasant area is required to attend to the needs of some of our younger additions. In every location we have carers’ facilities. These are:

– Dedicated rooms on Cost Centre’s premises for staff and visitors with babies.
– This has equipment and facilities to enable breast milk to be expressed and stored; babies to be fed and changed.

Parent networking opportunities – connection lunches

Balancing family and work responsibilities can be tough. To help make this a little easier we facilitate lunches which are:

– Informal and formal meetings for parents to share experiences and support each other.
– Run nationally and on a quarterly basis for parents who are about to go on parental leave, are on parental leave, or have just returned from parental leave.

Annual family events

We all work hard and sometimes this involves a level of commitment not only at a personal level but also from our direct families. Our family events are a small way that Cost Centre can say ‘thank you’ for your support in the success of your spouse or your partner. Family events held in each office annually – encouraging interaction between the firm, its people and their families. For example:

– Kids arts day/work
– National Maritime Museum
– Family movie premier
– Billabong Sanctuary
– Luna Park

Awards [some details withheld]

It is pleasing to receive public recognition for the progress we have made to date. This recognition is in the form of the following accolades:

– Finalist for the AHRI Award for Innovation in achieving work/life balance
– High commendation for the ACCI/BCA Work & family award
– EOWA – Employer of choice for women
Appendix 9: Relevant family-friendly sections of award for Service and Community

The relevant sections of the Crown Employees (Public Services Conditions of Employment) Award 2009 are sections 13, 21, 24, 71, 75, 76 and 81 available at:

Appendix 10: family-friendly policies at Service

Policy information relevant to family-friendly work practices is in place at Service as follows.

Flexible Work Practices Policy and Guidelines

Part 1 – General Policy and Overview

Policy statement

The New South Wales Government recognises the importance of flexible work arrangements for the successful performance of public agencies. Flexible work practices offer mutual benefits for public agencies and their employees, within the framework of employment arrangements that apply within individual agencies.

The changing nature of work and personal life has intensified the need for effective policies that will assist employees to combine paid employment with other responsibilities e.g. family obligations, study, personal health.

The Government encourages public agencies to develop management practices that facilitate flexibility in employment arrangements and which recognise both women’s and men’s lifestyles and family responsibilities. Agencies should inform employees of the flexible work practices designed to best meet their business and employee needs.

Flexible work practices options

Below is a summary of nine flexible work options which agencies may wish to introduce. Each of these options is covered in more detail in part 2 of this document. Part 2 also includes the key points agencies should consider in developing each option.

1. Part-time work

Part-time work allows flexibility for agencies to better utilise employees, and more effectively and efficiently manage the delivery of services to customers. It also offers greater flexibility for employees in combining their work and family responsibilities.

2. Job sharing

Job sharing is a voluntary arrangement whereby one job is shared between part-time employees. Job sharing allows managers to implement a greater variety of employment options and provides flexibility for employees to choose preferred work patterns.
3. Part time leave without pay

Part-time leave without pay provides an opportunity for employees currently working full-time to work part-time, with leave without pay for the balance of full-time hours for the classification. At the end of a defined period of leave without pay, the employee returns to full-time work.

4. Career break scheme

This scheme is available for any purpose desired by employees, such as extending parental leave, study, travel, personal and professional development, alternative employment and voluntary work. Employees are encouraged to keep in touch with their workplace by attending conferences, internal training and seminars, receiving regular newsletters and continuing links with professional and technical associations. In some cases work is available for several weeks each year to cover recreation leave of another employee. It differs from variable year employment in that it is not planned as far in advance and can be for various lengths of time.

5. Part-year employment

This option means that employees, by agreement with the employer, may elect to take a number of week’s unpaid leave in addition to their annual entitlement to recreation leave. Salary is paid for weeks worked, and for recreation leave accrued, and the remaining weeks are unpaid. For agencies, an annual period of unpaid leave may be particularly suitable where workloads fluctuate. Employees may be better able to coordinate work and family responsibilities, for example, by taking leave during school vacation periods.

