

NAVIGATING THE TENSIONS OF FLEXIBLE WORK:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES  
EMPLOYED BY FLEXIBLY WORKING PARENTS

BY

NATALIJA ANDREJIC

A thesis

submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Commerce

Victoria University of Wellington

2017

## Abstract

The demand for workplace flexibility is growing in New Zealand. The increasing and fragmented employment participation of women has given rise to growing complexity within family lives and higher demand for flexible work. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs) are intended to assist parents in managing care responsibilities, while discouraging unemployment among women in particular. Evidence linking FWA usage with positive work outcomes and reduced work-family conflict has grown in recent years. However, research also suggests a darker side to FWAs. For some, research shows that FWAs may exacerbate work-life balance (WLB) issues and negatively affect career advancement, with indications that attempts to promote WLB can come at the expense of positive work outcomes, and vice versa. As a result, less is known about the factors that shape outcomes for flexibly working parents, or indeed, the individual strategies that parents employ to promote positive outcomes while working flexibly. The complex way in which FWAs can either promote or hinder positive employee outcomes necessitates concurrent examination of the tensions between WLB and career outlooks for users of FWAs. Drawing on the experiences of 21 professional, flexibly working parents across public service organisations, this thesis finds parents navigate the tensions of flexible work using a variety of WLB, work organisation, and career-promoting strategies, with varying effects. Work intensification and efficiency strategies are shown to be commonly used by flexibly working parents for promoting positive work outcomes. However, while work efficiency appears to also promote WLB, work intensification is seen to negatively impact WLB. This research provides valuable insight into flexibly working employee strategies, hitherto largely neglected within the literature, and highlights the need for applying the life course perspective to FWA research.

### Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge those who dedicated their time to participate in this research. I would also like to thank the Government Women's Network for assisting me in finding participants. I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Noelle Donnelly for providing academic guidance to this research, and Dr. Sarah Proctor-Thomson for her assistance in the early days of this study. I thank Annie McConnochie for editing my work. To my family, friends, and beloved pets, I appreciate your support throughout my studies.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	vii
List of Figures .....	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	4
FWAs and WLB Definitions .....	4
FWA Legislation in New Zealand .....	5
Flexible Work and Career Development .....	8
Employee Perceptions of WLB and Positive Work Outcomes .....	10
The Tensions of Flexible Work .....	11
The Interconnections between Work and Family .....	11
Organisational Contextual Factors .....	12
Organisation and Management of Work and FWAs .....	13
Organisational Norms .....	14
Employee FWA Strategies .....	15
WLB Strategies .....	16
Boundary management. ....	16
Coordination of life domains. ....	17
Use of social and paid resources. ....	18
Partner support. ....	18
Social support networks and paid services. ....	18
Work Organisation Strategies .....	19
Work coordination. ....	19
Work intensification and efficiency. ....	20
Career Strategies .....	21
Developing human capital. ....	21

Developing social capital.....21

Introduction to the Present Study .....22

    Research Rationale .....22

    Research Questions.....24

    Theoretical Framework.....26

Conclusion.....27

Chapter 3: Methodology .....28

    Research Design.....28

        Qualitative Research.....28

        Social Constructionism.....28

        Purposive Sampling .....29

        Data Collection .....30

        Research Instrument .....31

    Sample Characteristics .....33

    Sampling Procedure .....35

    Data Processing and Analysis .....35

    Ethical Considerations and Approval Procedures .....36

    Criteria for Trustworthiness .....36

    Conclusion.....38

Chapter 4: WLB and Positive Work Outcomes: Findings and Analysis .....39

    Employee WLB Outcomes.....39

    Employee Positive Work Outcomes .....40

    Interconnections between WLB and Positive Work Outcomes .....42

    Organisational Contextual Factors .....45

        Organisation and Management of Work and FWAs .....45

        Organisational Norms.....50

    Conclusion.....55

NAVIGATING THE TENSIONS OF FLEXIBLE WORK	vi
Chapter 5: Employee FWA Strategies: Findings and Analysis .....	56
Employee WLB Strategies .....	56
Boundary Management.....	56
Coordination of Life Domains.....	60
Use of Social and Paid Resources .....	62
Partner support. ....	62
Social support networks and paid services. ....	65
Employee Work Organisation Strategies .....	66
Work Coordination .....	67
Work Intensification and Efficiency.....	69
Employee Career Strategies .....	72
Developing Human Capital .....	73
Developing Social Capital .....	74
Conclusion.....	77
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	78
Navigating the Tensions of Flexible Work .....	78
Theoretical Implications.....	82
Practical Implications .....	84
Implications for Organisations and Employees .....	84
Policy Implications .....	87
Limitations and Avenues for Future Research.....	88
Conclusion.....	90
References.....	91
Appendix A: Interview schedule.....	100
Appendix B: Participant information sheet.....	103
Appendix C: Participant consent form.....	105

## List of Tables

Table 1. Types of Employee-Oriented FWAs .....	5
Table 2. Provisions and Changes in New Zealand’s FWA Legislation.....	6
Table 3. Demographic Information of Respondents .....	34
Table 4. WLB Strategies Used by Flexibly Working Parents .....	57
Table 5. Work Organisation Strategies Used by Flexibly Working Parents .....	67
Table 6. Career Strategies Used by Flexibly Working Parents .....	72
Table A1. Interview Questions in Relation to Previous Research Prompts .....	102

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Theoretical framework .....	25
---------------------------------------	----

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

Driven by women's economic independence, modern couples have been described as having three careers. Under this arrangement, while both parents have separate employment careers, they share a third 'family career', where both have responsibilities (Levner, 2000). Consequently, parents face increased difficulty in juggling their work and family responsibilities in a time where raising their children to the best of their ability has increased in concern for parents, and professional employees are socialised to work long hours (Grady & McCarthy, 2008; Moen et al., 2013). Over 90 percent of a sample of US parents report experiencing work-family conflict (Gornick & Meyers, 2005). These changes in family and employment dynamics have been met with what sociologists refer to as 'structural lags' (Moen & Yu, 2000). More specifically, organisations and government have been slow to support families that are no longer dividing employment and childcare according to the traditional male-as-breadwinner and female-as-homemaker model. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs), such as, part-time work, flexible schedules, compressed work weeks, and working from home, are relatively inexpensive initiatives that once refined on a more widespread scale, may be one solution to the shift in dynamics between work and family life (Weeden, 2005). Within New Zealand, the demand for FWAs is high. A recent report suggests that over two thirds of professional workers currently seek greater WLB and FWAs (Hudson, 2015).

When it comes to the implementation of FWAs, research indicates that individual employees bear the burden of responsibility for promoting their positive outcomes while working flexibly. For example, business and legislative discourse tends to emphasise employees' roles in negotiating FWA usage and devising ways that their FWA may be effectively adopted and utilised within organisations (Cooper & Baird, 2015; Donnelly, Proctor-Thomson, & Plimmer, 2012). Furthermore, organisations selectively grant FWAs to high-performing and trustworthy employees (Hersch et al., 2001), who are more likely to assume responsibility for ensuring that their arrangements work in practice. Professional employees more broadly have also experienced increased responsibility in maintaining WLB, brought on by technological advancements and long-hours work cultures (Moen et al., 2013). Where previously organisations delineated work schedules for employees, with standard business hours signalling the end in the work day, now employees must decide how to fit in



family and personal time amidst constant pressure to be engaged in, or accessible to work (Moen et al., 2013). However, research tends to focus on examining organisational-level contextual factors or stable individual differences which may influence outcomes for flexibly working employees (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). Despite indications of employees having responsibility for promoting positive FWA outcomes, less attention has been dedicated towards researching how the behaviour of employees can influence outcomes while they are working flexibly.

Whilst there is evidence of positive effects of FWAs for both productivity-related organisational outcomes (Shepard, Clifton & Kruse, 1996) and job satisfaction and work-family conflict for flexibly working employees (Baltes et al., 1999; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), emerging research reveals that the picture is more complicated. Firstly, there is a lack of consistency concerning the relationship between FWAs and business outcomes. In their systematic review, de Menezes and Kelliher (2011) concluded that there is no universal business case for FWAs, citing examples of studies having found negative or null relationships between FWAs and organisational productivity, job performance, employee retention, presenteeism, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and health and well-being. This suggests the existence of many moderating contextual factors that may have an impact on outcomes associated with FWA usage. Furthermore, research also points to a 'dark side' to FWAs, in some cases resulting in stigmatisation, poorer performance appraisals, less prestigious work assignments, slower rates of wage increases and promotions, professional isolation, and risk of future unemployment (Glass, 2004; Munsch, 2016; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). This is alarming given that New Zealand researchers prescribe that *quality* FWAs cannot be associated with negative effects on income, career progression, nor access to favourable employment (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009). Moreover, there is concern over a negative impact of FWAs on WLB. Studies have observed flexibly working employees working longer hours than their standard-working colleagues, largely due to pressures related to high workloads alongside a desire to prove themselves whilst facing career disadvantages (Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Evans, Kunda, & Barley, 2004; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). This demonstrates the opposing forces that flexibly working employees may be required to navigate, wherein attempts to promote WLB or positive work outcomes may be in tension. Therefore, there seems to be a critical need to examine simultaneously the WLB and positive work outcomes of flexibly working employees.

The primary objective of this research is to explore and identify individual strategies used by flexibly working parents which contribute to WLB and promote positive work

outcomes, while also investigating the possibility for tension between these outcomes. This is a more positive perspective compared to the “rather dire view” (Kreiner et al., 2009, p. 715) that research into work-family relationships has cast with its predominant focus on negative outcomes, such as, work-family conflict that are less likely to provide insight into practical solutions for promoting positive FWA outcomes. This research aims to address a gap that exists in the current literature regarding strategies used by professional, flexibly working parents. Additionally, extant studies have not specifically sought to delineate the difference between individual’s strategies aimed at promoting WLB compared to positive work outcomes to investigate their interconnection (e.g. Lee & Kossek, 2005). The exploration of both WLB and work-related strategies in this research may provide valuable insights into ways that flexibly working employees can optimise both WLB, and positive work outcomes.

This thesis begins with a review of the literature in Chapter 2 that identifies the information that is known about the topic of interest and how FWAs are positioned within New Zealand’s institutional context, as well as research gaps to be addressed in the study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the research questions and theoretical framework employed in this research. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological considerations undertaken to address the research objectives, specifically describing the study’s qualitative nature, social constructionist perspective, and use of purposive sampling techniques and interviews for data collection. Next, Chapter 4 outlines how WLB and positive work outcomes, and the ways these outcomes are interconnected, are conceived by the respondents, as well as the organisational contextual factors that emerged as influencing FWA outcomes. In addition, the chapter provides an analysis of these findings as they relate to previous research. Chapter 5 presents and analyses various strategies that flexibly working parents adopted to promote WLB and positive work outcomes. The thesis concludes with chapter six which discusses the conclusion of the study in light of the research objective. Furthermore, chapter six presents the theoretical and practical implications of the research, and finally, certain limitations of the study and possible areas for future research.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter presents an outline of the FWA literature with specific framing from the perspective of strategies that employees adopt. First, it describes New Zealand's FWA legislation that shapes employee experiences of FWA implementation. Then it introduces recent career theories with a focus on the relevance of the life course perspective to the careers of flexibly working parents. Informed by career theory, the review then explores the literature related to the way flexibly working parents conceptualise WLB and positive work outcomes. After introducing notions of the tensions of flexible work and interconnections between work and family, the review also outlines organisational contextual factors known to influence these tensions and outcomes for flexibly working parents. Next, to understand what is currently known about ways of promoting WLB and positive work outcomes, the review explores the extant literature on individual strategies used by working parents and flexibly working employees. Finally, the chapter introduces the research rationale, the theoretical framework, and the research questions that emerged from an identification of the gaps in the literature.

### **FWAs and WLB Definitions**

WLB is defined as “the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities” (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 326). Framed in this way, WLB is promoted by employee-oriented FWAs that feature employee choice or control, rather than capacity-oriented flexibility, which streamlines work schedules to meet production or customer requirements (Dettmers, Fietze, & Kaiser, 2013). FWAs are defined here as “employer-provided benefits that permit employees some level of control over when and where they work outside the standard workday” (Mercer, Russell, & Arnold, 2014, p. 411). Table 1 describes the types of FWAs featured in this study.

Table 1

*Types of Employee-Oriented FWAs*

FWA	Description
Part-time	Working fewer hours than full-time employees with a proportionate reduction in salary.
Flex-full-time	Working full-time hours while using one or more of the below types of FWAs.
Telework	Working from home during at least part of the work week.
Flexitime	Having flexibility over work times.
Compressed work weeks	Compressing the total work hours per week into fewer days, resulting in longer work days and time off later in the week or fortnight.

**FWA Legislation in New Zealand**

New Zealand's FWA legislation corresponds with a soft-touch, 'right-to-request' type of legislation that exists in countries such as Australia and the UK (Donnelly et al., 2012). Under part 6AA of the Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act (2007), New Zealand employees currently have the right to request variation to the hours or days they work or place of work. Meanwhile the act gives employers the right to refuse requests under specific conditions where FWAs would compromise business needs (see Table 2). Under the act, employees are responsible for outlining any foreseeable changes that the employer may need to make to accommodate the request. Employers have the responsibility to consider requests and inform employees of whether they have been granted, and when requests are refused, they must explain their reasons. Under the legislation, employees cannot contest the reasons employers give for denying requests, but can report their employers for not following correct process to a labour inspector, then for mediation, and then to the authorities, which may fine an employer up to \$2,000 in reparations to the employee. Following a government review, changes were made under the Employment Relations Amendment Act (2014) to part 6AA relating to New Zealand's FWA Legislation. These included extending the entitlement for requesting FWAs to employees generally, not only caregivers, from the beginning of their employment, rather than after six months' job tenure, and with no restriction of how often requests can be made. In addition, employers became required to respond to FWA requests sooner, within one month rather than three. A

summary of New Zealand's FWA legislation across the two amendments is outlined in Table 2.

New Zealand's FWA legislation and the advice of government agencies on its conception have been criticised as 'employer-friendly', with a primary purpose of accommodating the needs of the country's labour market (Masselot, 2014; Ravenswood, 2008). As a result, the legislation highlights employee responsibility in managing work and family and ignores structural constraints to individual choices and the responsibilities of organisations and society to alleviate tensions between work and family (Ravenswood, 2008). The legislation prescribing employees as responsible for initiating FWA requests and assessing and mitigating against their business impact, reveals the legislation's emphasis on employees accommodating business needs rather than organisations supporting the WLB of employees (Ravenswood, 2008). Because the legislation emerged from the business case of FWAs in promoting employee recruitment, retention, and productivity, there is concern that the legislation may be removed if the business case weakens (Ravenswood, 2008).

Research has investigated the negative consequences of 'right-to-request' legislative and organisational policies only delineating the process for accessing FWAs while failing to address where the responsibility lies for the implementation and management of FWAs (Donnelly et al., 2012). New Zealand and Australian research finds that employees are left with responsibility for managing their arrangements, despite having little control over workload pressures (Cooper & Baird, 2015; Donnelly et al., 2012). For example, research on teleworking in 50 New Zealand and Australian organisations found that over half of the organisations had no written guidelines for teleworking arrangements (Bentley et al., 2013). With lack of training for employees and managers on teleworking, the managers studied felt unsupported in how to manage and facilitate teleworking. Lack of managerial support can then lead employees to work overtime while using FWAs (Cooper & Baird, 2015). Accordingly, Donnelly et al. (2012) argue that FWA legislation be guided by a 'rights and responsibilities' framework, defining the responsibilities as well as rights for organisations and employees.

Table 2

*Provisions and Changes in New Zealand's FWA Legislation*

Legislation	Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007	Employment Relations Amendment Act 2014
Objective	Promote the WLB of working parents.	Promote the WLB of employees.
Eligibility	Six months of employment with the same employer.	From the start of employment.
Entitlement	To request FWAs if employees are caring for any person. They must not have made a request in the last 12 months.	All employees can request FWAs. No restriction of time between requests.
Procedural requirements	Requests must be in writing. Employers must respond to requests within three months. If requests are denied, employers must provide reasons for the grounds for refusal.	Same procedural requirements except employers must respond within one month rather than three months of requests.
Grounds for refusal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to organise work among existing staff</li> <li>• Inability to recruit additional staff</li> <li>• Detrimental impact on quality</li> <li>• Detrimental impact on performance</li> <li>• Insufficiency of work during periods the employee proposes to work</li> <li>• Planned structural changes</li> <li>• Burden of additional costs</li> <li>• Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand</li> </ul>	Same grounds for refusal.

*Note.* Adapted from Heathrose Research (2010).

Furthermore, 'right-to-request' policies are claimed to limit FWA availability, through giving employers 'formalised discretion' in interpreting FWA policies and deciding whether to grant flexibility (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). This results in feelings of privilege and obligation when employees do use flexibility (Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Out of gratitude, flexibly working employees have been found to repay their organisations with increased productivity and work devotion (Cooper & Baird, 2015; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). New Zealand employees also report feeling guilty when deviating from regular business hours, which then leads them to work harder and longer hours in return (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009). Therefore, the lack of implementation guidelines in New Zealand's FWA legislation and the way it limits FWA availability have an impact on the ability of employees to access FWAs and promote their desired outcomes once they obtain them. The lack of business guidelines for FWA implementation in New Zealand's FWA legislation, coupled with indications that employees are responsible for avoiding any adverse business effects of their FWAs, begs the question of how employees are managing their burden of responsibility.

### **Flexible Work and Career Development**

The concept of 'career' is defined by Hall (2002) as "the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life" (p. 12). A relevant definition of work is "that which one does to make a living" (Gunz & Peiperl, 2007, p. 5). Although feminist interpretations of 'work' encompass unpaid housework and volunteer work (Swiebel, 1999), while studying work and family intersections, clarity between domains can be gained from limiting work to refer only to paid employment (Eby et al., 2005). Historically, career theory originated in the study of predominantly men as the breadwinners, in isolation from family circumstances (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2010). Careers were defined by objective outcomes of linear, upward job mobility, within a single organisation, promoted by high job commitment (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014). However, recently careers have been shaped by social changes due to competitive global markets where employees have higher job mobility, more job losses, and less opportunity for career advancement within their organisations (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014).

These changes have stimulated a variety of alternative career theories, for example, protean careers (Briscoe & Hall, 2006), boundaryless careers (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), intelligent careers (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995), kaleidoscope careers (Mainero & Sullivan, 2005), and feminist career perspectives (e.g. O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). Although

these career theories differ in focus, they all acknowledge the impact of social changes on careers as outlined above, emphasising the self-management of careers and the guiding role of individuals' subjective career perceptions. While it is important to examine objective measures of career success for investigating the relative standing of flexibly working employees in organisations, considering positive work outcomes from an individual's subjective perspective reveals more about the desired outcomes that might be motivating the strategy use of flexibly working employees. Accordingly, we use Mirvis and Hall's (1994) definition of career success with its subjective focus: "The experience of achieving goals that are personally meaningful to the individual" (p. 366).

Particularly relevant to this research is Moen and Sweet's (2004) application of the life course perspective to the study of careers and their intersection with family life. The life course perspective explores the interrelationships between four key themes, relating to: the *meaning* that people give to their values and identities, individual *agency* in strategically shaping the life course, as well as the ways this may be constrained by *context*, and the influence of *relationships* on choices and perceptions (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Therefore, the life course perspective advocates the importance of considering changing career and family dynamics over time within the greater, socially constructed context. It views careers as not only occupational, but that family life also represents a career, with changing stages. Important social issues shaping work and family dynamics include cultural contradictions and mismatches that are remnant from past historical periods, such as, the male-as-breadwinner and female-as-homemaker model of family life (Moen & Sweet, 2004). This institution no longer serves families due to the increased proportions of dual-earning parents, single parents and employees with elder-care responsibilities in the workforce (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014).

Accordingly, Moen and Sweet (2004) identify numerous lags in the work-family literature. These include the failure to acknowledge that: (a) gendered patterns in the life course and work hours are socially constructed and sustained, (b) WLB is dynamic and changing in parallel with the course of family life, (c) the type of employment and the use of FWAs are not necessarily stable and change over time, (d) with this dynamic nature there is a need to investigate processes rather than outcomes, (e) many employees collaborate with their partners on family considerations, and, (f) employees have more roles than just work and family. Overall, as per the life course perspective, prior modes of thinking reflecting a 'career mystique', that career dedication is of primary and constant importance throughout one's life, are outdated (Moen et al., 2013). Instead, Moen and Sweet (2004) suggest shifting



the emphasis away from linear careers, to ‘flexible careers’, with greater variety in possible career templates across life stages, genders, and work schedules.

In conclusion, in recent years, career theory has responded to social changes by emphasising subjective and self-managed careers as opposed to objective and linear notions of career progression. In particular, the life course perspective of work and family advocates greater acknowledgement of the social forces that influence the dynamic trajectories of careers and families. This section has highlighted the importance that contemporary career theories place on subjective career success. The next section will explore ways the research shows that flexibly working parents may view positive work outcomes, and WLB.

### **Employee Perceptions of WLB and Positive Work Outcomes**

Research on work and family informs ways in which flexibly working parents may subjectively view WLB and positive work outcomes. For example, Lee and Kossek (2005) explored the meaning of career success for 80 professionals and managers working part-time. They found endorsement of six categories for career success: (a) learning/growing/being challenged, (b) upward mobility, (c) having an impact/making a contribution, (d) interesting, enjoyable work/having fun, (e) peer respect/recognition, and a final category relating to WLB, (f) able to have a life. Since users of FWAs face discrimination and have an increased risk of quitting their jobs, another relevant outcome for work success for flexibly working parents may be staying in employment and having a desire to do so (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). The work-family literature suggests more specific ways that flexibly working parents may view WLB than simply ‘having a life’ as described by Lee and Kossek (2005). Firstly, research suggests that FWAs improve WLB by enabling parents to participate in and prioritise multiple aspects of their lives, such as work, family, and personal time (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009; Haddock et al., 2001). Additionally, much of the literature points to parents perceiving that FWAs reduce stress or feelings of conflict while coordinating between their work and family roles (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Haddock et al., 2006). Flexibly working parents may also view WLB as the ability to coordinate multiple life domains in ways that they prefer, be it by segmenting or integrating between domains, explored later in the review (Shockley & Allen, 2010).

To conclude, the literature suggests that flexibly working parents may view positive work outcomes as featuring employment retention, career and skill development, challenging and meaningful work, being respected, as well as having WLB. More specifically, research suggests that flexibly working parents may view WLB as participation in multiple life

domains, reduced work-family conflict, and the ability to use preferred segmentation or integration strategies. The next section discusses the tensions associated with FWA implementation, which may influence these outcomes for employees.

### **The Tensions of Flexible Work**

In their review of the literature on FWA implementation, Putnam, Myers, and Gailliard (2014) were first to investigate the notion of the tensions and contradictions of flexible work. They did so by applying what they call a ‘tension-based lens’, defining tensions as the push and pull of opposite concepts and behaviours (Putnam et al., 2014). They identified three primary tensions in FWA implementation that had the potential to negatively affect employees. Firstly, ‘variable vs fixed arrangements’ relates to rigid work processes, deadlines, and organisational FWA policies constraining the flexibility that ought to be gained with FWA use. Secondly, ‘supportive vs unsupportive work climates’ describes the tension inherent when supervisors and colleagues send messages of mixed support for FWA use. Thirdly, ‘equitable vs inequitable implementation of policies’ references the lack of consistency in granting FWAs, with bias favouring mothers with young children. In summary, within the literature, notions of the tensions of FWA implementation arise which compromise uptake and access to FWAs, and positive outcomes for flexibly working employees. In the following section, the review outlines the literature that has examined ways work and family are interconnected for employees, also finding the possibility for tensions.

### **The Interconnections between Work and Family**

In parallel with the investigation of tensions in FWA implementation, theoretical developments within the work-family literature reveal various interconnections between work and family for working parents. Firstly, the ‘scarcity’ perspective suggests that work and family domains must compete for limited resources, such as, time and energy, which places them in opposition (Casper, De Hauw, & Wayne, 2013). The construct of work-family conflict is in line with this perspective, commonly defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Meta-analyses have shown work-family conflict can be expressed in three ways (Casper et al., 2013). Time-based conflict results from a lack of time for both life domains, or when they occur at the same time. Strain-based conflict arises if one role mentally distracts an individual from another role. Lastly, behaviour-based conflict can be observed when behaviours from one domain are inappropriately applied to another.

On the other hand, an ‘enhancement’ perspective advocates the beneficial effects when resources in one role can be applied to another role (Casper et al., 2013). Terms arising from this perspective include enhancement, positive spillover, and facilitation. These various distinctions have been combined under Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) definition of work-family enrichment: “The extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another role” (p. 73). Greenhaus and Powell further specified ‘instrumental enrichment’ regarding resources or skills from one domain improving performance in another, and ‘affective enrichment’, which results if the positive mood arising from one role transfers to positive mood in another. Positive and negative interactions between work and family are theorised to be bi-directional, with potential for work-to-family conflict or enrichment, as well as family-to-work conflict or enrichment (Casper et al., 2013). Moreover, the interconnections between work and family life have important consequences. Studies have demonstrated the detrimental effect of work-family conflict and the benefit of work-family enrichment on outcomes, such as, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and burnout (e.g. Allen, 2001; Carlson et al., 2014). Therefore, it is likely that while flexibly working parents make use of work and WLB strategies, WLB and positive work outcomes may be interconnected in complex and impactful ways, sometimes reflecting tensions.

### **Organisational Contextual Factors**

Whilst examining strategies that flexibly working employees may use to promote their own positive outcomes, it is useful to consider the contextual factors of organisations which may promote or hinder FWA outcomes for employees. The contextual factors outlined in this review of the literature have the potential to influence positive work outcomes, through reduced efficiency of flexible work or stigmatisation due to the non-conforming characteristics of flexibly working employees, as well as WLB, via the compensatory behaviours that flexibly working employees may orchestrate in response to such risks. In turn, the following section discusses the organisational contextual factors relating to the organisation and management of work and FWAs,<sup>1</sup> and organisational norms. Within this

---

<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the term *organisation of work* is distinguished from individual-level *work organisation* strategies. Here, organisation of work reflects the formal distribution and coordination of tasks, and management of work and performance by authority figures in organisations (Smith, 1997). It also references the provision of technology for assisting with work coordination, as it is particularly relevant to FWA implementation. Whereas, work organisation, described below as an individual strategy, concerns the way employees informally coordinate tasks and make use of their own capabilities and discretion to manage their work. Literature on employee responsibility in New Zealand's FWA legislation supports this separate investigation of employee work organisation (Donnelly et al., 2012).

discussion regarding the impact of organisational contextual factors on employees FWA outcomes there are echoes of the FWA implementation tensions identified by Putnam et al. (2014).

### **Organisation and Management of Work and FWAs**

The following section describes research findings that suggest outcomes for flexibly working employees can be influenced by work coordination, project scheduling, performance measurement, technology provision, and the role of line managers, taking each in turn. The greatest challenge associated with the success of FWAs is thought to relate to work coordination readjustment among teams where members are not concurrently present in the office (Barnett, 1999). Co-workers are observed to feel resentment at experiencing interruptions to work processes, and the requirement to take over tasks during the absence of flexibly working employees (Sprinkle, 2012). The group performance of professional teams with flexibly working employees has been found to be facilitated when teams adopt team-centred coordination, where members engage in collaborative problem-solving, which promotes shared awareness of group processes and progress, and have generalist rather than specialised roles, so that others can take over tasks during the absence of flexibly working employees (Perlow, 2001; Van Dyne, Kossek, & Lobel, 2007). In contrast, managers who coordinated tasks alone were found to deplete shared group awareness and demand constant employee presence (Perlow, 2001), in tension with the fact that flexibly working employees are not always in the office.

Research on job design has found that work deadlines that are inflexible and unpredictable with short time-frames are unsuitable for work schedules where employees are not constantly present, such as, part-time work (Smith & McDonald, 2016). Instead, organisations negotiating deadlines with clients that consider employees' needs for flexibility relieves pressure being placed on flexibly working employees to meet rigid deadlines, and thereby work longer hours (Putnam et al., 2014). Moreover, research suggests that the performance ratings of flexibly working employees are undermined when organisations value endless employee availability (Munck, 2001), compared to measuring performance based on work output and participation in key task events (Van Dyne et al., 2007).

On the one hand, for teleworkers to complete tasks and coordinate with colleagues, research observes the necessity of work technology provision (Lauzun et al., 2010). Such technology includes portable notebooks and laptops, home broadband internet connections, remote access to work intranet, and smartphones with easy email access (Bentley et al.,

2013). Yet, research also points to the use of work laptops and cell phones as contributing to flexibly working employees struggling to psychologically detach themselves from their work and working extra hours from home (Golden, 2001).

Concerning the management of FWAs, supportive supervisors have been found to play important roles in assigning appropriate workload (Lee & Kossek, 2005) and encouraging the WLB of employees (Musson & Tietze, 2004), providing emotional and technical support (Hartman, Stoner, & Arora, 1991), and buffering employees from unsupportive organisational cultures (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004). However, research has also found evidence of supervisor behaviour that has a negative impact on flexibly working employees. For example, Kirby (2000) found that supervisors encourage flexibly working employees to work overtime by emphasising the importance of meeting rigid work deadlines and rewarding employees who sacrifice work over family as role-models.

In summary, previous research suggests that positive outcomes for flexibly working employees are promoted while employers focus on output rather than office presence and number of hours worked as the measure of productivity, while FWAs are considered in project planning and workload allocation, and, while employees collaborate towards team coordination with the aid of technology. However, there is also the possibility for tension in FWA implementation when employers value endless office presence, establish work deadlines that are inflexible to users of FWAs being out of the office, and while work technology enables the extension of work into home life. Relating to this, research points to the large role supervisors have to play in the management of FWAs.

### **Organisational Norms**

Specific organisational norms and cultural beliefs held in society are consistently reported to produce a 'flexibility stigma' and negative outcomes for flexibly working employees (Lauzun et al., 2010; Mercer et al., 2014). The main norms that threaten FWA success are the 'ideal worker norm' (Acker, 1990) and 'schema of work devotion' (Blair-Loy, 2003), which describe how businesses value employees who morally prioritise working full-time, with no career breaks, and whose personal needs, and the needs of their other family members can be taken care of by someone else, who historically has been the female homemaker. Organisations can also have 'face-time' orientations, highly valuing the physical presence of employees, to the detriment of flexibly working employees (Shockley & Allen, 2010). The autonomy-control paradox explains the process by which maladaptive cultural norms negatively impact the WLB of flexibly working employees by encouraging them to

work longer hours (Putnam et al., 2014). Counterintuitively, the more autonomy employees have, as facilitated with FWA use, the more control organisations have over their work effort through indirect and ‘invisible’ methods that consist of employee socialisation tactics and cultural norms, such as, the ‘ideal worker’ and work devotion norms (Putnam et al., 2014).

Gender beliefs also influence whether flexibly working employees will be discriminated against in their organisations, specifically through being viewed as less committed than their peers. For mothers, who tend to work part-time more than fathers (Pew Research Center, 2013), working flexibly is thought to signal that they are preoccupied workers, having greater commitment to their children than to work (Munsch, 2016; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). This is reinforced by out-dated cultural ideology that mothers belong in the ‘private sphere’ of childrearing and homemaking (Moen & Yu, 2000), and the societal prescription for mothers to engage in ‘intensive mothering’, forgoing their own personal identities to *correctly* nurture and develop their children towards their utmost potential (Hays, 1996). On the other hand, under certain conditions flexibly working fathers can experience a ‘fatherhood bonus’ being evaluated more favourably than mothers or other men working flexibly, because fathers, as the traditional breadwinners for their families, are assumed to be more committed to their employment, (Kmec, O’Connor, & Schieman, 2014; Munsch, 2016). However, Munsch (2016) suggests that this is contingent on fathers maintaining their full-time work hours while using FWAs. Otherwise, flexibly working fathers experience a ‘femininity stigma’ if they are believed to be assuming non-traditional caregiving rather than breadwinning roles in their households (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004; Coltrane et al., 2013).

In sum, research reveals that unsupportive organisational norms and cultures put flexibly working employees at risk for discrimination, at a cost to their career prospects, and sometimes WLB. This reflects the tensions flexibly working employees encounter within unsupportive work environments, whereby if they respond to these disadvantages by increasing their work hours, they risk compromising the very WLB that FWAs are intended to enable. These preceding sections demonstrate that a variety of organisational contextual factors influence flexible work outcomes. To inform how flexibly working employees may be responding to these contextual factors, in the next section, the review examines the literature relating to ways flexibly working employees may influence their own outcomes.

### **Employee FWA Strategies**

A review of the relevant literature points to three types of strategies that flexibly working employees may use to promote WLB or positive work outcomes. The following

sections present strategies employees use for promoting WLB, work organisation, and their careers in turn.

### **WLB Strategies**

Given that research demonstrates the tendency for flexibly working employees to overwork (e.g. Putnam et al., 2014), it is especially important for them to initiate strategies promoting their WLB. The following section reviews employee WLB strategies including the way employees set boundaries between life domains, how they coordinate between their life domains, and their use of social and paid resources to lessen their household workload.

**Boundary management.** Drawing upon boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2001), research suggests that employees actively manage the boundaries between their work and non-work lives to promote their WLB, often by setting firm boundaries between life domains (Haddock et al., 2006; Lee & Kossek, 2005). Boundary theory prescribes that people maintain physical and psychological boundaries between their various life domains which helps them categorise and simplify their experiences (Ashforth et al., 2001). Boundary management strategies fall along a continuum of segmentation, associated with inflexible and impermeable boundaries, to integration, where boundaries are more flexible and permeable. Kreiner et al. (2009), studying priests, proposed a typology of four types of boundary management strategies including physical, temporal, behavioural and communicative.

Employees have been found to use segmentation strategies, setting boundaries between their work and non-work domains. For teleworkers who work so close to home life, segmentation strategies are thought to be especially valuable (Shaw, Andrey, & Johnson, 2003). Teleworkers use physical strategies of working in specific household 'office' spaces away from distractions, such as, visitors, yet-to-be-completed housework, or access to television (Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Shaw et al., 2003). To keep their work and family temporally separate, teleworking employees maintain commitments to friends, children or pets as clear signals of the end of a work day (Basile & Beauregard, 2016). Behavioural strategies that employees use to manage their life boundaries include limiting the use of work technology during non-work hours (Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Kreiner et al., 2009). Employees have also been found to communicate their expectations to colleagues, managers, and their families regarding their FWAs and out-of-work availability (Basile & Beauregard, 2016; Corwin, Lawrence, & Frost, 2002; Kreiner et al., 2009). Furthermore, in resistance to work spilling into non-work life, employees have been found to formally or informally take time off from work, in-lieu, after having worked overtime (Moen et al., 2013; Kreiner et al.,

2009). Research also points to flexibly working employees engaging in integration strategies while managing between their work and non-work lives. Teleworkers and part-timers extend the work day by taking longer breaks to accommodate family activities (Lee & Kossek, 2005; Musson & Tietze, 2004; Shaw et al., 2003). Employees also blend working from home between recreational activities, such as, gardening which can produce inspiration and time for reflection on work tasks (Musson & Tietze, 2004).

In summary, research findings show employees use both segmentation and integration strategies for boundary management. Employees can physically, temporally, behaviourally and through communication mechanisms construct boundaries between work and non-work. Other, integrative strategies include structuring work around family life and blending work with recreation.

**Coordination of life domains.** Research findings show that employees who are satisfied with their WLB value and invest in multiple aspects of their lives, such as, their children, their work, and personal time (Haddock et al., 2001). Yet, research also points to the challenge for flexibly working mothers in particular, to find time for self-care activities in between work and family obligations (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Accordingly, it is important for flexibly working parents to be able to prioritise and coordinate between all their life domains. To do so, employees have been found to respond to concurrent and opposing demands from different life domains by strategically judging which obligation has priority based on the specific circumstances (Kreiner et al., 2009; Moen et al., 2013). Professionals also prioritise their family and WLB long-term, by changing to more supportive jobs, careers, or self-employment (Lee & Kossek, 2005; Moen et al., 2013). In this way, to prioritise multiple life domains employees readjust their expectations for each domain. As examples, employees readjust their expectations for how tidy their house should be, and accept potential career consequences of turning down extra workload (Moen et al., 2013). Research has also found that prioritising and achieving balance in multiple life domains elicits the need for sophisticated organisational skills (Grady & McCarthy, 2008; Watts, 2009). This is especially true for parents, who are challenged by children's care needs changing regularly over time (Lee & Kossek, 2005). The benefit of employee organisational skills was demonstrated in Lapiere and Allen's (2012) quantitative research. They found that planning behaviour assisted in the reduction of work-family conflict for employees with high job control, as is the case for professionals working flexibly (Schieman, Whitestone, Van Gundy, 2006).



To conclude, research demonstrates the importance of employees investing in multiple life domains. However, flexibly working parents have been found to struggle with making time for themselves. To coordinate between different domains, employees have been found to use organisation and prioritisation strategies.

**Use of social and paid resources.** Another pathway through which flexibly working employees can promote WLB is by drawing upon social support mechanisms to assist with household duties, such as childcare and household chores, thereby reducing their own home workload (Haddock et al., 2001). Working parents have been found to coordinate support from their partners, wider social support networks, such as, family and friends, and paid services.

**Partner support.** It is important for flexibly working mothers and fathers to elicit support from their partners regarding household management so that they are not over-relied upon for chores and childcare. Yet, due to gender beliefs surrounding the division of family duties within couples, flexibly working mothers are vulnerable to assuming a greater and disproportionate amount of the household workload compared to male partners. It has been well-documented that mothers, regardless of whether they or their partners work flexibly, are at risk of over-contributing to household and childcare duties (Gasser, 2015; Halford, 2006; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Mothers are particularly likely to assume greater household workload if they make lower contributions to household earnings or work fewer hours (Karambayya & Reilly, 1992; Raley, Bianchi, & Wang, 2012). Research on flexibly working employees and dual-earning couples has identified certain nuances in couples' relationships that can facilitate both members sharing the home workload equitably. These include both partners valuing work and family domains, adjusting their work schedules to accommodate parenting obligations, and collaborating in planning and decision-making (Haddock et al., 2001; Moen et al., 2013; Moen & Yu, 2000). Across a six-year period, couples have also been found to switch primary caregiving duties, thereby in the long run creating a more even distribution of caregiving and employment effort (Lee & Kossek, 2005).

In sum, gender roles pose a challenge to the egalitarian division of household management for dual-earners. Nonetheless, research findings also show factors which promote shared workload, such as, shared work and parenting values, dual use of FWAs within couples, readjustments to family roles across time, and partners working as a team.

**Social support networks and paid services.** There is evidence of working parents making use of practical support from social support networks and paid services to assist with

household management. For example, employees utilise paid services, such as, nannies, childcare centres, cleaners, and meal delivery services (Grady & McCarthy, 2008; Moen et al., 2013; Watts, 2009). To assist with childcare, part-timers have been found to enlist social support, such as, family and neighbours (Lee & Kossek, 2005). Enlisting help with childcare can however be associated with guilt over spending time away from children (Corwin et al., 2002). To summarise, working parents use a variety of social support networks and paid services to assist with household tasks. However, for parents, placing their children in the care of others can be met with feelings of guilt.

### **Work Organisation Strategies**

Research suggests that for many flexibly working employees promoting job performance and managing their workload is especially important because of the risk that their arrangements will not be considered during project planning (Putnam et al., 2014). The following sections present strategies which research shows employees use to individually promote their work organisation, specifically relating to coordinating and managing their work. Considering each in turn, there is discussion of strategies relating to work coordination, and work intensification and efficiency.

**Work coordination.** Research finds that flexibly working employees utilise work coordination strategies aimed at promoting their group's motivation and performance. Van Dyne et al. (2007) describe the strategy of 'proactive availability' through which flexibly working employees ensure group awareness of task processes and manage impressions colleagues may have of them as uncommitted, disruptive, or unfairly privileged. Employees are proactive in anticipating the cycle of work processes, initiating communication with co-workers, making themselves available for important group rituals and events, such as, meetings, and sending group members updates regarding their progress (Van Dyne et al., 2007). Accordingly, research findings show part-timers strive to be available and contactable to colleagues (Lee & Kossek, 2005), maintaining consistent work schedules so colleagues can remember when they work, and sometimes monitoring from outside the office to ascertain whether co-workers are completing tasks (Corwin et al., 2002). Employees also improve group coordination by initiating a process of synchronised interaction (Van Dyne et al., 2007). This involves group members deciding time points where members interact and jointly problem-solve, as well as times for focused individual work, where flexibly working employees can be away from colleagues (Perlow, 1999).

In summary, research suggests the importance of flexibly working employees maintaining the motivation and coordination of their work groups. While employees work flexibly, research indicates that they promote work coordination by proactively notifying others of their availability, communicating with colleagues, and being available during designated times for group work.

**Work intensification and efficiency.** Flexibly working employees have been described as undergoing a process of work intensification, increasing their work effort in response to a variety of reasons (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). These include heightened job demands, gratitude at using FWAs, and wishing to avoid inconveniences to co-workers (Putnam et al., 2014). Flexibly working employees intensify their work through what Green (2001) distinguishes as intensive effort, that is by working harder mentally or physically, and extensive effort, increasing total time spent working (Corwin et al., 2002; Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Similar to work intensification, previous research also indicates that flexibly working employees respond to work demands by what Lee and Kossek (2005) describe as ‘being flexible’. For example, during work emergencies, employees have been known to readjust their work schedules. However, these strategies occur to the detriment of the employee’s FWA and freedom in planning their week (Corwin et al., 2002; Golden, 2001). Moreover, employees do not always receive compensation for schedule readjustments (Golden, 2001). Thus, these strategies reveal how with FWA use, achieving WLB and positive work outcomes may be at odds with each other, requiring employees to make difficult trade-offs.

Research also indicates ways that flexibly working employees resolve work demands without negative consequences by increasing their work efficiency and streamlining work tasks. These include goal-setting and forward planning, and prioritisation, such as, by skipping unnecessary meetings to complete work, and delegating work to others (Corwin et al., 2002; Lee & Kossek, 2005; Shaw et al., 2003). Additionally, aspects of FWAs have been found to facilitate work efficiency. Working from home removes employees from office distractions, while working shorter periods in the office can promote focus (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

To sum up, workers with FWAs have been found to increase their work effort and hours worked due to performance pressure and a sense of gratitude. Furthermore, empirical research shows that during work emergencies, flexibly working employees offer flexibility back to their organisations by making changes to their work schedules. However, these

strategies come at the expense of WLB. On the other hand, research finds ways that employees respond to work demands that does not involve trade-offs. This involves increasing their work efficiency through organisation and planning, enlisting help, and making use of efficient aspects of their FWAs.

### **Career Strategies**

Within the context of potential career disadvantages for flexibly working employees (Glass, 2004), it is important to investigate how employees respond. The following section reviews the literature on ways flexibly working employees may promote their careers through developing human capital and social capital, discussing each in turn.