6. Variable-year employment

This option means that employees, by agreement with the employer, may elect to take a year of unpaid leave after working for a pre-arranged number of years. Salary is paid for the years worked, and for recreation leave accrued, and the remaining year is unpaid. It differs from a career break scheme in that it is pre-planned a number of years ahead and is likely to be for a shorter period than a career break.

7. Working from home

Working from home may suit the agency and the employees as a short or long term option. It may allow employees to continue their employment during some temporary, unforeseen circumstance which prevents their attending the workplace. It also allows employees to work at home when the manager and the employee are in agreement that a certain piece of work can be completed efficiently in this manner. This provision could also be used by employees with a temporary disability, or whose disability fluctuates, which prevents their attendance at the workplace.

8. Varying hours of work

Employees with family and/or other responsibilities are likely to require some flexibility to deal with such obligations. There are a number of options available to agencies to provide suitable arrangement which meet these needs. These include the
accumulation of flex leave, and varying core and bandwidth hours which can, for example, enable parents to coordinate their hours with school hours.

9. Short term absences for family and other responsibilities

The need to be absent from work to meet family and other responsibilities may be for part of a day, for a day or for a number of days. Flexible arrangements of working hours and a range of leave provisions, either separately or in combination, may be used to enable employees to meet these needs.

Service 2010, *Family friendly work policy and practices*
Appendix 11: family-friendly policies at Community

Policy information relevant to family-friendly work practices is in place at Community as follows.

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Flexible Work Practices Policy

Flexible work practices not only assist Community in responding to the needs of clients but will also benefit employees by encouraging them to fully participate in the workplace.

The changing nature of work and personal life has intensified the need for effective policies that will assist employees to combine paid employment with other responsibilities (e.g. family obligations, study, personal health).

Community is committed to the development of management practices that facilitate flexibility in employment arrangements and which recognise both women’s and men’s lifestyles and family responsibilities.

The policies in this document are based on the former Public Employment Office’s Flexible Work Practices Policy and Guidelines; and replace all previous Government guidelines and circulars etc relating to flexible work arrangements.

These policies are subject to Community’s discretion and work in conjunction with the Flexible working Hours Agreement No. XXX of date withheld i.e. flexi time regulations.

Exception

Flexible work arrangements are available to permanent employees. Temporary employees are able to seek Family and Community Service Leave, Personal Carer’s Leave, varying hours of work and, if appropriate, working from home.

Principles

Community is better able to meet its objectives, including improved customer service, by recognising that employee performance can be enhanced by an employer’s responsiveness to work and family issues. Employees or Community may initiate flexible working arrangements. Participation is by agreement, at Community convenience, and must be documented in writing, signed by the employee and the approved delegated Community officer.

There is no requirement for an employee to exhaust other forms of leave prior to taking the leave without pay mentioned in these policies.
Mutual Benefit

Changes in working arrangements to increase flexibility are made by agreement between the employee and Community, and should be of mutual benefit to both parties, embodying fair and equitable practices.

Extended Hours

Where flexible work arrangements involve extended hours, the same safety, security and facilities are to be made available as for employees working ordinary (standard) hours.

Regular Hours

The importance for employees with family responsibilities of factors such as predictable, regular hours and days of work which coincide with the availability of such services as transport and child care, should be recognised when planning the provision of business services.

Equity

Flexible working arrangements should be made available across locations and classifications on an equitable basis, wherever possible, in accordance with individual policy guidelines. The special cultural needs of staff will be taken into consideration when determining requests. Individuals seeking flexible work agreements may require the support of another person and/or an interpreter to facilitate discussions and reaching of an agreement. A manager should arrange an interpreter if deemed appropriate or if requested by the employee.

Practical Assistance for Employees

Employees need to manage their work and family responsibilities, both during and outside working hours. Community can provide practical assistance for employees during working hours through responsible working arrangements e.g. providing short breaks from the workplace to handle family matters on a “make-up” time basis; allowing the responsible use of office telephones to enable employees to make family contact or to be contacted.