**Developing human capital.** Human capital is defined as “the collective skills, knowledge, or other intangible assets of individuals that can be used to create economic value” (Human Capital, n.d.). Initiating skill development may be an especially useful strategy for flexibly working employees, especially part-time workers because of their reduced opportunity for promotion and work stretch assignments (Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). Yet, research also suggests the difficulty for flexibly working employees, with tight work deadlines and fixed caregiving obligations, to find time for their own professional development (Corwin et al., 2002; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010). Therefore, engaging in skill development for flexibly working parents requires a conscious effort. Parents working part-time tend to prefer attending internal professional development sessions within their organisations, and during work hours (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010). However, they have also been found to make family readjustments to attend events on their days off, or participate in online forums instead (Corwin et al., 2002; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010).

In sum, the development of human capital for flexibly working employees and part-timers in particular, is challenged by reduced opportunities for roles where they can grow their skills and lack of time for professional development. Despite this, the findings from the little research that exists indicate that part-timers do create opportunities for skill development.

**Developing social capital.** We define social capital as “naturally occurring social relationships among persons which promote or assist the acquisition of skills and traits valued in the marketplace” (Loury, 1992, p. 100). Political capital is described as “a subtype of social capital which is intended to measure access to political decision-makers” (Weinreb, 2001, p. 2). While facing challenges of little time to spare away from immediate work and reduced time spent with potentially resentful colleagues, part-timers have been found to

promote their social and political work relationships in various ways (Corwin et al., 2002). Research indicates that part-timers promote their work relationships by organising lunch dates, maintaining communication while away, and seeking office gossip to keep themselves updated on work matters (Corwin et al., 2002). They also strategically advocate and role-model the business case for FWAs, educating others on their FWAs and making sure to deliver results (Corwin et al., 2002; Lee & Kossek, 2005). In doing so, part-timers also garner political capital through cultivating ‘champions’ in senior management that will support their FWAs, update them on work affairs and take over ongoing tasks (Corwin et al., 2002).

To conclude, flexibly working employees face barriers to developing social and political capital, including reduced time with colleagues and high work demands, as well as possible negative views towards them. In response, part-timers build their standing at work through high performance and making connections with colleagues and senior managers. In relation to this study, a thorough review of the many elements of the FWA and work-family literatures has been presented. The next section summarises the findings from the literature review in the context of framing discussions of the rationale, research questions, and theoretical framework for this study.

### **Introduction to the Present Study**

#### **Research Rationale**

Upon a review of the FWA and work-family literature, the challenges and tensions of flexible work are revealed, alongside gaps in FWA research. In addition to finding positive business and employee outcomes associated with FWA implementation, empirical research has demonstrated the possible negative effects of FWA use (see also Chapter 1). Employees who work flexibly are at risk of experiencing stigmatisation and stunted career progression, as well as pressure to work long hours. Much of the literature links these negative outcomes to organisational contextual factors relating to the way work is organised and managed, which can create high work demands, as well as organisational norms about work devotion and gender expectations. Research indicates that these organisational contextual factors can lead employees to encounter tensions between maintaining their WLB and positive work outcomes while they navigate unsupportive work environments. Namely, behaviours aimed at improving positive work outcomes through work intensification and conveying availability to colleagues can come at the expense of WLB. On the other hand, asserting boundaries between work and non-work may further compromise positive work outcomes through attributions concerning low work commitment. Although this review finds evidence that

work and family can be in conflict for all working parents, flexibly working parents seem to experience unique tensions due to specific organisational challenges and tensions of implementing FWAs. Even so, research also indicates instances where work and family domains enrich one another. This raises questions about whether flexibly working parents may be able to optimise both WLB and positive work outcomes.

Yet, an examination of the current progress of the FWA literature reveals that research on strategies that employees may use to influence their fate while working flexibly is still in its infancy, despite legislative and business policy prescribing much responsibility on the part of the employee to obtain a FWA and ensure its sustainability. Furthermore, studies have not specifically sought to investigate how strategy use of flexibly working employees may be linked to the interconnections between WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working parents. This is surprising given the risk for tensions between these outcomes for flexibly working employees, which questions the very utility of FWAs in promoting WLB and employment participation for parents. Nevertheless, such a line of inquiry could reveal how the tensions of FWAs are experienced from the perspective of the employees who use them. Therefore, it seems pertinent for this research to explore how flexibly working parents use strategies to promote their positive outcomes, and how the strategies may relate to the interconnections between achieving WLB and positive work outcomes. Putnam et al. (2014) explored tensions in the broad implementation of FWAs, including issues of FWA access and uptake. This research explores the tensions of flexible work from the perspective of flexibly working employees and their outcomes, with a focus on employee agency in navigating these tensions.

This research is also informed by the career literature. A review of career perspectives reveals the importance recent career theories place on the role subjective employee outcomes play in guiding the direction of career self-management. Likewise, previous research indicates the variety of ways that employees may conceptualise positive outcomes. Therefore, this study will also explore the meaning of WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working parents. In its examination, this research takes a life course perspective on work and family (Moen & Sweet, 2004), as outlined above. Specifically, this research embodies four principles of the life course perspective. It acknowledges: (a) flexibly working parents as defining their own meanings for positive outcomes, (b) the influence of relationships, including familial, on employee choices, (c) the agency of flexibly working parents in strategically shaping their life courses, and, (d) the overarching context within which behaviours may be constrained.

To sum up, this research seeks to address the gaps in the literature relating to individual strategy use by flexibly working parents and how they may be related to potential tensions between WLB and positive work outcomes, while also acknowledging that subjectivity exists in employees' interpretations of their desired outcomes. In doing so, it adopts a 'tension-based lens' and is guided by the life course perspective of work and family. The subsequent sections introduce the research questions of this study, followed by the guiding theoretical framework (Figure 1).

### **Research Questions**

Reflecting the research objectives, this research employs the following overarching research question:

*How do professional working parents navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes?*

To answer this, the study also has three more specific questions:

- 1) *How do professional, flexibly working parents conceptualise WLB and positive work outcomes?*
- 2) *In what ways are there interconnections between the achievement of WLB and positive work outcomes for professional, flexibly working parents?*
- 3) *What types of strategies do professional, flexibly working parents use to (a) promote their WLB and (b) progress their positive work outcomes?*

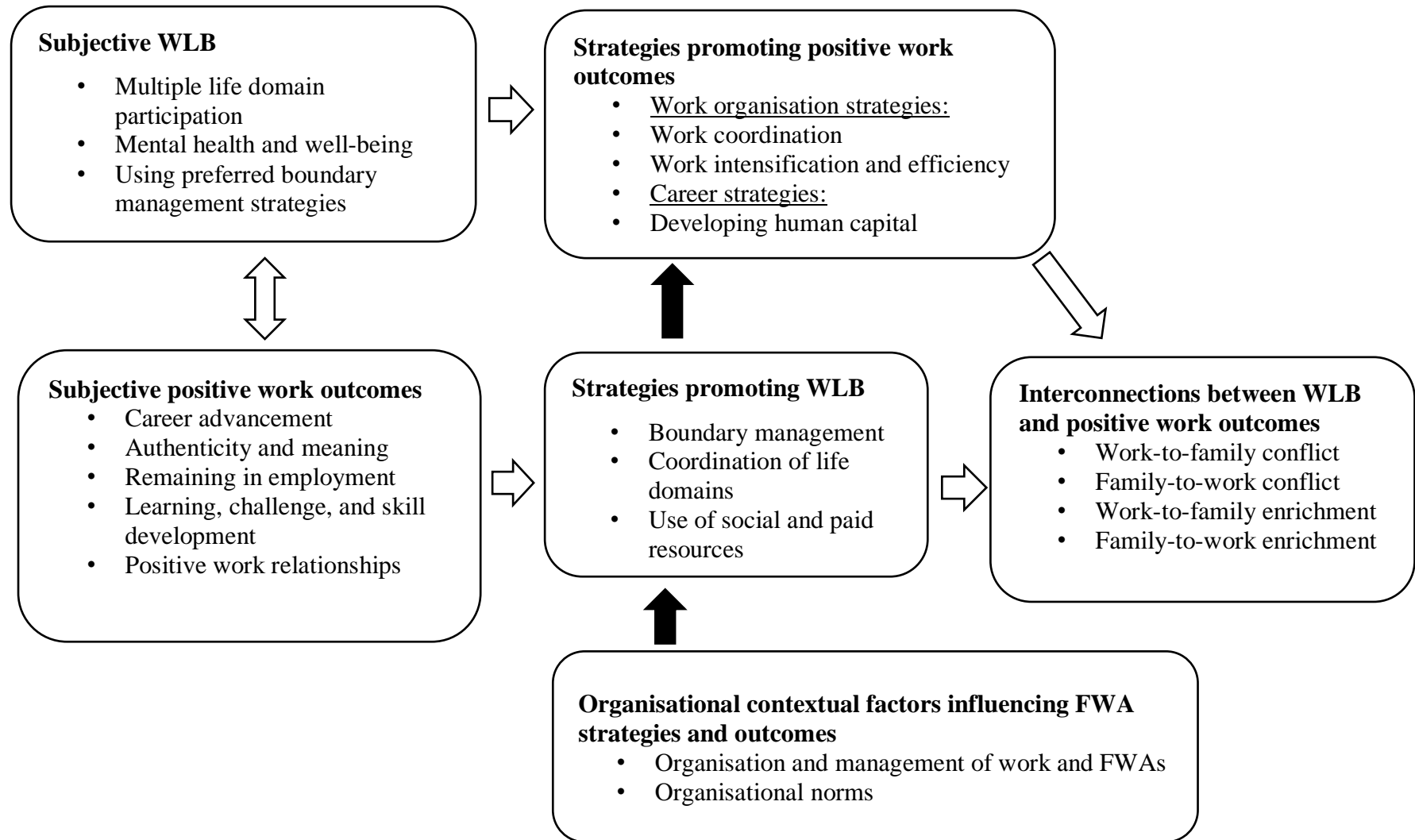


Figure 1. *Theoretical framework*



### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework (Figure 1) summarises the literature reviewed above and guides the empirical examination of how professional working parents navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes. Consistent with recent career theories that emphasise subjective values as drivers of career self-management (e.g. Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), the framework explores the subjective meaning of WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working parents. Hence, as seen in Figure 1, it depicts subjective WLB and positive work outcomes as influencing strategies aimed at promoting WLB and positive work outcomes, respectively. In line with a review of the literature, the framework specifies a variety of potential positive work outcomes as career advancement, enjoyment and meaning, remaining in employment, learning, challenge and skill development, and positive work relationships. The proposed WLB outcomes highlighted in the literature and depicted in the framework include: participation in multiple life domains, such as, work, family and personal life, mental health and well-being, and use of preferred integration or segmentation boundary management strategies. Employees have previously described WLB as a valued positive work outcome (Lee & Kossek, 2005) and positive work participation as part of WLB (Haddock et al., 2001). As can be seen, the framework visually depicts the interrelatedness of employees' conceptions of WLB and positive work outcomes. While the outcomes are related, they are categorised separately in the framework to better examine the different processes for promoting each and the interconnections that can occur between the two outcome types. Hence in this thesis use of the term 'positive work outcomes' does not include WLB.

The framework also specifies strategies that flexibly working parents may use to promote WLB and positive work outcomes. In accordance with a review of the literature, it presents the following WLB strategies: boundary management, coordination of life domains, and use of social and paid resources. From a review of the previous research, it outlines two forms of work-related strategies: work organisation strategies, consisting of work coordination and work intensification and efficiency; and, career strategies, which include developing human capital and social capital. The framework delineates ways that strategy use may influence the interconnections between WLB and positive work outcomes. In accordance with the literature, possible ways that WLB and positive work outcomes may be interconnected are summarised as: work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, as well

as work-to-family enrichment and family-to-work enrichment. Much of the literature has outlined the role of organisational contextual factors in influencing FWA outcomes. By extension, it is likely that such organisational factors shape employee strategy use. For example, unsupportive organisational factors may stimulate flexibly working employees to use compensatory strategies to promote positive outcomes, or they may constrain which strategies are practical to use. Therefore, the theoretical framework also specifies organisational contextual factors as influencing employee strategy use. It categorises the factors into two themes found in the literature, relating to the organisation and management of work and FWAs, and organisational norms. While there may be other connections between the factors in the framework, these were not deemed directly relevant to exploring strategy use and interconnections between outcomes for flexibly working parents. To sum, the theoretical framework visually depicts the relationships between factors of interest in this research.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter presents a review of the literature which informed the rationale for this research. It provides context by reviewing New Zealand's FWA legislation. It also examines career theories, including the life course perspective, alongside research on subjective WLB and positive work outcomes. It introduces ideas of tensions in flexible work and the ways work and family are interconnected for employees. This chapter also describes research related to organisational contextual factors influencing FWA outcomes, and what is known about employee strategy use to promote WLB and positive work outcomes. This chapter concludes by outlining the rationale for the study, the research questions, and the guiding theoretical framework. The next chapter discusses the methodological decisions which served to shape the research findings.

### **Chapter 3:**

#### **Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodological considerations and approaches which were undertaken in the study's investigation of how professional working employees navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes. The chapter will discuss the benefits of the study's qualitative nature and its epistemological affiliation with social constructionism. Then it will describe the methods for data collection, including the rationale for using purposive sampling and semi-structured interview techniques, the construction of the research instrument, the sample characteristics and the procedure, and data analysis. Finally, the chapter discloses the ethical considerations that were undertaken in conducting the research, and the way the evaluation of the validity of this research was guided by the criteria of trustworthiness for qualitative research.

#### **Research Design**

##### **Qualitative Research**

In an attempt to fulfil the research aim, this study employed qualitative research methods. Because qualitative research pays particular attention to the viewpoint of the respondents, it is adept in producing practical advice with an appreciation for the employee perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). With a focus on rich description, the qualitative research method enabled the disclosure of unforeseen FWA challenges and strategies, as well as information confirming that which is already known within the research discipline (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In short, qualitative research allowed for detailed exploration of the subjective meanings employees give to their experiences of working flexibly.

##### **Social Constructionism**

This study is guided by the epistemological principles and assumptions of social constructionism.<sup>2</sup> In line with social constructionism, this study acknowledges that different approaches must be used while studying the human experience compared to the physical world, which tends to be taken as an objective reality that can be uncovered with a deductive scientific approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). We acknowledge that people construct and interpret their own realities, guided by cultural references and language. Therefore, we aimed

---

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that the terms *constructivism* and social *constructionism* have similar meanings and have been used interchangeably in the literature (see Patton, 2002).

to investigate multiple constructed realities that people hold, which are influenced by context and social interaction (Patton, 2002). For example, the perceptions and experiences of flexibly working employees can be influenced by both cultural constructions and institutions relating to family and work (Acker, 1990; Hays, 1996; Moen & Sweet, 2004). This research recognises that facts are contextually dependent on the value frameworks from which they originate (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Subsequently it makes no attempt to evaluate findings according to an 'objective validity', nor to generalise to other contexts beyond that of professional, flexibly working parents. To summarise, in taking a social constructionist stance, this research seeks to explore the socially constructed realities of flexibly working employees and the factors influencing their reaction to their environment.

### **Purposive Sampling**

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the use of purposive sampling allowed respondents to be strategically selected based on possessing attributes that would likely increase their investment in strategies for promoting WLB and positive work outcomes. These attributes include being professional employees, parents, and working in the public service. In this way, knowledge produced by targeting this group of employees that seem likely to use strategies while working flexibly can then inform the broader literature on flexible work and working parents (Patton, 2002).

Professionally working parents were chosen for sampling in the study because of the challenges that they as a group face while pursuing WLB, and their circumstances which may also enable them to strategically respond. The study uses Moen et al.'s (2013) distinction of professional employees as encompassing those who engage in intellectually demanding work, which often requires tertiary education, and is associated with higher earnings as well as job autonomy. Professionals are experiencing increased pressure to work long hours due to job insecurity, greater employer expectations, and technological advancements causing work to spill over into the home domain (Christensen & Schneider, 2010). Secondly, it is well-established that parents have higher levels of home workload and greater risk of work-life conflict (Eby et al., 2005). Hence, professionally working parents may have greater incentive to adopt sophisticated methods to balance their work and family while using FWAs. Moreover, the increased autonomy of professional employees suggests that they have greater freedom to employ strategies to support their WLB and positive work outcomes while working flexibly (Schieman et al., 2006). Similarly, the financial privilege of professional employees means that they can afford to work reduced hours, as well as utilise their money in

strategic ways to promote WLB, such as, enlisting paid support services to manage home workloads (Grady & McCarthy, 2008).

Organisations in the public service have typically been amongst the first to implement WLB initiatives and are regarded as the most responsive to the institutional and economic drivers of FWA implementation (den Dulk et al., 2013). As a result, respondents from these more supportive contexts may be enabled to use individual strategies to a greater extent, and with greater impact. For example, supportive organisations may facilitate environments where other employees are more open to the constructive suggestions of flexibly working employees. Sampling professional employees from public service organisations also served to reduce the variance in the job roles of respondents and how their organisations operate. This enabled the present exploratory research to identify rich contextual information surrounding how and why flexibly working parents adopt certain strategies within their specific circumstances with respect to holding professional roles in the public service.

To conclude, purposive sampling was utilised to recruit a target group of flexibly working employees who were likely encountering the tensions of flexible work, but also had the agency to respond. Thus, this study sampled professional, flexibly working parents within the public service, who have competing work and family demands, as well as greater resources to navigate potential tensions.

### **Data Collection**

Semi-structured, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were employed as the method for data collection. Throughout the interviews, respondents retrospectively described their experiences through language (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; Seidman, 2013). This enabled the researchers to access detailed information that cannot be directly inferred from observation, such as, individuals' perspectives and the meaning that they give to social practices and events (Patton, 2002). Compared to surveys, interviewing yielded more nuanced information since the interviewer (the researcher) could request respondents to clarify and elaborate upon their answers (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The interview process could also prompt reflection and enlighten respondents towards making inferences of which they had not previously been aware (Arksey & Knight, 1999).

Semi-structured interviews follow an interview guide that includes a list of questions or topics to be covered (Arksey & Knight 1999). They are useful in providing a balance between structure and a degree of flexibility (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The interviews had some level of structure to ensure that all topic areas were covered, facilitating comparisons

across interviews. Yet, respondents were not led towards a limited range of responses or answers that simply confirmed researcher expectations because the questions began broad and open-ended (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Patton, 2002). The interviewer had the flexibility of pursuing unexpected lines of enquiry (Edwards & Holland, 2013). There was also flexibility in how the questions could be worded or rephrased to promote the understanding of the interviewee regarding the questions, and so that back and forth conversations between the interviewer and interviewee could occur (Edwards & Holland, 2013). These techniques used in semi-structured interviews assisted the interviewee in feeling comfortable to answer questions in their own way and give detailed answers based on what they personally deemed to be important (Flick et al., 2004). To summarise, detailed information regarding the perceptions and experiences of the respondents was obtained via semi-structured interviews, which provided a balance between having structure for ensuring broad topic coverage, and freedom for spontaneity.

### **Research Instrument**

The interview schedule (Appendix A) was constructed to follow the theoretical framework which emerged from the literature review. The methodology sections of relevant research also guided the interview questions. In the construction of the interview schedule, descriptions of the interview questions or topics from previous research were grouped in terms of the following themes of inquiry: the challenges and practicalities of utilising FWAs at work, organisational culture, career development, WLB, and partner's influence on work. These interview questions continued to be regrouped as the structure of the interview guide was constructed and refined. Ultimately, the exemplar questions from prior studies were adjusted so that the final interview questions would better represent the theoretical framework in its entirety. Some examples of the way the interview questions relate to questions from previous studies are shown in Table A1. The interview schedule was then piloted on two respondents (not included in the final sample), which resulted in minor adjustments, such as, referencing 'work' outcomes instead of 'career' outcomes, which respondents could more easily relate to.

The interview schedule was divided into five sections of questioning. In the first section respondents were asked about their employment background, including details about their FWA. If respondents had partners, they were also asked about their partner's employment arrangement. These questions served to provide an understanding of the context in which flexibly working respondents negotiated positive outcomes. In the second section,

respondents were asked about their conceptualisation of WLB and positive work outcomes. Sections three and four of the interview schedule asked respondents about the strategies that they utilised to promote WLB and positive work outcomes, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Within these sections, the respondents were asked about the following: (a) the challenges to WLB, and the difficulties associated with using FWAs at work (Questions 4 & 7, respectively); (b) the strategies they were utilising to address these challenges and promote their WLB and positive work outcomes (Questions 5 & 8, respectively); and, (c) how effective they considered their WLB and work-related strategies to be (Questions 6 & 9, respectively). It was believed that asking first about challenges would prompt respondents to reflect upon the broader context that their strategies were situated within and thereby assist them in locating a greater number of strategies that they adopted. Asking respondents about the effectiveness of their strategies served to elicit further discussion regarding the influence of contextual factors and under which circumstances the use of a strategy may be warranted. Finally, in section five respondents were asked whether achieving WLB or positive work outcomes may facilitate one another or be in tension.

Throughout the interview schedule, questions were followed by prompts that elicited further information from respondents, or specifically asked about issues surrounding FWA use demonstrated in past research. For example, following Question 4 on challenges to WLB, respondents were prompted to think about whether they could maintain work, family and personal time as priorities in their life. This related to Haddock et al.'s (2001) findings that prioritising multiple life domains may facilitate WLB for dual-working parent couples. Regarding Question 5 on WLB strategies, prompts were offered which related to aspects previously suggested by empirical research to influence the WLB of working parents. These included: (a) utilising integration or segmentation strategies (e.g. Kreiner et al. 2009); (b) negotiating household chore division with partners (Haddock et al., 2001), and; (c) the availability of wider social support networks (e.g. Crosbie & Moore, 2004). Prompts to Question 7 regarding the work-related challenges of FWAs addressed the specific challenges of using FWAs at work that are indicated in previous research, such as, the following: (a) lower career advancement opportunities (e.g. Glass, 2004); (b) work coordination challenges (e.g. Van Dyne et al., 2007); (c) impact on work relationships (e.g. Corwin et al., 2002); and,

---

<sup>3</sup> The decision to ask respondents about WLB outcomes and strategies, separately from positive work outcomes and strategies was ultimately justified since respondents viewed WLB and positive work outcomes as including separate facets, as well as some overlap (see chapter four).

(d) organisational cultures promoting work devotion (e.g. Blair-Loy, 2003). The prompts to Question 8 on work strategies also related to the aforementioned challenges from previous research.

To conclude, the interview schedule related to the issues and strategies highlighted in the FWA literature. It included topics, such as, the meaning of WLB and positive work outcomes, the ways these outcomes were interconnected, and the challenges faced and strategies employed by flexibly working employees.

### **Sample Characteristics**

Respondents were comprised of 21 professional, flexibly working parents (9 fathers) from 13 Wellington public service organisations. As per Table 3, most of the respondents were permanent employees (18) and most FWAs were formally established (19). Within the sample, 12 employees worked part-time and nine employees worked full-time and flexibly (flex-full-timers). There were more part-time working mothers (8) than fathers (4), and more mothers worked part-time than flex-full-time (4). Flex-full-timers ranged in working compressed weeks only (2), teleworking only (2), teleworking while using compressed weeks (1), and teleworking with flexitime (4).<sup>4</sup> Only one part-timer also worked from home. Part-timers worked at least .8 of an FTE at their organisations, with hours ranging from 20-32 hours per week. While most flex-full-timers (6/8) were managers, most part-timers were not (10/12). Most employees were in cohabiting relationships with spouses (19), of which 14 had partners also using FWAs. In one case, both father and mother in a couple were respondents. Respondents had between one and three dependent children, between 10 months and 12 years old. The length of time respondents had been using FWAs ranged from three months to over 10 years. To sum up, the demographic information of the respondents reveals that the sample included both mothers and fathers, who were predominantly married, working a range of FWA types.

---

<sup>4</sup> All flex-full-timers except for one respondent, who worked an informal FWA, used their FWAs at least once per week. This respondent was included in the sample to provide greater insight into cultural barriers of FWA use.



Table 3

*Demographic Information of Respondents*

Characteristic	Total (N=21)	Part-time (N=12)	Flex-full-time (N=9)
<u>Parental status</u>			
Fathers	9	4	5
Mothers	12	8	4
<u>Type of organisation</u>			
Public service	19	12	7
State service	1		1
State sector	1		1
<u>Employment status</u>			
Permanent employee	18	10	8
Fixed term	2	2	
Contractor	1		1
<u>FWA status</u>			
Formal FWAs	19	12	7
Informal FWA	2		2
<u>FWA type<sup>a</sup></u>			
Compressed week	2		2
Teleworking	3	1	2
Teleworking and compressed week	1		1
Teleworking and flexitime	4		4
<u>Organisational role</u>			
Managerial	8	2	6
Non-managerial	13	10	3
<u>Marital status</u>			
Cohabiting	19	11	8
Single	2	1	1

<sup>a</sup> FWA type does not sum to the sample total because most part-timers only worked part-time with no other type of FWA.

### **Sampling Procedure**

To recruit respondents, the Government Women's Network in Wellington circulated advertisements via email to members as well as networks within Wellington government agencies. Respondents were also asked to recommend the study to flexibly working fathers they knew. Potential respondents contacted the researcher by email who then arranged to call them on the phone to explain more about the study and ask questions about their demographic information, ensuring they met the criteria for participation (see above section on purposive sampling). The researcher arranged with respondents by phone or email a convenient time and place for the interview. Interviews occurred at respondents' homes, workplaces, and public cafes. Respondents were emailed an information sheet and consent form (Appendices B & C) which they read and signed before the interview began. With respondents' consent, the interview was audio recorded with a smartphone voice-recording app. The interview was described to respondents as roughly one-hour-long, however sometimes interviews took two hours. For one respondent, the interview occurred over two separate periods. Respondents were emailed the transcription of their interview which they had the opportunity to verify. To sum up, this research followed stringent protocol for recruiting and screening respondents, and inducting them into the study.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Immediately after each interview, audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher with as much word-for-word accuracy as possible using *Audacity*. The data was analysed using template analysis, a type of thematic analysis commonly used in the organisational and management disciplines (Brooks et al., 2015). Template analysis involves constructing a hierarchical template of themes which captures the patterns in responses within the data. It is versatile to many epistemological approaches and allows for the use of an initial, theoretically-based template to guide the analysis. The data analysis followed the steps of template analysis outlined in King (2012). The study's theoretical framework and interview topic guide, which were constructed based on the research literature, were used to construct an *a priori* hierarchical template to guide the analysis. An initial reading of all transcripts was undertaken, after which five were coded by highlighting the basic features of the data that appeared to be meaningful. All codes were cross-referenced against the hierarchical themes in the initial template. The template was adjusted to encompass additional codes from the text. In an iterative process, the rest of the transcripts were coded while referring to and adjusting the template. At the end of the coding process, and upon re-reading the transcripts,

it became evident that the hierarchy of themes needed to be readjusted. For example, the typology of strategies was expanded into three categories, with work organisation strategies separated from career strategies. In sum, a hierarchical template analysis was used to extract, structure, and revise the findings.

### **Ethical Considerations and Approval Procedures**

The research and its procedures for data collection were approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (approval number: 0000022960). The research process followed the procedure specified in the ethics application. Prior to the interview, respondents were informed regarding the nature and purpose of the study. Respondents were advised that their participation was voluntary and that at any point they could refuse to answer questions or end the interview. They were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study up to four weeks after their interview, in which case the data collected from them would be destroyed and not used in data analysis. Information of a personal nature was only asked in so far as it related directly to the research questions. Respondents were assured that the information they provided would remain confidential to the research team and that neither they nor their organisations would be identifiable in research reports. Interview audio recordings were used with consent from respondents and were destroyed immediately after the interviews were transcribed. The data will be securely kept under password protection by the research team for five years after which it will be destroyed. It was disclosed to the respondents that the research findings would be disseminated through a Masters research report and may also appear in journal or conference publications. Respondents could indicate whether they wished to receive a final copy of the Masters report or a two-page summary of the research findings. Respondents were also told that they may personally benefit from the interview process in that it encourages reflection regarding the way they balance work and family responsibilities. To summarise, this research followed ethical procedures by obtaining informed consent from the respondents who were made aware of their rights, and protecting the confidentiality of the data.

### **Criteria for Trustworthiness**

To ensure rigour in the qualitative research methods used in this study, Guba's (1981) criteria for trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry were adhered to. Using criteria designed specifically with qualitative research in mind ensured that the strengths and relevance of this study were not sacrificed in attempts to fit the mould of quantitative research (Krefting, 1990). Guba (1981) specifies four criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness or rigour of

qualitative research. Credibility, similar to internal validity in quantitative research, relates to the accurate portrayal of the researched phenomena. Confirmability, similar to objectivity in quantitative research, relies on the investigator interpreting the findings directly from the evidence with minimal influence from their own preconceived ideas. Similar to reliability in quantitative research, dependability involves detailing the research process step-by-step so that other researchers will be able to conduct a similar study. Lastly, transferability, which is similar to external validity in quantitative research, is promoted by presenting detailed contextual information in order to establish the relevance of applying the findings to other settings.

In addition, this study followed strategies outlined in Shenton (2004) to promote the trustworthiness of the findings. Facilitating the dependability and credibility of the study, an ‘audit trail’ is presented throughout this chapter in the form of a detailed step-by-step description of the procedures and decision-making process, so that the study can be repeated and the integrity of the results can be evaluated. To support the confirmability and credibility of the study, the researcher followed a systematic process of data analysis, interpreting the findings based firmly on the data and evidence. The analysis of the data involved an ongoing evaluation of whether the themes were representative by checking for negative cases and alternative explanations. To further contribute to the study’s confirmability and credibility, a reflective commentary was kept throughout the research process, wherein the researcher documented and reflected on how her preconceptions were affecting data analysis. Through this process the researcher also kept track of the possible limitations of the study and their potential effects. To better understand the circumstances of the flexibly working respondents, the researcher developed in-depth knowledge and understanding of the FWA, work-family, and career literatures. Knowledge from previous research was used as a basis for the interview topics and questions, and for framing the study findings. For guidance throughout the research process, the researcher participated in debriefing sessions with superiors. To facilitate detailed and meaningful information from respondents, more specific probing questions followed the interview questions and the respondents were given the opportunity to read over their interview transcripts, thus ensuring that their words matched what they had intended to convey. The interviewer attempted to encourage honest responses through building rapport with the interviewees and emphasising that their participation in the study was confidential, voluntary, and that they could refuse to answer any of the questions. Additionally, the research findings and studied phenomena are described in depth with

quotations and reference to examples from the interviews, so that the reader can judge the real-life relevance of the research findings.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) critique the tendency of the quantitative tradition to try and generalise the findings across different contexts. Instead they favour to contemplate the *transferability* of qualitative findings, since they believe that human behaviour is much more heavily dependent on the social context than the act of generalising typically acknowledges. Considering the transferability of results from one context to another that is similar only offers working hypotheses of the applicability of the findings to other contexts rather than firm conclusions. The purposive sampling strategy used in the study has implications regarding the transferability of the research findings. This research acknowledges that the findings generated in this study are only transferable to people within a similar context as the respondents, that is, other professional, flexibly working parents in the public service. To promote the transferability of the study to individuals within this group, this study collected and presented detailed contextual information about the situation of the respondents. Interview questions also were included that specifically asked respondents how their strategy use was shaped in terms of context.

To conclude, the trustworthiness of this qualitative research was promoted by outlining decisions and procedures in detail, evaluating the representativeness of themes, illustrating the findings with employee quotes, and only applying the findings within the context of professional flexibly working parents in the public service, from which they emerged.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study adopted the social constructionist principles of qualitative inquiry to explore how professional working parents navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, this study utilised a select sample of flexibly working employees. The choice of professional working parents as the target group for the present study lies in the unique challenges they face as well as certain advantages which may stimulate their agency to instigate their own strategies. The respondents were recruited through a Wellington networking group as well as by employing snow-balling techniques. To fulfil the research aims, the study utilised the method of semi-structured interviewing to gather in-depth, contextually-specific information.

## Chapter 4:

### WLB and Positive Work Outcomes: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings and analysis that relate to how professional, flexibly working parents conceptualise WLB and positive work outcomes, as well as the interconnections between achieving these two types of outcomes. The chapter also discusses emergent findings with respect to the organisational contextual factors that influence both WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working employees.

#### Employee WLB Outcomes

When asked to describe their conceptualisations of WLB, flexibly working parents responded by citing a variety of things that they felt contributed to their WLB. More specifically, employees spoke of the ability to participate in multiple life domains, such as, prioritising family time, having personal time for interests and friends, as well as remaining in employment and having positive work outcomes -which are described in greater detail below. Supportive work environments were also considered to be part of WLB. In addition, parents viewed WLB as the ability to construct boundaries so that work and family domains would not encroach upon one another. Consequently, control over how they structured their work weeks was viewed by flexibly working parents as important for maintaining WLB. In relation to this, employees viewed WLB as maintaining health and well-being rather than experiencing stress or burnout. As part-timer Alice noted,<sup>5</sup> *“It’s really important... for my own sanity and well-being to have WLB... If I get overworked, or tired, or anxious, then that really affects my mental health”*. Therefore, in sum, flexibly working parents viewed WLB as having the ability to participate in and construct boundaries between multiple life domains, within supportive workplaces and without stress.

As noted earlier, previous research suggests that being able to participate in multiple life domains is important for WLB (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009; Haddock et al., 2001). In line with the life course perspective of work and family this research demonstrates the importance, for flexibly working parents, of participating in broader social and community roles, not just work and the immediate family (Moen & Sweet, 2004). These findings also support previous research that reports health and well-being as WLB outcomes (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Previous research also suggests that the capability to

---

<sup>5</sup> All names of respondents are presented as pseudonyms.

use preferred segmentation or integration boundary management strategies may be beneficial for WLB (Shockley & Allen, 2010). Indeed, these findings reveal that employees value having control over their work schedule. However, this research also finds little variation in boundary management preference, with most employees viewing WLB as having the ability to create boundaries between work and non-work. This is discussed further in chapter 5.

In conclusion, this research supports the empirical literature which indicates that participating in multiple life domains, pursuing health and well-being, and having control over work and family boundaries are factors that *promote* WLB. In addition, this research finds that flexibly working parents view these factors as part of their conceptualisations of what WLB *is*.

### **Employee Positive Work Outcomes**

Flexibly working employees perceived that positive work outcomes comprise a range of factors, including access to career advancement, having responsibility in their job, being challenged and having learning opportunities at work, doing well at their job, receiving recognition or positive feedback from others, and being able to financially provide for their family. In addition to this, it was important for employees to feel that they were motivated, inspired, doing interesting and enjoyable work, and making meaningful contributions in their roles. It is of note that for some, linear career advancement was not a motivator. As part-timer Lloyd explained, *“I’m probably at the stage now that career doesn’t mean a lot... I’m looking for roles that are challenging or interesting”*. Some employees spoke of the value of being able to stay in employment and make use of their skills while also being a parent. Furthermore, positive work relationships and ‘feeling supported’ in their workplaces were listed as positive work outcomes for flexibly working employees. Franklin, working flexitime and from home, described, *“A pleasant work environment, it makes it a lot easier... because you want to go to work”*. Although employees were asked separately about positive work outcomes and WLB, it is of note that they associated their search for WLB as a type of positive work outcome, and positive work outcomes as a component of healthy WLB. Part-timer, Vince concluded, *“Part of my career goals is to have good WLB, so in that sense it is like a direct link”*. However, as seen in the above sections, employee descriptions of WLB and positive work outcomes also encompassed many more facets than just each other. In summary, employees generally viewed positive work outcomes, while framed alongside WLB, broadly as comprised of career development opportunities, and doing work that they felt was meaningful and challenging, yet supportive, as well as remaining in employment.

In line with career theories that emphasise the importance of subjective career outcomes that may motivate employee career decisions this research indicates that a variety of different positive work outcomes are viewed as important for flexibly working employees (e.g. Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). In previous research, New Zealanders describe FWAs as assisting parents in remaining in employment (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009). This is supported in this study which finds that employees report maintaining labour market participation as a positive work outcome. This seems to suggest the importance of FWAs for these parents. Many of the positive work outcomes that this research identifies directly correspond with the way part-timers in Lee and Kossek's (2005) study described positive work outcomes. These include career advancement, peer respect, and learning and growing, making meaningful contributions, and having interesting and enjoyable work. This research expands on the peer respect/recognition outcome found by Lee and Kossek (2005) by also revealing working in supportive work climates as a positive work outcome. This may be especially salient to employees in this study given their family demands which require support from work. Reflecting the importance of this outcome to parents, this research reveals that networking strategies of flexibly working parents are aimed at positioning themselves within work environments that support their FWAs and family needs (see chapter 5). Similar to Lee and Kossek's (2005) study, this research finds flexibly working parents to directly reference WLB as a positive work outcome, which demonstrates the interrelatedness of positive work outcomes and WLB. However, as seen above, this research demonstrates how more detailed information relating to the meaning of WLB to employees can be obtained by asking about WLB separately from positive work outcomes.

This research also reveals two additional outcomes not identified in Lee and Kossek's (2005) study. One relates to having responsibilities at work. While similar to career advancement, this outcome may reveal insight into the motivations for managers in the study particularly, who tend to use work intensification strategies out of feelings of obligation towards their employers and direct reports because of their level of responsibility (see Chapter 5). Additionally, this research identifies the ability to financially provide for their families as a positive work outcome for flexibly working parents. This highlights the diversity of conceptualisations and choices concerning contributing to family, with some choosing to work part-time and spend more time with their children, while others emphasise providing financially for their families.

In conclusion, these findings parallel the research of Lee and Kossek (2005) by indicating that flexibly working parents perceive positive work outcomes as career



development, learning and challenge, making meaningful contributions, obtaining peer recognition, and doing work they enjoy. In extension, these findings also point to supportive work climates, work responsibility, as well as financially contributing to family as important work outcomes for flexibly working parents.

### **Interconnections between WLB and Positive Work Outcomes**

According to respondents, achieving WLB and positive work outcomes was interconnected in a variety of ways. Flexibly working employees often viewed themselves as juggling between their multiple life domains. This was a delicate balancing act and sometimes required trade-offs between WLB and positive work outcomes. Bertha, a part-timer, was very clear that she did not believe that an individual could dedicate themselves completely towards both the task of working and the task of parenting. She claimed, *“You can’t, I don’t think, do both and shoot for the absolute moon”*. Parents reported short-term, day-to-day instances where work encroached upon family life which had a negative effect on the family and likewise, instances where family emergencies disrupted their work life. Sometimes these occurred concurrently: *“I was really crazy busy at work and my daughter got the chicken pox”* (Angelica, flexitime, teleworking manager). Regarding such scenarios, Alice, working part-time, mentioned the risks to health and well-being. She explained, *“You can get so easily burned out because you have put in weekend hours, you have put in evening hours”*. Despite family representing the number one priority for employees, it was work that tended to encroach more upon family time than vice versa. As Toby, a manager working a compressed week, explained: *“It’s always going to be weighted towards work because... NZ and basically the Western world is structured towards working five days a week, 40 hours a week, and so that tends to be the pull”*.

Employees also agreed that work and family wellness could both positively influence one another: *“Happy family life... you can dedicate yourself at work much more effective... Work is going well... you can take that back to home”* (Edith, part-timer). Campbell, a teleworking manager, explained how skills learned in one role could promote outcomes in another. For example, he said, *“The experiences you learn as a parent... negotiating and prioritising and keeping calm under pressure etc. are directly applicable into a work environment”*. Jane, a teleworking manager, described how having multiple life domains could lessen the psychological impact of negative outcomes in one domain. For instance, she explained, *“If I get made redundant... it won’t be the end of my life, because I still have... my personal life”*. Part-timer Ned also spoke of how overall well-being was dependent on both

work and family outcomes: *“I need both to be satisfied... If I am not enjoying my job, but my family life is going quite well, that’s not enough”*.

While family was consistently prioritised, flexibly working parents had different perceptions concerning how their search for WLB interacted with their long-term positive work outcomes. Some parents described having made work or career sacrifices for WLB. As Penelope, a part-timer felt, *“I have been totally treading water in my career since I had children”*. Other employees had a slightly different viewpoint; they explained that they had made *readjustments* to their career expectations. Bertha, describing herself as an ambitious personality, explained, *“There’s that constant sort of slight reigning in of ambition”*. These employees accepted that their careers were going to progress more slowly and they had altered their industry or area of work towards more supportive environments. Some parents still believed that they would achieve their career goals, only more slowly. Angelica, a flexitime and teleworking manager concluded, *“I could probably achieve it faster if I... worked longer hours... but I think it will just delay me achieving that, that’s all. It won’t stop it”*. Some parents also described their sense of optimism about maintaining WLB and career progression as they saw FWAs becoming an increasingly relevant mode of working for both male and female caregivers, as well as employees more broadly.

The degree of relative importance of work and WLB for parents also influenced their views on the interconnections between WLB and positive work outcomes. For example, some parents maintained that since they did not have particularly high career ambitions to begin with, they had much less to sacrifice by prioritising their families. Part-timer Vince explained, *“Neither of us are hugely career-driven, so we both argue in a joking way over who gets to stay home most”*. Whereas, others felt that work was also an important part of their life that gave them a sense of meaning and fulfilment. For example, Campbell, a teleworking manager contemplated, *“WLB, I think it is a slightly misleading description in a way, because... work is part of life”*. These parents came to accept that, despite the expectations of their children, they could not participate in family life to the extent that non-working parents could.

In summary, flexibly working parents viewed their ability to achieve WLB and positive work outcomes as interconnected, both in positive ways while one or more life domains was going well, and in negative ways if one domain demanded time away from the other. This day-to-day juggle resulted in long-term re-evaluations of parents’ expectations concerning the amount of time and energy they felt they could dedicate to their work and

family domains. The relative importance of each life domain to individual parents influenced the way they felt about the adjustments they made to their work and family goals.

A main theme in the work-family literature concerns the potential for life domains to both negatively and positively affect each other (Casper et al., 2013). Similarly, this research indicates that flexibly working parents experience day-to-day conflict between work and family, which is associated with negative health effects (Allen, 2001). Specifically, this study finds this conflict to be time-based, with parents needing to decide when to prioritise each life domain (Casper et al., 2013). This research also indicates that flexibly working parents experience work-family enrichment in the forms of both affective enrichment, where positive mood in one life domain transfers to others, and instrumental enrichment, transferring valuable skills learned from either work or family domains to the other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). In line with previous research, this study also finds bi-directional effects with both work and family positively and negatively influencing each other (Casper et al., 2013). Findings from this research also suggest that work, more so, tends to encroach upon family life. This seems to reflect the pressure to work long hours and to be accessible within professional work environments (Moen et al., 2013). This research also reveals additional ways that work and family outcomes are interlinked for flexibly working employees. Firstly, these findings point to the high degree of interconnectedness between work and family to the extent that positive outcomes in one domain cannot be fully appreciated without also having positive outcomes in the other. Additionally, the findings suggest that positive outcomes in one domain can minimise negative psychological effects if there is adversity in another life domain. It is possible that these observations are especially salient for parents in this research whose decisions to work flexibly may reflect a greater importance placed on optimising both work and family domains.