Benefits for Regions/Divisions

The advantages and cost benefits in providing flexible work practices include improved retention of skilled employees, reductions in recruitment and training costs through lower employee turnover, a decrease in absenteeism, improved employee morale and reduced stress. These all lead to greater productivity.

Current Provisions

There are already a wide range of provisions, which recognise that employees have both work and family responsibilities. These provisions include adoption leave, parental leave, part-time work including job sharing, Family and Community Service Leave, Personal Carer’s Leave and leave without pay. However, these provisions
were not generally designed to cover many situations, which commonly arise such as school vacation periods. In some policies Community may negotiate with employees to relinquish their substantive position at the beginning or after a 12 month period has elapsed, (e.g. job share).

(Employees on parental leave, which includes the provision of 12 months leave without pay for maternity leave, cannot be approached to relinquish their substantive positions).

Where an employee has the right of return to work at their substantive level, although not necessarily to the work performed before the period of leave or at the same location, the withheld information Award may apply. When such a transfer is contemplated regard should be given to the following factors to determine whether the proposed transfer should proceed:

The reasonable availability of transport facilities between the officer’s home and proposed work location; the number of times the officer has been directed to transfer in the past (information on their personnel file); the reasonableness of the transfer in relation to the officer’s responsibilities outside the workplace, e.g. dependent care responsibilities. Total time involved in travelling; number of public transport connections to be made; frequency of public transport services; increased transport costs involved.

**Summary of Flexible Work Practice Options**

**Part-Time Work**

Part-time work involves working less than the full-time hours for the job. This could be a permanent or temporary arrangement with paid or unpaid leave for the balance of full-time hours for the classification. Part-time work allows Community service delivery to customers. It also offers greater flexibility for employees in combining their work and family responsibilities. For more information: Working Part-Time

**Job-Sharing**

Job sharing is a voluntary arrangement whereby one job is shared between part-time employees. Job sharing allows managers to implement a greater variety of employment options and provides flexibility for employees to choose preferred work patterns. For more information: Job Sharing

**Career Break Scheme**

Employees can take up to three years’ leave without pay to undertake full-time study, child care or dependent care and then return to a job at the same level but not necessarily to the same location. Such leave may be in addition to or combined with maternity and parental leave. Communication procedures should be developed between the employee and Community to ensure employees are aware of developments, training opportunities etc during the time they are not at work. For more information: Career Break Scheme.
Part Year Employment

Employees, by agreement with Community, may take a number of week’s unpaid leave in addition to their annual entitlement to recreation leave. Salary is paid for weeks worked and for recreation leave accrued and the remaining weeks are unpaid. Employees may be better able to co-ordinate work and other responsibilities e.g. by taking leave during school vacation periods. For more information: Part Year Employment.

Variable Year Employment

By agreement with Community, employees may elect to take a year of unpaid leave after working for a pre-arranged period (minimum one year). Salary is paid for the year(s) worked and recreation leave accrued. The remaining year is unpaid. For more information: Variable Year Employment.

Working From Home

Working from home is a special arrangement whereby an employee, with the approval of Community, carries out specified duties at their place of residence. The duration of such an arrangement is not to exceed two consecutive days and is subject to mutual agreement between the employee and Community in accordance to the specific policy. For more information: Working From Home.

Varying Flexible Hours

The pattern of hours worked may be re-arranged by agreement between the employee and Community (but within the prescribed limits under the proposed Enterprise Instrument i.e. 7am – 7 pm) in order to accommodate family and community responsibilities e.g. providing before or after school care for the employee’s children. For more information: Varying Flexible Hours.

Short Term Absences for Family and Community Service Responsibilities

The need to be absent from work to meet family and community responsibilities may be for part of a day, or for a number of days. Flexible arrangements of working hours and a range of leave provisions, either separately or in combination, may be used. For more information: Short Term Absences for Family and Community Services Responsibilities.