Moreover, this research produces further insight into how flexibly working parents conceptualise trade-offs between life domains. These findings suggest that while some flexibly working parents acknowledge making sacrifices, others seem to be actively reformulating their evaluations in a more positive light, readjusting their work or family expectations or maintaining their beliefs that they will achieve their goals. At the same time, parents readjusting their expectations may reflect their limited personal influence over making trade-offs due to contextual constraints that lie within organisation and family institutions creating tensions in flexible work (Moen et al., 2013). The impact of contextual factors on the outcomes of flexibly working employees are discussed in the following section on the emergent findings.

In conclusion, this research provides insights into how achieving WLB and positive work outcomes are interconnected for flexibly working parents. It finds that employees reap work-family enrichment benefits from their FWAs. It also reveals that competing demands occur for flexibly working parents, despite their use of a WLB initiative. Furthermore, flexibly working employees face unique challenges causing trade-offs between life domains, and this likely lies in their marginalised position regarding career opportunities in organisations. This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

### **Organisational Contextual Factors**

Several organisation-relevant factors emerged as influencing both WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working employees. The following section presents factors relating to the organisation and management of work and FWAs which impacted both WLB and positive work outcomes predominantly by influencing the work demands of flexibly working employees. Then, description and analysis are presented with respect to the impact of organisational norms on flexibly working employees' experiences of stigmatisation, work intensification and reduced career opportunities.

#### **Organisation and Management of Work and FWAs**

Respondents noted that their positive outcomes were impacted by the coordination of work groups, the way productivity was measured, the planning of work projects, and the use of technology. Considering each briefly, effective ways of managing team coordination included using online filing systems, email correspondence, meeting with managers for task handover and updates, delegating projects to colleagues whilst flexibly working employees were away, and scheduling team meetings when all employees would be in the office. Focusing on work output as a measure of job performance was described as much more accurate and less stressful than practices that involved 'clock-watching' or counting the number of hours that employees worked. The former allowed employees to manage their work schedules more flexibly around day-to-day or week-to-week changes in work demands. Campbell, a teleworking manager advocated the value of focusing on work output: *"I have a much more supportive and realistic manager who appreciates that... it doesn't actually matter where I physically am at certain points as long as the quality of the work is maintained"*.

In regard to project planning, employees felt that FWAs, particularly part-time work, were more suited for well-planned, long-term projects which provided greater leeway for the timing of task completion. Lloyd, a part-timer explained, *"One or two days for a project*

*that's running for five years, that's not actually going to kill the project*". It was also easier if employees had responsibility for their own projects and autonomy to manage the timing of tasks. In contrast, the ability of flexibly working employees to complete task requirements was compromised by aspects of their work that increased their workload or reduced their schedule flexibility. These include: work that was difficult to predict and reactive to external events with fluctuating workloads, and jobs which required their physical presence in the office, regular travel, or meetings with external parties that were more difficult to reschedule, and where they needed to provide 24/7 service support. Part-timer Alice elaborated, *"My work can be quite reactive... People expect a turnaround within the same day... I found it really hard coming back... after having two days off and... trying to do urgent things"*. Unfortunately, due to poor project planning, part-timers in particular had great challenges managing workload pressures. Henrietta, a part-timer, explained how her workload was elevated by the fact that the staff were under-resourced, described as common in the public service. She explained, *"When [a colleague] left, she wasn't replaced. So, the entire workload fell to me... I was doing my 30 hours, plus I was doing at least another 10 at home unpaid"*. Olive, a part-time manager felt that, *"the design wasn't done to determine.... what the impact would be of having someone part-time in the role"*. Angelica, a flex-full-time manager, commented, *"The expectation on some of our part-time staff is not dissimilar to what we expect of our full-time... It's just very easy to forget that actually no, they are only doing part-time"*.

The provision of work technology within organisations gave employees greater flexibility in scheduling where and when they worked. Even for those who were not regularly teleworking, having the technological means to work from home meant that rather than falling behind on their work, parents could get work done even while they had to stay home with sick children. Organisations provided technological support, such as, access to work smartphones where they automatically received work emails, and laptops that could be plugged into work docking stations. However, employees also described that the technology they had access to was not modern enough to keep up with their need for flexibility. Parents did not want to carry laptops to and from work if they were bulky, or if they walked their children to school. Neither could parents plan to take their laptops home ahead of their children becoming sick so as to work from home. For these reasons, employees felt they needed work laptops as well as desktops at work that would automatically sync together. Yet, the fact that technology enabled employees to be accessible and engage in work from home made it difficult for parents to switch off from work while at home and be mentally present

with their families. Part-time working manager, Olive, described, *“You weren’t always present... We would be sitting playing a board game and I’d be checking my work phone.... before oops, it’s my turn”*.

Furthermore, according to employee descriptions, line managers had a central role in promoting flexibly working employee outcomes. Line managers were key players in influencing workload allocation, work coordination, a work output focus, and requesting technological resources for flexibly working employees. Employees described a joint approach in coordination and workload management between managers and themselves which promoted positive FWA outcomes and was dependent on having trusting relationships: *“Being really honest with your employer, building a relationship with your manager that is trustful”* (Lloyd, part-timer). Supportive supervisors took over tasks for flexibly working employees while they were away and updated them upon their return, they took FWAs into account while planning task and project deadlines, and they were regularly available to discuss the suitability of the workloads assigned to flexibly working employees. These managers were flexible regarding which hours employees worked, and tried to avoid asking employees to work overtime, or arranged for their time off, in lieu, or compensation for working extra hours. They also focused on the work output and results of flexibly working employees, rather than monitoring the number of hours worked, or valuing office presence.

On the other hand, formal, organisation-wide procedures for implementing FWAs were seen to be ambiguous in their practical applicability and the discretion of managers was relied upon in interpreting and following FWA policies and managing the work processes of flexibly working employees. Alice, a part-timer elaborated, *“The official word in the HR manual is that they support flexible working, but... it hasn’t been clear on how it’s applied at a kind of day-to-day manager level”*. According to employee accounts, HR processes also seemed to act as barriers to the establishment of FWAs and the success of the arrangements. There were indications that HR teams, rather than acting as proponents of FWAs, appeared to be gate-keepers that limited the availability and scope of FWAs to employees. In these cases, managers advocated on the behalf of employees by convincing HR to allow their FWAs. As Darcy, working a compressed week and from home, explained, *“[My manager] had to go through quite a fight apparently to get [HR] to do it”*. Moreover, respondents mentioned that HR had a reputation of placing part-timers in less desirable roles where the work was not interesting or challenging, whereas employees believed they could obtain higher quality placements if they themselves approached supportive managers.

Because there was ambiguity over how to interpret organisational FWA policies and a subsequent reliance on managerial discretion, the success and continuity of employees' FWAs were particularly dependent on continued line management support. This was concerning because respondents also described manager behaviour which negatively affected their FWA status and outcomes. For example, part-time manager Olive, who some weeks worked up to 60 hours, described that her manager was not easily accessible for discussions about her workload. Instead Olive's manager was available only for consultation about project processes. In another account, a newly appointed manager tried to discontinue part-timer Effie's working arrangement without following the organisation's protocol. Although she contested the actions, the situation resulted in Effie's transfer to another division, which resulted in a demotion from her managerial role.

To summarise, positive outcomes for flexibly working employees were promoted while their organisations facilitated coordination between flexibly working employees and colleagues and managers, focused on work output as indicators of performance, rather than office presence, assigned appropriate workloads, and provided technology to facilitate working from home. Threats to WLB included organisations failing to assign manageable workloads, especially for part-timers, and technology use obscuring the boundaries between work and home life. Employee accounts also revealed that within the context of weak HR functions, employees' FWAs and positive outcomes were vulnerable to the discretion of line managers in terms of the way they managed flexible work.

Previous research highlights the importance of project planning, work coordination, and technology provision for promoting FWA outcomes, alongside measuring performance through work output rather than by hours worked (Drew & Murtagh, 2005). The present research also demonstrates this. In terms of project planning, this study supports previous findings that inflexible, unpredictable deadlines with short time-frames along with workload miscalculation can create high work demands, especially for part-timers (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Smith & McDonald, 2016). This study also reveals additional factors relevant to the nature of work that pose as challenges for FWAs, such as, understaffed roles, 24/7 service support, and jobs that require travel. Previous research has also identified ways technology can both facilitate out-of-work communication and coordination with colleagues, and make it difficult psychologically to switch off from work while at home (Drew & Murtagh, 2005; Golden, 2001). Similar experiences are disclosed by respondents in this research. In extension, these findings reveal how flexibly working employees evaluate the provision of technology within New Zealand's public service, and point out certain

shortcomings. Specifically, a recommendation arising from employee accounts is to provide laptops employees can keep at home that will sync efficiently to desktops at work.

Empirical research suggests that supervisors have significant influence on both employees' outcomes and the continuity of their FWAs (e.g. Kirby, 2000). This research parallels previous literature by finding that managers can assist flexibly working employees through facilitating their WLB and allocating appropriate workload (Lee and Kossek, 2004; Musson & Tietze, 2004). In extension, this research reveals that managers play an important role in facilitating coordination between flexibly working employees and their teams. Previous research has contrasted the beneficial effect of team-centred coordination where members have equal awareness of group processes and problem-solving discretion, compared to managers alone coordinating between group members (Perlow, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2007). Along similar lines, this study indicates that flexibly working employees have reduced agency to plan their work weeks when managers receive more information than them about work tasks and are slow to communicate. However, this research also reveals an alternative approach to coordination. Rather than a team-centred approach, in this study, effective coordination within work groups is seen to be reliant on open and honest collaboration between flexibly working employees and their managers, who in the absence of flexibly working employees, can represent their interests to the rest of the group. Preference for this approach may be due to the lower interdependence of the sampled professionals' teams, which often dealt with government policy.

In addition, empirical research suggests that managers have greater impact on flexibly working employee outcomes than HR departments because organisational policies do not prescribe FWA implementation strategies, and instead give managers discretion in granting and managing FWAs (Cooper & Baird, 2015; Kelly & Kalev, 2006). Similarly, this research finds that managers have a direct influence on employees while HR policies are interpreted as vague and difficult to apply to practical situations. Where previously 'right-to-request' FWA policies have been claimed to limit widespread use of FWAs (Kelly & Kalev, 2006), these findings also shed new insight into the pitfalls of HR processes. These include, limiting the scope of flexibility that employees and managers propose, and the tendency to allocate work for flexibly working employees that is less meaningful and challenging than would be assigned by individual managers.

In conclusion, this research provides support for previous research outlining the potential of project planning, work technology, work coordination, and ways of measuring performance to influence flexibly working employee outcomes. These findings provide



insight into additional factors that can heighten the workload for flexibly working employees, and reveal the current state of technology provision for FWAs in New Zealand's public service. Additionally, these findings build upon the empirical research by suggesting that for flexibly working employees in moderately independent teams, effective coordination involves managers acting as communication channels between flexibly working employees and colleagues. This research further extends previous literature by noting that in addition to FWA availability being limited by HR processes that empower managerial discretion, HR may also attempt to prevent managers from granting employee FWA requests.

### **Organisational Norms**

Findings of this research suggest that for several employees, the availability and success of FWAs were dependent more on the culture of their organisations than on how work was organised and managed. Part-time, teleworking manager, Effie, explained, "*It is a bit of a mind-shift rather than a job set*". Flexibly working employees experienced strain from organisational cultures that featured high performance and long-work-hour pressures, the tendency to 'clock-watch' the hours employees worked at the office, management beliefs that inherently all jobs require full-time hours, along with distrust regarding working from home and other non-standard work arrangements. These organisational cultures led flexibly working employees to feel that they were viewed as 'poor-performers' or 'not-fully-committed' to work. Penelope, a part-timer described, "*I have felt a little bit second class for working part-time*". Toby, working a compressed work week, explained how a few years ago in his organisation, requesting flexible work resulted in career disadvantages. According to Toby:

There is at least one person who was very keen to maintain some work from home to spend more time with his children and as a result was side-lined from work, was considered to be not fully committed to the office -even though he is brilliant and extremely dedicated.

Furthermore, employees encountered gendered organisational attitudes around FWAs and parenting responsibilities, with part-time work seen as a temporary transitional arrangement for mothers with young children, rather than a legitimate, long-term alternative to full-time work, also suited for fathers, other caregivers, or anyone in search of greater WLB. Wilbur, a part-timer, disapproved of the gendered attitudes of colleagues and was unaware of any other part-time working fathers in salaried jobs. He explained, "*There's people here my own age that think that the mum is fine at home for weeks on end looking*

*after a kid*". Along similar lines, most of the fathers who participated in the study tended to work full-time, while some regularly worked over 40 hours per week. In addition, Olive, a part-time manager, encountered stigmatisation from a full-time working mother about being less committed and privileged. Her colleague taunted, "*Lucky for some being able to work lady's hours!*"

Employee accounts highlighted that distrust of employees was a reason for limiting the availability of FWAs, which were described as reserved for employees considered to be trustworthy and dependable. Because of this distrust, some employees were not granted FWAs at the beginning of their employment contracts; first they had to prove themselves. Moreover, organisations granting FWAs to even high-performing employees seemed to also be constrained by the difficulty of managing poor-performing employees who were not trustworthy. They were termed by Angelica, a flexitime, teleworking manager, as 'clock-watching' employees:

If you are in a position where you are working flexibly yourself, then how do you say no to people who you don't trust to be able to do it?... That's what I call clock-watchers: ... 'I work eight hours a day and I am not working a minute over that' ... I don't even trust them to do their hours at work... So, there is almost a bit of an, 'If we give it to that person, what are we going to do about other people?'

Distrust in FWAs and limiting FWA availability resulted in lack of job opportunities for employees who wanted to work flexibly, especially at higher levels. Many part-timers felt that they had been unable to progress to managerial roles. Part-timer Penelope described, "*I have been working at a level where I could have been a manager years and years and years ago, but it is very difficult to get part-time management positions*". Flexibly working managers also felt that they would be unable to maintain their current level of flexibility in a higher role. This reflected a lack of trust among organisations that higher-level roles could be worked flexibly. Effie, a part-time and teleworking manager explained:

It seems to be that if you were already a manager and then you return on a part-time basis, that is more acceptable because you have already proven yourself in that role.... I had proven myself as a manager, but I definitely felt the need to re-prove myself as a part-time manager.

Employee accounts revealed the impact of organisational culture leading to perceptions of FWAs as a rare privilege. The construction of FWAs as a privilege led to

flexibly working employees feeling obliged to reciprocate by offering flexibility back to their organisations through work intensification. This was referred to as a ‘two-way flexibility’, with employers providing flexibility through granting FWAs, while employees also remained flexible about making temporary or permanent changes to their work schedules to accommodate business needs. Yet, Franklin, a flexitime teleworker, reflected that two-way flexibility was unreasonable for employers to expect. He asserted, *“Regardless of where I am, I have responsibilities as a parent to look after children. So although we call it ‘flexible’, the reality is I can’t leave my seven-year-old at school after three. It’s kind of illegal.”*

Nevertheless, employee feelings of indebtedness to their organisations, coupled with the high-performance expectations put upon them, simultaneously instilled feelings of gratitude and guilt for working flexibly, which in turn induced high work effort. Teleworking manager, Poppy, felt, *“I don’t want to let anyone down... taking advantage of the generosity of my work by letting me work from home... I would feel incredibly guilty that I’d taken advantage”*. Part-timer Alice described her internal guilt in keeping to her reduced work hours: *“There is always a voice in my head saying ‘You are a slacker, you are a slacker’”*. Because employees had developed the impression that their FWAs were a privilege, there was an associated anxiety that such arrangements could be taken away. Alongside this anxiety, work effort was expounded through employees comparing their performance to that of standard full-time workers. As part-time manager Olive explained:

All the extra hours I worked was all about trying to do a good job, and as good as a full-timer... You don’t want to do anything that is going to rock the boat... You are almost so grateful that you’ve got a FWA that you end up giving a whole lot more, but the organisation doesn’t necessarily know that.

In summary, for some employees, their ability to access FWAs depended on their job tenure, job level, and job performance. Perceptions of the ‘privilege’ of flexibly working employees led to them feeling obliged to reciprocate flexibility to their organisations. To resolve concurrent feelings of gratitude, anxiety, and guilt, flexibly working employees intensified their work performance. Although factors relating to the organisation and management of work and FWAs were described as having an influence on the outcomes of flexibly working employees, it was the culture of organisations that was thought by some to have an even greater impact on the success of FWAs.

Previous research highlights organisational norms that limit FWAs and job opportunities, and cause stigmatisation for flexibly working employees. These include norms

about work devotion (Blair-Loy, 2003) and ‘ideal workers’ (Acker, 1990) that favour employees who work standard hours and prioritise work over other life domains, along with norms valuing office presence of workers with cultural distrust over working from home (Shockley & Allen, 2010). These elements of organisational culture are identified in this research. In addition, the study demonstrates how ‘ideal worker’ norms can limit the widespread availability of FWAs by creating biases that all jobs require full-time hours. This research also produces further insight into the ways that cultures of distrust affect FWA availability and outcomes through issues termed by employees as ‘clock-watching’. Distrust seems to promote the ‘clock-watching’ micromanagement approach which limits flexibly working employees from gaining greater informal flexibility to vary daily work hours and settings. Additionally, while previous research points to organisations limiting FWA availability to only trustworthy, high-performing employees (Hersch et al., 2001), these findings reveal that employers may also fear granting flexibility to even high-performers. This seems to reflect concern over the precedent that may be set to unmotivated employees who are more focused on ‘clock-watching’ than completing their work. It reflects how issues of managing FWAs are influenced by broader issues regarding the management of work. It may also reflect and suggest the need to address the difficulty of measuring and placing value upon professional work (Evans et al., 2004). ‘Clock-watching’ behaviour of managers is in opposition to recommendations for focusing on worker output rather than hourly office presence (Putnam et al., 2014). To sum up, access to quality FWAs in organisations seems to be constrained by both ‘clock-watching’ employees and managers.

As previously noted, empirical findings show that cultural norms can lead to the work intensification of flexibly working employees through the process known as the autonomy-control paradox (Putnam et al., 2014). This describes the way organisations end up having increased control over work effort when employees are given greater autonomy by working flexibly. This research supports and develops upon this idea. Similar to previous research, this study suggests that perceptions of FWAs as a privilege and notions of two-way flexibility actively create a sense of gratitude and obligation for flexibly working employees to intensify their work effort (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Moreover, these findings extend this by revealing that in tandem with instilling feelings of gratitude, perceiving flexibility as two-way, and a privilege, also leads to a substantial feeling of employee guilt and anxiety. Crucially, this guilt and anxiety seems to coincide with employee insecurity over having the opportunity to keep their FWAs. In turn this research suggests that the situation is compounded by high-performance cultures and inappropriate workload levels for part-timers,

especially, which creates feelings of uncertainty over whether employees can adequately repay flexibility to their employers and meet all the work requirements expected of them. In this way, the study demonstrates the interaction between factors relating to the organisation of work as well as culture in eliciting guilt and anxiety. This is similar to previous research identifying that the work intensification of flexibly working employees is associated with workloads and the timing of work cycles, as well as ideas about professional reputation and gratitude (Evans et al., 2004; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). To summarise, these findings demonstrate that organisational views of FWAs as ‘counter-cultural’, coupled with high work demands, lead to work intensification out of anxiety and guilt, as well as gratitude.

Empirical research suggests that traditional gendered prescriptions of fathers as breadwinners and mothers as homemakers influence evaluations of flexibly working fathers and mothers (Munsch, 2016). Similar to previous research, findings from this study reveal that mothers working flexibly are viewed as less committed and on a ‘mummy track’ (Stone & Hernandez, 2013). Regarding fathers, the literature posits both positive and negative ways that flexibly working fathers can be appraised, through the fatherhood bonus or femininity stigma (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2004; Munsch, 2016). These findings extend previous research by providing support for a femininity stigma and suggesting that the fatherhood bonus occurs only if fathers engage in compensatory behaviours that negate their flexibility. In this research, a femininity stigma was attached to fathers working part-time, as previous research suggests (Munsch, 2016), and additionally, in cases where fathers wished to work from home. This suggests that in general, working flexibly may elicit stigma for fathers. This contrasts with previous indications regarding a fatherhood bonus, wherein flex-full-time working fathers are judged to be more committed to the workplace because of their breadwinning family role (Munsch, 2016). In terms of the fatherhood bonus hypothesis, the study indicates that flex-full-time fathers, particularly in managerial positions engage in behaviours which will favour them in their organisations, such as, working long hours and using work technology from home. Yet, these behaviours come at the expense of WLB. This is in line with previous research finding fathers to work long hours while using FWAs (Gasser, 2015). These findings suggest that flex-full-time working fathers may be more vulnerable to working overtime. In sum, this research finds that while some employees try to compensate against stigmatisation, both mothers and fathers using FWAs seem to be at risk of having their work commitment questioned.

In conclusion, this research extends the literature by revealing how the ‘clock-watching’ behaviour of managers and employees can escalate cultures of distrust of FWAs

and impact on their availability and outcomes for flexibly working employees. It supports evidence that the work intensification of flexibly working employees is induced by ideas about work devotion, 'ideal workers', and flexibility as a privilege and as two-way. This study extends the empirical research by indicating that the privileged position of flexibly working employees not only fosters gratitude, it can also be associated with guilt and anxiety. This research also provides supporting evidence that a femininity stigma is associated with fathers working flexibly, while revealing that flex-full-time fathers attempt to compensate for this by increasing their work hours and availability.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, this research finds that positive work outcomes for flexibly working parents broadly encompass career development opportunities, meaningful, challenging and supportive work, and staying in employment. Positive WLB is viewed as being able to participate in and manage the boundaries between multiple aspects of life, such as, work, family, and time for the self. For flexibly working employees, WLB and positive work outcomes interact in positive ways by promoting one another and in negative ways through competing demands causing short-term and long-term sacrifices to be made. While some parents do not have particularly high career aspirations to begin with, for others the need to regularly make trade-offs results in parents readjusting their work and family expectations. In addition, the study also indicates that organisational contextual factors have an impact on the WLB and positive work outcomes of flexibly working parents. Relating to how work and FWAs are organised and managed, these findings reveal the influence of ways of measuring work output, project planning, team coordination, the influence of work technology, and the importance of line managers. Additionally, organisational norms that normalise standard full-time office hours, and gendered attitudes surrounding FWA usage, operate to the detriment of FWA outcomes. Having identified the meanings and interconnections of WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working parents, and the organisational contextual factors that influence them, the next chapter examines the strategies used by flexibly working employees to influence these outcomes.

## Chapter 5:

### Employee FWA Strategies: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings as they relate to the research objective which is to explore how professional working employees navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes. The broader meaning of the findings are also analysed within the context of existing research. The chapter is structured along three themes of strategies flexibly working employees were found to use, those targeting WLB, work organisation, and career. Within the chapter, Tables 4, 5, and 6 summarise the strategies used to promote WLB, work organisation, and career, respectively.

### Employee WLB Strategies

The following section describes and analyses the strategies flexibly working parents used to promote WLB. First, it discusses how flexibly working employees manage the boundaries between work and non-work. Second, it presents the strategies employees use to coordinate and prioritise between life domains. Last, it reveals how parents use social and paid resources to lessen their household workload while working. Within this, there are separate discussions in regards to enlisting partners as a resource, and drawing upon wider social support networks and paid services.

### Boundary Management

Managing the boundaries between their work and non-work lives was a challenge for employees working unconventional office hours, that had high stakes. A common risk for part-timers was having to complete the equivalent of a full-time workload, which sometimes involved working overtime, while only receiving pay representative of the part-time hours they officially worked. Boundary management was also challenging for managers. Despite having greater autonomy over tasks, discretion over their schedules, and resources at their disposal to influence their workload, managers felt they were expected, given their increased responsibility, to work long hours and be readily accessible. Accordingly, they felt it was inappropriate to ask for compensation or time off in lieu for working extra hours. As Campbell, a teleworking manager explained, *“We are lucky to have these great jobs but with that comes a lot of responsibility... At times it requires more hours”*.

Table 4

*WLB Strategies Used by Flexibly Working Parents*

Boundary management
Keeping physical boundaries between work and home e.g. teleworking in secluded areas of the house.
Keeping temporal boundaries between work and home e.g. leaving work at exact times.
Limiting work technology use outside of work hours, or freely using work technology at home as an integration strategy.
Communicating boundary expectations with others.
Fitting non-work activities such as childcare or exercise within the work day.
Coordination of life domains
Prioritising multiple life domains e.g. work, family and personal time.
Organising household routines e.g. planning commutes between home, work and childcare.
Use of social and paid resources
<u>Use of partner support</u>
Partners appropriately dividing household obligations.
Partners working as a team e.g. open communication and proactive decision-making.
Partners holding similar egalitarian values on shared parenting and the equal value of both partner's careers.
Partners having similar expectations for household duties.
Partners readjusting household division over time.
<u>Use of social support networks and paid services</u>
Enlisting paid services to help manage household obligations e.g. cleaners, childcare facilities.
Utilising social support networks to assist with household obligations e.g. family helping with childcare.

In response to these challenges, flexibly working employees utilised a range of segmentation boundary management strategies to prevent work hours encroaching upon their home lives. Employees kept physical boundaries between work and non-work. Even while working overtime, rather than working at home part-time manager Olive would drive back to work. Teleworkers worked in secluded areas to avoid distractions, such as, TV, household chores, and a messy home, or worked while their children were sleeping, away, or distracted



by others or videos. Employees temporally separated work and non-work by attempting to arrive and leave work at exact times, even if these times were different from their colleagues' schedules, and trying not to think about work at home, and family at work. In terms of their behaviour, employees kept records of the number of hours worked, and set limits on technology use outside of work hours. For example, they turned off phone notifications and only checked work emails at certain times. Jeremy mentioned regarding teleworking and using flexitime, that he avoided using his personal phone for work matters. He disclosed, "*I am totally into having separate phones and separate numbers... I don't like to blend it at all I have really clear boundaries*". Children also directly confronted their parents about their work technology use while at home. As part-timer Henrietta described, "*With my previous job it got really bad with the kids going 'Mum I asked you that five times and you haven't answered me... Leave your Blackberry alone!'*". Employees also communicated their boundary expectations with others. For example, they communicated their concerns regarding their ability to manage their workload with managers, and negotiated for compensation or time off in lieu if they were asked to work overtime. Interestingly, this often resulted in managers deciding that the employee did not need to work overtime after all.

Some employees, particularly teleworkers also used integration strategies to blend together their work and non-work lives. Employees integrated their life domains by using work technology at home, reflecting on work while at home, and while teleworking taking breaks for exercise or to pick children up from school, and resuming work later in the day. Because working near children was challenging, some teleworkers worked late in the evenings. Angelica, a teleworking and flexitime manager said, "*If I have to work till two in the morning, I'll work till two in the morning. I will just do what I need to do to get the job done*". This poses a concern regarding whether employees would be rested for work the next day.

Despite using integration strategies, overwhelmingly employees preferred keeping life domains separate. Ned, a part-timer felt, "*If I mix I do a terrible job of everything*". Rather than personal preference, integration strategies often reflected the necessity to balance high work and family demands. As examples, employees voiced dissatisfaction over feeling compelled to use work technology during family time, and children's well-being rather than preference drove part-timers' decisions to personally juggle work and family demands, described later in the chapter. Integration strategies were also used if employees were constrained in having little control over working long hours. In these situations, integration was viewed as a way of gaining a sense of control and structure. Campbell, a teleworking

manager who had previously also worked compressed weeks, reflected, “*It’s basically about having control over when I do stuff... Then I don’t mind so much if I need to spend an evening working because then I have spent time with the kids already*”. However, Campbell’s high work demands also meant that family and personal time could be interrupted by work. This had compromised his compressed work weeks and suggests that he did not have complete control. He described, “*Had some great conversations where we would be at the park... I’d be pushing the kids on the swings while talking to someone about a major [work] issue... Wasn’t optimal.*”

To summarise, flexibly working parents actively managed boundaries between life domains to avoid working overtime which was a particular risk for part-timers, and managers using FWAs. Parents used strategies to physically and temporally separate work and non-work. They also communicated their boundary expectations to others and kept track of their work hours and technology use. Employees also integrated their life domains, despite their personal preference for segmentation.

Boundary theory describes a continuum of ways that employees may maintain physical and psychological boundaries between life domains, with some preferring to segment work and non-work domains while others favour integration (Ashforth et al., 2001). This study extends Kreiner et al.’s (2009) boundary management typology that specifies physical, temporal, behavioural and communicative strategies. In particular, this research indicates the use of sophisticated techniques for communicating workload expectations to managers. Whereas previously Moen et al. (2013) found that professional employees take time off in lieu as a resistance and compensatory strategy for working overtime, the present findings reveal that employees also use their right of time off in lieu as bargaining power in order to *prevent* working overtime. These findings support the important role of organisational frameworks that monitor overtime hours in assisting employees with boundary management. Of concern, however, this research indicates that managers do not perceive structures such as time off in lieu to be accessible for them. In the absence of guiding organisational structures and messages, this raises concern for the ability of managers to make judgements regarding the length of their work weeks. An assumption of boundary theory is that individuals have different preferences for segmentation or integration of life domains (Ashforth et al., 2001). Yet, findings from this study instead suggest that the contextual factors consisting of long-work-hour pressures and parenting expectations, combined with a lack of faith in external childcare providers seem to have a greater influence on the strategies employees use, rather than their first preference. This is in line with the life

course perspective's identification of constrained choice in using FWAs (Moen & Sweet, 2004). In addition, the study's findings on integration strategies further support the underlying processes promoting work intensification within the autonomy-control paradox (Putnam et al., 2014). While it appears that integration gives employees an impression of control over their work schedule, ultimately, work demands control how much of their time they devote to work. In this way, use of integration strategies as well as resulting from long work hours, may also be interpreted as enabling them.

Previously, teleworking has been the type of FWA predominantly studied in terms of boundary management (Basile & Beauregard, 2016). This research extends what is known about the use of boundary management strategies through exploring their use by a greater variety of flexibly working employees. The findings therefore suggest that while boundary management strategies are necessary for teleworkers because of the physical overlap between their place of work and family home (Shaw et al., 2003), they are equally important for flexibly working employees working within the office where organisational norms about standard work hours are directly salient and create challenges for leaving early. Additionally, the study suggests that boundary management strategies relating to limiting work technology use are salient across FWA types, because all groups of flexibly working employees are challenged by the temptation to engage in work technology from home regardless of whether they formally telework.

To conclude, these findings forward our knowledge of boundary management strategies and reveal their importance for not only teleworkers but also for flexibly working employees who must navigate standard-hour office norms to maintain their unconventional work schedules. This research highlights the importance of organisational structures to monitor employee hours, even for managers. Contrary to boundary theory, the findings of this research illustrate that rather than reflecting individual preference, integration strategies seem to be used in response to constraints of long-hour work cultures and inadequate social structures for childcare, revealing gaps in organisational and institutional support for working parents.

### **Coordination of Life Domains**

For flexibly working parents, coordinating between life domains was challenging, described as a precarious juggling act where crises could easily occur and where there was some loss of efficiency. The organisational workload of flexibly working parents was inevitably expounded by the continual need for schedule adjustments due to the changing

‘age and stage’ of parents and their children. As examples, parents experienced changes to job roles and their workload, and children’s childcare needs changed once they started school. Part-timers asserted that rather than having more free time or WLB, they had a greater workload compared with full-timers because they personally had to juggle more between work and childcare. Meanwhile, full-timers generally enlisted more help with household duties. Part-timers in this way chose to work reduced hours for their children’s well-being rather than their own. Nevertheless, employees acknowledged their financial privilege in being able to improve WLB by working reduced hours and enlisting paid services for household management. Effie, a part-time, teleworking manager stated, *“The fact that you do take a cut in pay is the real defining factor for most people... We are lucky... in that we had children later in life”*. However, the need for financial security when repaying mortgages limited parents to using FWAs within salaried jobs, compared to the greater independence of self-employment.

Flexibly working parents used strategies to help them to coordinate as well as prioritise between family, work and personal time. For example, employees organised household routines by planning childcare calendars, cooking schedules, efficient commutes between home, work and childcare providers, as well as financial budgets to maintain part-time work. To prioritise non-work life, employees moved to more supportive jobs. For those living far from work, choosing to work from home could also save up to two hours of commuting time per day for non-work activities. As a way of prioritising both WLB and work success, employees strategically used job interviews to inquire whether their prospective employers had adjusted the workload and work processes to suit FWAs. As part-time manager Olive explained, *“I have been quite clear in my discussions with them... ‘What are the time-frames for delivery -how have you accommodated part-time for that?’”*. Because of the salience of work demands as well as children being the utmost priority, personal time was especially challenging for parents to maintain, being first to be sacrificed in the juggle for WLB. Ways parents tried to make time for themselves included having rigid weekly planned social events, paying attention to their own feelings, or incorporating exercise or personal time into their daily commute. However, individual components of self-care time were often sacrificed against each other. For example, part-time manager Olive sacrificed sleep, as 5:00 am was the only time free for exercise.

To summarise, mirroring the efficiency skills used to organise and prioritise work tasks (see work organisation strategies below), flexibly working parents also used their personal organisation and prioritisation skills to promote WLB. While employees

acknowledged that their financial situation contributed to the achievement of WLB, changing life circumstances saw them continually juggling and readjusting their plans and FWAs, which resulted in very little personal time.

Empirical research has identified individual organisation and prioritisation skills as essential for working parents (Haddock et al., 2001). For example, previous studies have quantitatively demonstrated the value of general planning behaviour (Lapierre & Allen, 2012). The present study provides new insight relating to the range of organisation strategies flexibly working parents use. This research also finds support for flexibly working parents, similar to dual-earners, actively prioritising multiple life domains (Haddock et al., 2001). However, as previously in research, this study suggests that self-care time becomes the lowest priority for flexibly working parents and the easiest to sacrifice (Watts, 2009). In line with the life course perspective, findings regarding the high organisational workload for flexibly working parents, compounded by continually changing dynamics between family and work obligations, suggest that organisations need to be aware that FWAs themselves cannot remain static (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Rather, they should be adjustable to suit changing family cycles and new career opportunities.

In conclusion, these findings progress research on ways flexibly working parents organise between life domains. Like previous research, this study indicates that finding time for self-care seems to be a challenge for even working parents who use FWAs. These findings point to the dynamic changes in the lives of parents which exacerbate the necessity for them to coordinate their workload, and the need for support.

### **Use of Social and Paid Resources**

**Partner support.** WLB for flexibly working parents was promoted when partners equitably shared household duties, including childcare. Yet, the division of household workload posed a significant challenge for parents. Within respondents' marriages, overwhelmingly mothers had greater levels of work flexibility, and greater household workloads, regardless of which partner in the couple was the primary earner. Bertha a part-timer described, *"I run the kids to soccer and go to the supermarket... I do all the organising... all the cooking, 60% of the cleaning. But that's normal right?... He definitely gets more spare time than me..."*. Accordingly, more often mothers had made greater career sacrifices. Penelope, working part-time stated, *"[Childrearing] has a bigger toll on my career than it does on his. No question"*. On the other hand, some fathers reported wanting more flexibility than their organisations would approve.

The reasons why mothers often had greater household responsibilities included the tendency for fathers to have stronger work or financial earning identities, fathers' disinterest in looking after children for long periods, and fathers having performed in a substandard fashion when given more responsibility in the past. Toby, a manager working compressed weeks admitted, "*I would have probably struggled doing five days a week with the kids. I love having a day with them and... I enjoy my work a lot*". Additionally, some mothers were unwilling to give up their roles as primary caregivers to their husbands. Other mothers still, had greater household workload because they had higher standards, with some not wanting to give up control over how tasks were done. Teleworking manager Poppy explained:

I like my house to look like a show home which is probably a little unreasonable... So that's probably why I do most of the housework... It's that typically male-female thing that I witness in most of my friends' relationships, that guys don't even see jobs that need to be done.

Nevertheless, couples coordinated household management by communication, joint-decision making, and proactive planning, such as, by having structured weekly rules and routines. Equitable division of household management was facilitated if both partners held similar household expectations and broader egalitarian attitudes towards childrearing and dual-earning. As Campbell, a teleworking manager described, "*We do work really well as a team in that we both respect each other's jobs and we don't expect that one person is going to do more or one person's job is more important*". Some couples also alternated who was the primary caregiver working flexibly over different periods in time.

To sum up, having a partner provided an opportunity for parents to share the household workload. However, consistent with gender roles, mothers tended to have greater work flexibility and household workload. Equitable chore division was promoted by egalitarian attitudes, communication, proactive planning, and similar household expectations, and readjustments to the divisions over time.

Empirical research indicates a gender bias in mothers making greater use of part-time work, while they also tend to have greater domestic duties regardless of whether anyone in the household works flexibly (Halford, 2006; Hilbrecht et al., 2008; Pew Research Center, 2013). The present research provides evidence supporting these trends. Similar to previous research, these findings suggest that working reduced hours seems to be a reason for mothers to do more housework than their husbands (Raley et al., 2012). Interestingly though, this research indicates that for some couples, even while the mothers have higher earning capacity

than their husbands they still have greater household workload and work more flexibly, sometimes also working fewer hours. Although previous research suggests their greater domestic contribution is linked to mothers having lower earning capacity compared with husbands, the present research reminds that this is not always the case (Karambayya & Reilly, 1992; Raley et al., 2012).

Extant literature on dual-earning parents, points to the importance of partners sharing values about equality in parenting and career contributions, as well as jointly planning and communicating to facilitate shared household workload (Haddock et al., 2006). This research supports the previous findings while it also extends empirical research. It reveals the importance of couples holding similar standards regarding parenting and household chores to ensure that both partners make equitable contributions. While this research also indicates the need for partners to share egalitarian values, having similar household standards may be more important still, as partners regardless of their intentions, do not appear to be aware of the need to complete tasks past their own standards. Meanwhile, mothers seem to contribute more to the household because they feel that their standards are ‘unreasonably’ high. Hence these findings indicate the importance of couples reaching agreement and shared awareness on household expectations.

Mothers tending to have higher standards for their households could reflect identity differences between mothers and fathers, as this research indicates that fathers tend to have greater financial and work identities. This corresponds with empirical research that suggests fathers have greater schemas for work devotion while family devotion schemas may be more salient for mothers, and that there is a societal construction of intensive *mothering* expectations about ‘correct’ childrearing practices (Hays, 1996; Moen et al., 2013). However, it must be noted that this research indicates that both mothers and fathers worry over how to ensure their children’s care while working, outlined in the following section. In addition, for some fathers their lower levels of workplace flexibility appear to result from constraints beyond their control, such as, not being able to obtain greater flexibility, or indeed wives preferring that husbands work full-time as breadwinners. Nevertheless, the fact that this study indicates that fathers are choosing to work flexibly, often complementing their wives’ FWAs, may be an encouraging sign that gender roles are shifting, with mothers acting as role-models for fathers to also assume active roles in family life.

In conclusion, this research provides supporting evidence for research that suggests there are gendered trends in the uptake of FWAs and the division of household duties. It extends the literature by suggesting that the different standards for household responsibilities,

which may reflect gendered identities, seem to contribute to mothers doing more. Nonetheless, this research finds fathers as more than just ‘breadwinners’. They strive to be active players in their children’s lives, accordingly changing their work schedules. Additionally, reasons for fathers not working as flexibly as mothers in this study remind that accessing FWAs is not simply an independent choice for New Zealand fathers. It seems to require negotiation and compromise with organisations as well as wives over how flexible roles will be divided within households.

**Social support networks and paid services.** Flexibly working parents utilised a variety of social support networks and paid services to manage their childcare and other household obligations. Employees paid for cleaners, gardeners, students or nannies to help with cooking and washing, as well as food delivery services. Paid childcare services used by parents included day-care, crèche, before and after-school care, school holiday programmes, nannies, and babysitters. Parents also relied on family and friends for childcare assistance. Family support could make a big difference, in some cases enabling parents to take on more senior roles with longer hours. As Poppy, a teleworking manager explained, “*What made me decide to go full-time? ... It was because I had my mum there to help*”.

Flexibly working parents also encountered various challenges to enlisting household support. These included the cost of paid services, lack of quality full-time childcare, sick children being unable to attend childcare, lack of family proximity, and working parents being unable to reciprocate children’s play dates. Employees commonly felt emotionally torn about leaving their children in the care of others. They reported feeling guilty regarding their children developing a bond with nannies, and being in day-care or before/afterschool care, where they openly complained, became tired or cranky, seemed too young or unconfident, and could not attend play dates or afterschool activities. Feeling guilty for working was perpetuated when children compared their working parents with stay-at-home parents. Olive, a part-time manager shared her child’s comments, “*‘But mummy, why can’t you help at swimming like all the other mummies?’ How much effort it takes to try and be flexible.... Yet it wasn’t quite enough in [child’s] eyes*”. In response, Olive realised she had to adjust her parenting expectations: “*There is this ideal of the perfect mother and you can’t be that because you are working some of the time*”. Nonetheless, utilising FWAs alleviated parental guilt compared to some employees’ past experiences of standard-working and placing children in full-time day-care from three months until school-aged.



In sum, to assist their ability to juggle their work and home obligations, flexibly working parents made use of both social support and paid resources which minimised their household workloads. However, the expense of paid services, along with isolation from families and communities made organising for help with household duties challenging and costly. For parents whose number one concern was their children's well-being, participating in paid employment also came with the cost of guilt over how childcare was potentially affecting their kids.

Previous research demonstrates that flexibly working parents utilise social supports of family and friends along with paid services to alleviate childcare and household workloads (Crosbie & Moore, 2004; Lee & Kossek, 2005). This mirrors findings in the present study. The study also highlights several challenges flexibly working parents face in arranging for household support. These are in line with issues raised by the life course perspective (Moen & Sweet, 2004). They include: the high costs of childcare and household services, concerns about the quality of childcare providers, the mismatch between employment hours and hours of childcare provision, isolation from familial and community support, and issues surrounding the continuity of work if children are sick. Thus, these findings reiterate the life course perspective's view of the institution of paid employment relying on and being indebted to autonomous support systems that help parents go to work, while there is a lack of cohesion between employment and childcare institutions (Moen & Sweet, 2004). The fact that this research finds employees to experience parental guilt while having their children in care may reflect the lack of adequate childcare support for working parents. However, it may also result from the pressure that societal intensive parenting attitudes place on working parents, which one parent in this study specifically commented on (Hays, 1996).

In conclusion, these findings provide supporting evidence of the use of social support networks and paid services to help flexibly working parents manage their household obligations. This research supports the life course perspective's identification of institutional gaps in supporting work and parenting needs. It also finds support for assertions that intensive parenting expectations put emotional strain upon working parents.

### **Employee Work Organisation Strategies**

The following section reports on the strategies that were employed by flexibly working parents to coordinate and manage their work. It presents and discusses, first, the work coordination strategies used by employees within the context of working at unusual

times and places, and second, the strategies of work intensification and efficiency for managing high workload pressures.

Table 5

*Work Organisation Strategies Used by Flexibly Working Parents*

Work coordination
Communicating work schedule to colleagues.
Coordinating on tasks with colleagues e.g. communicating about task progress.
Managing impressions of availability.
Keeping up-to-date on work progress.
Dealing with challenges to meeting scheduling e.g. sending delegates if absent.
Utilising technology for communication.
Work intensification and efficiency
Working harder and longer hours.
Making short-term or long-term adjustments to work schedule to suit business needs.
Targeting high workloads e.g. delegating work to others.
Keeping organised e.g. goal-setting and prioritisation.
Utilising aspects of their FWAs that promote work efficiency e.g. teleworking enabling focused working away from office distractions.

### **Work Coordination**

While using their FWAs, employees used various strategies to facilitate coordination on tasks with colleagues. To make others aware of their work schedules, employees provided verbal reminders, had automated out-of-office email replies giving their contact details, indicated non-availability on public calendar systems, and maintained consistent work schedules. As Henrietta, a part-timer described, *“My reminder on my calendar is to put my out-of-office on every day and I have my entire calendar blanked out from 2.30 so no one can schedule a meeting in. They know I’m not available”*. Employees also used strategies to facilitate handing over and coordinating tasks with colleagues. They updated colleagues when tasks would be completed, especially if there were delays, enquired after the availability of others, and asked colleagues if they needed anything from them before leaving. Employees reminded others that they were available to be contacted while working from home. One employee explained, *“I’ll send an email saying that I am back and I’m online... I am still there over there and ready to help”* (Jeremy, flexitime, teleworker). While out of the office,

some managers used work technology to monitor their direct reports. By contrast, Naomi, a manager working a compressed work week, discussed her weekly absence as benefitting her direct reports. She said, *“They quite like the fact that I am not around on a Friday because there aren’t any meetings and they can just get on and get their work done”*. To update themselves on work changes, employees checked work emails in their personal time, or blocked out time in their calendars so that they only attended meetings once updated. As part-timer Alice disclosed, *“If I have a really busy, full week of meetings or big issues then I will pop on my laptop [at] night... to be aware of what’s coming up”*. Employees also arranged for colleagues or supervisors to keep them updated.

Challenges in meeting scheduling were handled in various ways. Employees avoided attending meetings while they were teleworking. However, if meetings occurred outside of their office hours, flexibly working employees video-conferenced into meetings from home, sent delegates, requested meeting minutes, or gave their input beforehand or afterwards. Regarding coordinating via technology, some employees used face-to-face video conferencing, others preferred phone calls, while others still, disliked discussing work issues while teleworking. One employee described, *“There’s some issues which are complex and you need to have both sides of the story. It doesn’t work so well”* (Darcy, compressed work week, teleworker). For this reason, teleworkers prioritised having work conversations in the office.

In summary, employees directed significant effort towards maintaining coordination with colleagues while they utilised unconventional work schedules or locations for work. This involved ensuring that others understood their FWAs, establishing systems for task handover and being kept up-to-date by others, and managing impressions of availability while away from the office. It also featured coordinating meeting schedules and compensating when unable to attend, including making decisions relating to technology use for coordination.

These findings empirically extend on theorisations of the work coordination of flexibly working employees (Perlow, 1999; 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2007). Themes from this literature include proactive availability and synchronised interaction, which are discussed in turn. Van Dyne et al.’s (2007) examples of proactive availability seem to have strong parallels with strategies standard-working employees would use. They include: initiating communication with colleagues, sending updates of their progress, anticipating the cycle of work processes, and making themselves available for important events or meetings. The findings from this research extend Van Dyne et al.’s (2007) conceptualisation by revealing

that proactive availability for flexibly working employees requires additional effort, predominantly out of the need to compensate for being away from the office. For example, communication efforts are centred around reminders of their atypical office schedules, and the importance of updating colleagues of delays in task completion due to their high workload. In addition to anticipating the cycle of work processes as a feature of proactive availability, flexibly working employees must anticipate the need to learn of work changes after being out of the office, before any group processes and tasks can be continued.

Synchronised interaction refers to assigning specific times for group work and for individual work (Van Dyne et al., 2007). For the professionals in our sample, who do a fair amount of independent work, it seems that meetings are important events facilitating group work. However, despite the value of attending meetings for group coordination and signalling commitment to group goals (Van Dyne et al., 2007), this research indicates that professional, flexibly working employees cannot always manage this, despite their efforts at communicating their work schedules. Again, these findings reveal that additional effort is dedicated in compensating for these absences. Furthermore, these findings also parallel other research that suggests the practical challenges for flexibly working employees in initiating synchronised interaction, regarding feeling compelled to offer endless availability to colleagues through technological channels (Corwin et al., 2002; Lee & Kossek, 2005). This may reflect responses of flexibly working employees to cultural expectations within certain organisations for constant availability, especially for managers (see boundary management strategies). This seems to suggest the need for organisations to support other work coordination strategies that flexibly working employees may initiate.

To conclude, this research extends previous findings by demonstrating that the proactive availability of flexibly working employees centres around compensating for being out of the office and delays in completing tasks, along with the need to be informed of work progress. These findings also highlight the importance of meetings as a platform for group coordination among professionals, and the need for flexibly working employees to compensate when they are unable to attend. Additionally, these findings suggest the need for organisational support so that flexibly working employees do not feel compelled to signal their endless availability to colleagues, at the expense of WLB.

### **Work Intensification and Efficiency**

In response to high workload demands, flexibly working employees intensified their work effort by working harder and longer hours, including working overtime from home. In

doing so, employees skipped work social events and lunch breaks. Bertha, a part-timer explained, *“I’ve got to get so much work done in such a concentrated amount of time that it’s just full on... I don’t do anything that isn’t work for my work hours”*. However, intensifying work could lead to burnout and personal sacrifices. Olive, a part-time manager whose job had been demanding more than a full-time workload, described her deep regrets over not spending time with a sick family member. She disclosed, *“I had spent so much of my time working... I didn’t see her in the two or three weeks before she passed away which I am really sad about”*. Soon after, Olive changed her job. Additionally, employees managed workload pressures by being flexible and adjusting their work schedules short-term or long-term for business needs. While this promoted the impression of their availability to colleagues, it also encroached upon non-work domains.

However, another way of responding to work demands, by increasing their work efficiency, did not appear to have negative effects for flexibly working employees. One way employees promoted their work efficiency was by managing and streamlining their workloads. To do so, they delegated work to others, replaced under-performing employees or hired additional staff, developed the capacity of their teams, chaired efficient meetings with agendas and tight time-frames, and avoided unproductive meetings. Additionally, employees increased their work efficiency through staying organised, such as, by goal-setting and prioritising which tasks to do at which times. They also optimised their time by reflecting on work progress while commuting, leaving tasks at points where they could be resumed easily, and completing tasks in less detail. As Bertha, formally working a fulltime workload in part-time hours, explained: *“Don’t bring out the Mercedes when the Mini will do.”* Employees were motivated to work efficiently to avoid work spilling into home time. Accordingly, keeping tight timelines had the benefit of discouraging procrastination and safeguarding against unpredicted delays or increases in workload. Part-timer Henrietta explained, *“You have to be quite clear about your work plan, what has to be delivered each day... Your best laid plans suddenly go out the door because [the kids] they’re sick”*.

Aspects of employees’ FWAs also facilitated work efficiency. Part-timers found they could focus more while working shorter time periods and they engaged in strategic thinking about work tasks when they were not working. Teleworkers could work when and where they were naturally more focused, such as, the evening, and away from open-plan office distractions. Effie, a part-time, teleworking manager described, *“Those three hours [at home] are the equivalent to six hours in the office... You can get that reflection and thinking and analysis done that you can’t in a work environment”*. Compressed work weeks also provided

time away from office distractions in the early morning or once others employees had finished work. Employees also tried to address the tedium of working long, compressed hours by breaking up their days with meetings, by alternating between completing different kinds of tasks, and changing their work locations such as reading work reports in cafes.

In summary, some flexibly working employee strategies for managing high workloads were associated with personal sacrifices and health risks, such as, working harder and for longer hours, or making schedule readjustments for work emergencies. However, these negative consequences did not seem to result when employees worked efficiently through organisation and prioritisation, and managing and streamlining their workloads. Additionally, work efficiency could be promoted through natural aspects of FWAs, such as, encountering fewer distractions when working from home.

A common theme in the literature relates to the work intensification of part-timers and teleworkers in response to high work demands through both extensive effort (Green, 2001), by increasing work hours, and intensive effort, through increased work effort (e.g. Corwin et al., 2002; Crosbie & Moore, 2004). This research mirrors those findings. The study also reveals that employees are not only prepared to readjust their work schedules on a short-term basis to accommodate work emergencies (Lee & Kossek, 2005), but in some cases employees also permanently changed the terms of their FWAs based on business needs and long-hour cultures. As previously established, work intensification, as well as raising concerns over the exploitation of flexibly working employees, is also linked in this research to negative outcomes for employees and their families, such as, burnout and turnover (Corwin et al., 2002; Golden, 2001). Thus, these findings further highlight the prevalence and negative effects of high-performance pressure for flexibly working employees.

The research findings also extend previous research by demonstrating that work intensification is an issue not only for teleworkers and part-timers; it also occurs for employees with compressed work weeks and flexitime. Therefore, these findings affirm the fact that work intensification can occur even for flexibly working employees who in total spend the same amount of time in the office as standard workers, but spread this time in unconventional ways. These findings in this study may be due to the greater expectation for managers (who were the main users of compressed weeks and flexitime) to work long hours, as well as what appears to be a universal experience that consists of work pressures and crises for flexibly working professionals. While this study supports notions of work intensification, like other empirical research, these findings also demonstrate that flexibly working employees promote work efficiency with organisation and planning strategies in response to

work demands (Lee & Kossek, 2005; Shaw et al., 2003). Moreover, these findings indicate additional ways employees increase their work efficiency by taking steps to manage their workloads. However, it must be noted that many of these strategies rely on employees having the authority and discretion to implement them, as is the case in managerial positions.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the research literature on the work intensification of flexibly working employees by finding that teleworkers, part-time workers, and employees working compressed weeks or flexitime increase their work effort and work hours, which is linked to negative outcomes. In a more positive light, the study also further illustrates the work efficiency strategies that employees may adopt to alleviate their workload, with little cost to themselves. Yet, some of these strategies tend to rely on managerial autonomy and discretion, and thus do not appear to be accessible to all flexibly working employees. By contrast, rather unfortunately, work intensification appears to be an accessible strategy for all flexibly working parents, despite their home obligations. Additionally, there exists a certain irony that although managers possess greater autonomy to manipulate their workloads, the findings show that they also experience heightened pressure to work longer hours (see boundary management strategies).

**Employee Career Strategies**

Next, career strategies are presented. This section discloses and analyses ways that flexibly working employees, while having high work demands, unconventional work patterns, and limited opportunities for flexible jobs that are challenging, promote both their human capital and social capital.

Table 6

*Career Strategies Used by Flexibly Working Parents*

Developing human capital
Scheduling professional development on days that work a full day in the office.
Readjusting family schedule to participate in professional development.
Accessing online video recordings of speaker events.
Utilising time while teleworking to reflect on professional development.
Developing social capital
Readjusting family schedule to participate in work social events.
Initiating small-talk with colleagues during time-saving moments at work.
Promoting political capital e.g. role-modelling and advocacy at individual or group levels, and demonstrating high performance while working flexibly.

### Developing Human Capital

Flexibly working employees promoted their human capital whilst they faced disadvantages relating to skill development. Their unconventional work hours made it especially challenging to access professional development. Part-timer Henrietta explained, *“One of the hardest things I find is the lack of opportunity for skill development because a lot of skill development courses are nine-to-five”*. Part-timers with extensive workloads also found it impractical to prioritise professional development over progressing their immediate tasks. Moreover, part-time workers had difficulty obtaining challenging work assignments. As part-timer Penelope noted, *“I’m not stretched in any way. I could have done the same job I’m doing now, five years ago”*. To some extent, these career development disadvantages were attributed to a ‘tipping point’ where reduced hours affected the ability to perform in roles. One employee explained, *“There becomes a tipping point, I don’t think I could do my job on anything less than four days a week, especially as a manager. There has to be a certain level of being present”* (Toby, compressed work week manager). On the other hand, respondents agreed that with proper planning, the difference between working four days a week rather than five was negligible, and that more senior roles could also be managed in four days. Part-timer Ned, related, *“Most jobs you can still do, with working a bit harder... in four days rather than five”*. Nevertheless, part-time work was also cited as providing an avenue for staying in employment, and as less detrimental to careers than taking periods of leave, such as, for parental leave. One employee explained, *“If you are away... for six months, you do get forgotten about.”* (Toby, compressed work week, manager).

Despite facing barriers, flexibly working employees were found to engage in professional development. This ranged from participating in external networking groups and professional development courses, internal leadership programmes, secondments, lateral placements, as well as acting temporarily in more senior roles, and volunteering business skills to non-profit organisations. Flexibly working employees devoted additional energy into scheduling professional development opportunities on days when they worked the standard eight-hour schedule, or making family readjustments to attend, or accessing video technology used at speaker events they could not attend. Additionally, teleworkers made use of their time free from office distractions to contemplate their development needs and read business articles.

To summarise, while flexibly working employees engaged in various professional development initiatives, access to challenging work could be restricted for part-timers, especially if they worked less than four days per week. While chapter four indicates reduced



job and promotional opportunities for flexibly working employees, this section describes the challenge of attending professional development for employees who are in the office less or at unconventional times, and have high work demands. In response, flexibly working parents tried to make time for personal development endeavours or access them through indirect means.

The research literature has explored barriers to the development of human capital for flexibly working employees. In line with previous research, this study also indicates barriers relating to the lack of opportunities for stretch assignments, less time to devote away from work tasks, and professional development and networking opportunities occurring outside of office hours for flexibly working employees (Corwin et al., 2002; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010; Stone & Hernandez, 2013). Similar to previous research, these findings show that these barriers are especially salient to part-timers (Corwin et al., 2002). The presence of barriers to developing human capital suggests the need for professional development and networking opportunities to become more accessible to flexibly working employees. These findings, while confirming earlier indications that flexibly working employees strategically plan their availability for professional development (Corwin et al., 2002; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010), also extend upon previous research. They demonstrate that flexibly working employees may additionally make use of teleworking and online technology for professional development. They also indicate a great variety of professional development initiatives flexibly working employees may come to use, ranging from temporary placements to volunteering their business skills to non-profit organisations.

To conclude, while investigating ways flexibly working employees develop their human capital, this research confirms what was previously known about barriers to professional development for users of FWAs, especially for part-timers. It also expands upon knowledge by revealing additional strategies flexibly working employees use to promote their human capital.

### **Developing Social Capital**

There were several advantages to flexibly working employees developing their social capital. By gaining the trust of colleagues, employees were more likely to receive help or be updated on project developments. Given their unconventional work schedules, employees also relied on network contacts acting as organisational insiders to recommend them when applying for jobs and FWAs. However, developing work relationships was challenging because flexibly working employees were busy at work, missed work social events, and spent

less time with colleagues. This was particularly difficult if employees began working part-time in a new organisation. In response, some employees were very strategic when scheduling work times and interaction with colleagues. For example, Olive, a part-time manager, chatted with colleagues during time-saving moments, such as, while waiting for her computer to log on. She also worked Fridays with her children in afterschool care so that she could attend impromptu work drinks.

Employees were found to promote their political capital by acting as advocates and role-models for WLB and FWAs. They role-modelled utilising informal flexibility to participate in family activities. One employee described, *“I just say I’m going to watch [child] play [sport]... That just puts in people’s mind that it’s perfectly normal to do things that support your personal life”* (Poppy, teleworking manager). If they were managers, employees granted FWAs to their staff. Employees also discouraged colleagues from working overtime or using work technology at home. As part-timer Wilbur explained, *“I told off someone... working on their day off... ‘Look, it’s your day off. You are not getting paid for it. Your kid is not getting attention... It’s not that urgent’”*. Rather than risk tension by directly confronting stigmatisation towards them, employees favoured demonstrating the merits of FWAs through high job performance, letting their *“results speak for themselves”* (Angelica, flexitime, teleworking manager). This emerged as a very common strategy. Employees also engaged on a political level by forming part-timer collectives which could exchange tips on working flexibly, such as, recommending supportive managers. Through collectives, part-timers also negotiated more inclusive organisational policies with HR. One such policy mandated that as far as possible all jobs should be open for part-time work. As part-timer Edith described, *“It has started off as a sort of coffee group of part-timers... We have talked to HR and talked to others just trying to engage more with the organisation”*. In contrast, employees with less common FWAs, such as, compressed work weeks, independently fostered senior management endorsement. Toby prioritised first completing tasks for influential people, such as, his CE. Naomi educated her CE on parenting issues which FWAs help: *“Talking on a macro-level really, about the issues of traditional women’s work, and where does that go when women have entered the formal men’s world of work? And how society isn’t really dealing with that very well”* (Naomi, compressed work week, manager).

In sum, social capital allowed flexibly working employees to access help with work tasks and support for their FWAs. Yet, developing social capital was challenging due to employees’ high work demands and unconventional working arrangements. Employees

promoted social capital through strategic scheduling of work and social interaction, and via political capital, by advocacy and role-modelling of FWAs and WLB, including proving the effectiveness of their arrangements through their results.

The empirical literature emphasises the importance of networking in enabling individuals to find new jobs given increased job competition, insecurity and labour mobility (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Findings from this study reveal that networking is especially useful for flexibly working employees, who face uncertainty over being able to keep their FWAs. In line with the great influence line managers have on FWA access and outcomes (see chapter four), this research reveals the importance of networking for securing high quality FWA placements with managers. Despite this, previous research has pointed out the difficulty and reluctance for part-time working parents to set out time for investing in work relationships (Corwin et al., 2002; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010). While this study confirms these challenges, it also suggests that some employees are prepared to make family readjustments to prioritise social networking. It may be that these readjustments are easier for families with older children who can utilise afterschool care programmes. Even so, these findings also carry a positive message that work relationships may be legitimately developed during simple day-to-day, time-saving moments, requiring little additional effort from the flexibly working employee, except to prioritise such actions.

Previous literature has identified that part-timers maintain high performance to promote their political standing in organisations (Corwin et al., 2002; Lee & Kossek, 2005). This appears to be a very popular strategy among respondents. It perhaps reflects the general centrality of work demands for flexibly working employees, with little time for reflection on other social endeavours. Thereby, producing results seems to be an efficient strategy in that it provides a way of presenting a good impression without detracting from task progress. This strategy also echoes the responsibility constructed within New Zealand FWA legislative discourse for employees to still meet business demands while working flexibly (Donnelly et al., 2012).

Previous research points to the use of advocacy and role-modelling by flexibly working employees, including garnering political support by educating managers and other colleagues about the specifics of their FWAs (Corwin et al., 2002; Lee & Kossek, 2005). This research reveals that flexibly working employees also engage in a higher level of advocacy that targets the broader WLB issues that FWAs seek to address, such as, tensions between parenting and working. This reveals employees' breadth of knowledge on the 'structural lags' of work and family institutions in supporting contemporary parenting needs, identified by

sociologists (Moen et al., 2013). Extending the extant literature, this research demonstrates that part-timers also use the strategy of group-level advocacy by forming part-timer collectives which provide support to group members and yield influence in contesting issues about their arrangements with HR. This appears to be enabled because of the greater numbers of part-time workers in organisations compared to other FWA types. On the other hand, while previous research indicates the value of honest communication with supportive line managers for all flexibly working employees (Kirby, 2000), findings from this study suggest that personally garnering support from senior management may be especially important for those who work less common types of FWAs, such as, compressed work weeks.

To conclude, these findings extend the networking literature by revealing that networking is especially important for ensuring high quality FWA placements, and their long-term sustainability. Amidst the challenges that high work demands and reduced face time with colleagues pose to the development of social capital for flexibly working employees, this research reveals the importance of simple ways of instigating relationships with others, as well as proving oneself through high performance. These findings also indicate that flexibly working employees have sophisticated levels of understanding of societal issues relating to FWAs, which they seem to be addressing in their organisations through role-modelling and advocacy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, within this research emerge three forms of individual strategies that flexibly working employees use: those promoting WLB, work organisation, and career. Work organisation strategies include work coordination with others while working in the office at unconventional times, and work intensification and efficiency in response to high work demands. Within the context of lower opportunity for career advancement while working flexibly, this research finds employees to engage in career strategies of developing human capital and social capital. To balance between their work and family demands, flexibly working employees engage in WLB strategies. These relate to boundary management, coordination of life domains, and use of social and paid resources in the form of their partners, social support networks, and paid services for practical household support. The preceding two chapters examine the research findings. In the concluding chapter the implications of these findings are explored in greater detail.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Conclusion**

This research set out to explore the ways professional working employees navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes. This final chapter draws together the overall conclusions of this research to answer the primary research question. It then considers the consequences of these findings more broadly by reflecting on them in relation to theory, and exploring their practical implications for flexibly working parents, organisations, and New Zealand policy. Subsequently, it considers the limitations of the study, as well as ways the inquiry into FWA strategies may be extended in future research. The chapter ends with a conclusion delineating the rationale, methods, and overall findings of this research.

### **Navigating the Tensions of Flexible Work**

In order to examine how professional working parents navigate the tensions of flexible work to achieve their desired outcomes, this research also inquired into how they conceptualise WLB and positive work outcomes, as well as ways that achieving WLB and positive work outcomes are interconnected. In doing so, multiple aspects of these findings demonstrate the relevance of the life course perspective of work and family (Moen & Sweet, 2004) to FWA research. In this section the findings are drawn together with respect to the research objectives and the life course perspective, which is also developed further in relation to the theoretical implications.

These findings reveal that WLB and positive work outcomes have a variety of meanings for flexibly working parents. Their conceptualisations of positive work outcomes, as separate from WLB, include: having meaningful, challenging, enjoyable, and supportive work, career advancement, learning, doing well at their job, and staying in employment. WLB is perceived as the ability to participate in and manage the boundaries between multiple aspects of life, such as, work, family, and time for the self. Additionally, the meaning and relative importance of outcomes for flexibly working employees seem to influence their views on the interconnections between WLB and positive work outcomes. For example, employees who do not value career advancement highly do not appear to associate career sacrifices with their pursuit of WLB. In line with the life course perspective, these findings demonstrate the importance of acknowledging the subjective meanings of outcomes and understanding the variation in how flexibly working employees perceive their experiences

(Moen & Sweet, 2004). This research indicates that for flexibly working parents, WLB and positive work outcomes are interconnected in both enriching and conflicting ways. This suggests the potential for tension in flexible work, where achieving positive work outcomes can come at the detriment to WLB, and vice versa. This demonstrates the benefit of examining WLB separately from positive work outcomes while monitoring the effects of FWAs. It also confirms the importance of exploring the use of strategies by flexibly working employees and the ways they may optimise both outcome types, or make trade-offs.

This research extends the little that is known about individual strategy use by flexibly working employees. These findings reveal employees to use many different strategies, reflecting the intricacies of how FWAs function within organisations and families. These findings point to three types of strategies that parents adopt while navigating the tensions of flexible work: WLB strategies, work organisation strategies -that relate to the ways tasks are coordinated and completed, and career strategies. This research, having demonstrated the strategy use of flexibly working employees, validates the view of the life course perspective relating to employees having agency in shaping their lives (Moen & Sweet, 2004). According to this research, employees also appear to have varying levels of success with their strategy use, reflecting several ways that WLB, work organisation, and career strategies are interconnected, and influenced by organisational contextual factors. Firstly, WLB and work organisation strategies are in tension when employees must make day-to-day decisions over whether to prioritise work or family demands. In such situations, these findings suggest that boundary management strategies may help keep work and family obligations more separated.

Secondly, tensions may occur between WLB and career strategies for flexibly working parents in that their very decisions to promote WLB by working flexibly can be associated with career trade-offs due to the limited opportunity for jobs with FWAs, especially at higher levels. At the other end, this research demonstrates that employee decisions to promote their careers by readjusting their FWAs to suit business needs or when entering higher job levels results in sacrifices to WLB. To avoid these tensions, there seems to be a need for organisations to expand the FWAs on offer. These findings suggest that flexibly working employees may be able to navigate the tensions between WLB and career by using milder career-enhancing strategies which do not involve such extreme trade-offs to WLB. These relate to developing human capital and social capital. Because career advancement appears to be delayed for some flexibly working employees, especially part-timers, these strategies may keep their skills and networks up to date, to be utilised at later stages in their careers. In keeping with the life course perspective (Moen & Sweet, 2004), this

reflects the ways that strategy use and outcomes interact across time, based on changing family and employment circumstances. Social capital also appears to be an essential resource for maintaining FWAs in current or future jobs. This demonstrates the importance of flexibly working employees developing strategic relationships with others who can represent their interests. Interestingly, it reveals how because of the vulnerability of working flexibly, even during life stages when their careers might be on hold, employees must use 'career' strategies just to ensure the continuity of their FWAs. Yet, this research also points to challenges to the development of human and social capital. The unconventional work hours and settings of flexibly working employees can exclude them from certain opportunities for professional development, and networking or team bonding.

Further relating to career challenges for flexibly working employees, this research reveals a third tension, between the use of career and work organisation strategies. These findings indicate that the need to prioritise finishing immediate work tasks often makes it difficult for flexibly working employees to focus on promoting their long-term career opportunities. This appears to be primarily due to high work demands, particularly for part-timers. Hence it seems that for their career strategies to have greater impact, flexibly working employees are reliant on organisations bridging career barriers. This research also indicates how, in another sense, career status influences strategies that relate to work organisation and WLB. For one thing, flexibly working employees in lower job levels tend to have less autonomy to use work organisation strategies that alleviate their workload. Meanwhile, ironically, flexibly working managers who have greater discretion for this also appear to have greater pressure to be more available to work, often at a cost to their WLB. Therefore, both flexibly working employees in lower and higher job levels seem to require support in managing their workloads and work hours.

Most relevant to the inquiry of ways employees navigate the tensions associated with flexible work, the findings reveal an overarching strategy with the potential to simultaneously promote WLB, work organisation, and career. This strategy, popular amongst flexibly working employees relates to proving oneself through job performance. One way of achieving this is through promoting work efficiency. At the heart of work organisation, work efficiency directly promotes task completion. Impressive job performance through work efficiency also promotes career outcomes, as well as WLB indirectly, by ensuring that employers will not discontinue employees' FWAs. Given the high work demands of professionals working flexibly, this research also indicates that work efficiency can facilitate WLB by enabling employees to finish tasks within their work hours and avoid overtime

work. The boundary management strategy of segmentation also appears to compliment work efficiency, by motivating employees to make sure they can leave work on time. Overall, working efficiently appears to be a strategy which enables employees to promote WLB, as well as positive work outcomes, thereby circumventing the tensions of flexible work.

However, this research also identifies instances where promoting job performance is in tension with WLB. These feature the use of work intensification strategies through increasing work hours or mental and physical effort, as well as giving flexibility back to organisations through schedule readjustments. Flexibly working employees also appear to feel pressure to portray their availability to colleagues through technology use at inappropriate times. These strategies witness employees sacrificing WLB to promote work organisation and their careers. The findings of this research show these work intensification strategies to be enabled by the boundary management strategy of integration. Rather than using integration to fit *work* within family needs, this research observes flexibly working parents trying to fit *family* within long hours or schedule changes that favour work. Although previous studies have suggested positive effects of integration strategies (Musson & Tietze, 2004), these findings clearly demonstrate the benefit of segmentation over integration strategies in avoiding tensions between achieving WLB and positive work outcomes. In this way, these types of behaviours of flexibly working parents in this study seem to further affirm assertions that FWAs in New Zealand operate to accommodate business needs rather than family needs (Ravenswood, 2008). Overall, these findings reveal the complexity in strategies that promote job performance, with the need to be mindful of the potential costs to WLB.

This research reveals that driving work intensification are cultural and structural organisational contextual factors. The high work demands of professional employees appear to be at the core of the tension between achieving WLB and positive work outcomes. This research indicates that these performance pressures are further exacerbated by organisational norms about work devotion (Blair-Loy, 2003) and 'ideal workers' (Acker, 1990). Thus, these findings demonstrate the combined influence of organisational culture and the organisation of work in creating the tensions of flexible work. For alleviating these tensions, this research demonstrates the importance of ensuring cultural support for FWAs as well as manageable workloads for all employees.

This research also identifies key figures that may assist flexibly working employees with coordinating their home and work lives. These findings demonstrate the centrality of line managers in readjusting work processes and acting as communication channels between



flexibly working employees and colleagues. Additionally, line managers support WLB in allocating appropriate workloads and trying to avoid employees working overtime. Correspondingly, at home, partners are most influential in assisting flexibly working parents in coordinating work and family obligations. These findings reveal that the partners of flexibly working parents are especially useful due to the sheer organisational load for working parents, and to fill the gaps between work and childcare institutions in accommodating dual-earning parents. Therefore, consistent with the life course perspective, these findings demonstrate the importance of support from relationships at work and at home (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Yet, effective collaboration between flexibly working employees and both their managers and spouses does not appear to be guaranteed. Employees seem to be vulnerable to the lack of responsibility assumed by organisations towards supporting FWA implementation, and gendered family roles that blur a sense of shared accountability for household responsibilities. Overall, these findings support the life course perspective in demonstrating how access to these relationships are constrained by the wider context for flexibly working employees where gender beliefs operate and there is ambiguity regarding the responsibility of organisations and government to manage FWAs and accommodate the parenting obligations of workers (Moen & Sweet, 2004).

This section outlines several conclusions from this research. In summary, these findings reveal that flexibly working employees encounter tensions between their use of WLB, work organisation, and career strategies, and their effect on outcomes. This research identifies individual strategies which optimise both WLB and positive work outcomes, and others which result in trade-offs. It also reveals the role of organisations, line managers, and partners in influencing FWA outcomes. The following sections further expand on the theoretical and policy implications of these findings.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Firstly, this research has several implications for the literature concerned with the theoretical framing and empirical testing of FWAs. Previous research has predominantly explored organisational contextual factors surrounding the uptake of FWAs, rather than the outcomes and experiences of flexibly working employees. Meanwhile, studies which have examined outcomes have explored situations associated with negative outcomes (e.g. Frone, 2003). These findings highlight the value of taking a more positive perspective, examining the agency and strategy use of flexibly working employees to mediate or moderate organisational contextual factors. At the same time, this research also demonstrates the value

of adopting a ‘tension-based lens’ (Putnam et al., 2014) for furthering insight into the process of interactions between outcomes for flexibly working employees, within which the role of organisations is an important component. Therefore, there is benefit in measuring WLB and positive work outcomes concurrently, yet as separate constructs in order for the overall prospects and holistic picture of outcomes of flexibly working employees to be monitored. By focusing on individuals, as well as organisations, family, as well as work needs, further insights can be gained into the opposing factors that may cause tensions in flexible work.

As this research demonstrates, the avenue for empirical inquiry into the experiences and strategies of flexibly working employees can be aided in multiple ways by applying the life course perspective on work and family (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Firstly, given indications from this research of the changing nature of individual strategy use, greater insight can be gained from examining the agency and experiences of flexibly working employees across the various transitions in their working lives. Secondly, the life course perspective on work and family cautions that there is a tendency for research on working parents to overlook life domains beyond work and family (Moen and Sweet, 2004). Similarly, this research having found respondents to view WLB as participation in multiple life domains suggests the importance of considering work-*life* balance rather than simply work-*family* balance as an outcome for flexibly working parents. This is especially salient given additional empirical research demonstrating the difficulty of and the need for flexibly working parents investing in self-care time (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Thirdly, with its positioning of employee agency within broader organisational and institutional constraints, taking a life course perspective involves framing both employee and organisational influences on FWA implementation. Furthermore, the life course perspective also stresses the influence of relationships on individuals’ lives. In extension, this research suggests the importance of studying the relationships of flexibly working parents. Specifically, these findings reveal that employees use strategies in collaboration with, or in response to, both spouses and line managers. Therefore, as a direction for the FWA literature, the crux of the conflicting pressures in flexible work may be revealed by exploring employee-line manager and employee-partner dyads.

These findings also speak to the career literature. Research has explored gender issues in careers (Watts, 2009), women’s career pathways (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005), and women in leadership positions (Richie et al., 1997). However, little research has sought to examine the influence of FWAs on careers. Moreover, while recent career theories highlight individual agency in shaping self-tailored careers (e.g. Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), what is underexplored

is the role of employee agency in influencing career plateaus or advancement while using FWAs. Therefore, implications from this research point towards a new research agenda for exploring the careers of flexibly working parents that extends perspectives of careers as individualised, ‘boundaryless’ (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), and ‘flexible’ (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Per the life course perspective and recent career theories, such as, boundaryless careers and protean careers, insight may be gained through greater exploration of how individual agency can shape careers for flexibly working employees, as well as their subjective career aspirations, which direct behaviours (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Moen & Sweet, 2004). In doing so, consistent with the life course perspective, flexibly working employees must also be placed within their greater context by understanding the influence of organisational contextual factors and family circumstances on their career strategies, career outcomes, and evaluations of their lives (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Also salient here is the framing offered by the life course perspective of the changing dynamics between occupational and ‘family’ careers. This finds individuals, across life stages, striving for new ways of integrating work, family and personal life, flexible to their current needs (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Examining WLB and positive work outcomes could serve to pinpoint tensions and priorities at specific life stages.

In conclusion, these findings have theoretical implications for the directions of inquiry in the FWA and career literatures. They indicate the need to acknowledge the tensions of flexible work. These findings point to further ways the life course perspective and elements of recent career theories can be applied in FWA research. These include studying the dynamic interactions between FWAs and employment and family stages across the life course, and investigating the interrelationships between employee meanings, agency, relationships and the broader context. The next section explores how these findings may be applied for practical benefit.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of the study have many practical implications for employees, organisations, and for New Zealand policy. The following section first discusses the implications for organisations and employees, after which it explores policy implications.

#### **Implications for Organisations and Employees**

Employees and organisations stand to benefit from knowledge of the strategies that this research reveals flexibly working employees to use. These strategies can be incorporated into training initiatives for line managers and employees regarding FWA implementation.

This research has implications for employees in finding that consistent with the way New Zealand's FWA legislation is framed, individual agency has a huge role to play in promoting positive outcomes while working flexibly. In particular, the career and WLB strategies that this research reveals are directly relevant to flexibly working employees. For example, these findings indicate the value of flexibly working employees networking to exchange insight on challenges of their FWAs, and their strategy use. These findings also have implications for dual-earning couples managing work and family demands. While the uptake of FWAs and distribution of household chores appears greater for mothers, the greatest WLB gains seem to be made when parents work together, both working flexibly, and both contributing to the household.

From an organisational perspective, strategies relating to work coordination among teams and work efficiency through prioritisation and keeping organised are lessons in promoting productivity in FWA use, without negative consequences to employee WLB. Moreover, this research alerts organisations and current or potential users of FWAs regarding issues associated with FWA implementation. These primarily relate to career disadvantages and the high workloads of professionals using FWAs, that lead them to work longer hours. Organisations may need to become aware that these challenges are especially salient for part-timers, who have lower opportunity to advance into management levels and high work demands. Given these risks, these findings highlight the need for organisations to monitor both WLB and positive work outcomes for flexibly working employees.

Several recommendations emerge from this research regarding ways organisations can manage the workloads of flexibly working employees. Firstly, this research demonstrates the benefit of employees having open communication channels with line managers for task coordination and gauging appropriate workloads. Therefore, line managers and flexibly working employees could be trained on collaboration regarding task handover and managing workloads. The findings from this research reveal the increased difficulty for flexibly working employees, especially part-timers to complete unpredictable work with short time-frames. Therefore, managers are advised to try to allocate longer-term projects to flexibly working employees, and consider their specific work schedules or reduced hours. Additionally, these findings suggest the advantage of allowing flexibly working employees greater autonomy to directly influence workload pressures, such as, the ability to manage their own projects, with the discretion to delegate work, skip certain meetings and be less detailed in their work to manage their demands. This is in keeping with previous empirical research asserting that job control is critical in achieving positive FWA outcomes (Kossek,

Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). These findings also emphasise the importance of line managers or HR representatives conducting accurate job workload analyses and ensuring that there are systems in place to redistribute work while employees are away. They also suggest the significance of job interviews in providing a platform for the discussion of taking steps towards FWA implementation.

Within this research, the pressure for flexibly working managers to work long hours and be constantly available is apparent. These findings provide insight into ways these demands can be managed. For example, flexibly working managers can develop the skillset of direct reports and clearly communicate task requirements so that employees can work independently in the absence of their managers. There may also be a need for more collaborative work structures and redeployment of tasks so that in their manager's absence employees can approach colleagues with overlapping skills or other managers with issues. However, before implementing such initiatives, issues of fairness in redistributing work to other employees may first need to be resolved (Sprinkle, 2012). This highlights that while implementing FWAs, it is important to consider the manageability of workloads for both flexibly working and standard-working employees so that the redistribution of tasks is equitable.

These findings suggest the need for targeting organisational cultures of long work hours to prevent employees feeling guilt and anxiety over working reduced hours and increasing their work hours at the expense of WLB. This may also reduce career disadvantages associated with employees being judged less committed or productive for working fewer hours. To combat long-hour cultures, this research suggests organisations recommend limits to work technology use beyond reasonable hours. These findings indicate that systems for regularly measuring employee productivity through output rather than hours worked in the office can help alleviate the focus on long hours. This also reduces the need to micromanage employees, which these findings suggest creates stress for flexibly working employees. Monitoring work output may also bypass the trust issues concerning FWAs, particularly regarding working from home. Additionally, the development of trust through monitoring systems may make organisations more willing to allow wider access to FWAs.

In terms of promoting career outcomes for flexibly working employees, this research indicates further ways organisations can support FWA implementation. Firstly, these findings suggest that when offering professional development and networking opportunities, organisations should account for employees having reduced or unconventional office hours. Yet, networking and skill development will have limited utility if organisations continue to

limit opportunities for jobs, particularly managerial roles, to be worked flexibly. Therefore, organisations might consider expanding opportunities for FWAs in managerial roles. For example, a useful technique that this research identifies involves making a policy that all jobs should be allowed to have part-time hours unless demonstrated unfeasible given the nature of the work. This research also points to barriers in assigning challenging work assignments for part-timers who cannot manage projects over entire weeks. Instigating job sharing arrangements between part-timers has been recommended as a way of mitigating this (Daniels, 2011). Normalising FWAs as long-term options for all kinds of employees and empowering flexibility role-models in high levels of organisations should assist in creating more supportive cultures where flexibly working employees do not encounter stigmatising questions about their privilege in using FWAs and commitment to work. Approval of FWA requests at the start of employment contracts rather than after a period of standard-working is also identified in this research as a way of normalising FWAs and accommodating employees' immediate WLB needs. While FWAs may also be normalised by widespread use of flexitime in organisations, where employees have greater leeway over when they work, these findings also imply certain cautions to implementing flexitime. They raise concern regarding whether the autonomy gains from flexitime regarding fitting family into work enable long-hour work cultures by masking employees' lack of control over the number of hours they work. Additionally, it is unclear when flexitime users who work in the evenings sleep and rest. Therefore, targeting long hours seems to be most impactful.

In summary, implications for employees and organisations include sharing strategies in FWA training, redistributing work to accommodate FWAs, expanding greater access to FWAs, targeting long-hour work cultures, and creating cultural endorsement of FWAs. An exploration of policy implications follows.

### **Policy Implications**

The findings of the study also have policy implications. This research highlights the effect of the ambiguity in New Zealand's FWA legislation over whether organisations or flexibly working employees are responsible for ensuring the smooth implementation of FWAs. This research finds that flexibly working employees end up devoting substantial effort in managing the high workloads and additional challenges of their FWAs, with mixed support from managers. Thus, while employees do not have a *right* to receive FWAs, those who work flexibly hold much of the *responsibility* in promoting WLB and positive work outcomes, within problematic organisational contexts. This suggests the need for a reframing

of New Zealand's FWA legislation, from a 'right-to-request', to a 'rights and responsibilities' framework. These findings also point to issues associated with New Zealand employees only having a right to *request*, rather than to *access* FWAs. These include employees feeling stigmatised, yet obligated to intensify their work to pay back their 'privilege', while they fear their FWAs might be terminated. Greater WLB for more employees could be achieved if New Zealand's legislation took an approach more consistent with Scandinavian and continental European models, mandating the employee right to part-time work (Plantenga et al., 2010; Putnam et al., 2014). However, this may pose significant work redistribution challenges for organisations, particularly small-to-medium sized businesses (Vranken, 2009). To alleviate this burden, financial assistance or tax incentives for FWA implementation could potentially be provided by the state (Vranken, 2009).

There are also parenting-related policy implications. In line with previous research, these findings suggest that part-time arrangements are used more commonly by mothers than fathers (Pew Research Center, 2013). This is also associated with mothers having greater household workload. This suggests the need for policies targeting FWA accessibility for fathers without stigma. Moreover, because of gaps in state provision of childcare, this research suggests that policies could support access to affordable, quality childcare settings that cover a full-time working day. These findings show that dual-earning couples without ready access to family or social support face the issue of who cares for sick children since childcare services do not extend to them. A potential aid could be for government or organisations to subsidise emergency childcare. Otherwise, organisations could allow for generous care-for-dependent leave; one organisation in this study did not have a limit for care-for-dependent leave. These findings also identify the provision of work laptops for use at home as a way of enabling the continuity of work while children are sick.

To summarise, potential policy implications include the application of a 'rights and responsibilities' framework to New Zealand's FWA legislation, mandating FWAs as an employee right coupled with state financial assistance, exploring more options for supporting childcare for working parents, and promoting the use of FWAs for fathers as well as mothers. The limitations and future directions for research are outlined next.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

Despite its informative findings, the study is not without limitations. Firstly, this qualitative research is exploratory in nature, with the aim of understanding subjective experiences of flexibly working parents. In doing so, this research collected retrospective

information, from a sample of respondents that was small and non-representative. Hence, the findings cannot be generalised beyond the target population of professional, flexibly working parents in the public service. Respondents highlighted this issue with discourse forewarning that what works, changes over time and is heavily dependent on the preferences and circumstances of the individual. Along these lines, to further develop a life course perspective on flexible work, research could explore strategy use and outcomes of a constant sample of flexibly working parents longitudinally across their life transitions, or by making cross-sectional comparisons between groups of employees at different life stages and transition points. Researchers may also wish to examine employee strategy use in other populations that likely have different experiences of FWAs. For example, while they are found to significantly benefit from FWA use, strategies of non-professional, low wage employees working FWAs may be constrained because of their lower organisational status, job autonomy, and economic resources available towards household support (Danziger & Boots, 2008). Additionally, this group often works in rostered settings, such as, customer facing roles and jobs where greater physical presence is required, such as, manufacturing, which are barriers to flexibility (Danziger & Boots, 2008).

The study is also limited by the fact that the experiences of part-timers were more represented than other types of FWAs. Studies have previously examined the experiences of teleworkers as well as part-timers (e.g. Corwin et al., 2002; Hilbrecht et al., 2008). Future research may wish to specifically examine employees working compressed weeks, especially since they experience unique challenges of maintaining energy and work levels over long work hours. Additionally in future, larger-scale comparative research could be undertaken examining further the differences in experiences and strategies between users of different types of FWAs, men and women, and employees with and without managerial responsibilities. In particular, although beyond the scope of this research, these findings imply that there are differences between part-time versus full-time employees using FWAs. Therefore, there is value in greater exploration of distinct experiences between part-timers and flex-full-timers. Although these findings suggest that collaboration between flexibly working employees and their spouses or managers can promote positive outcomes, the study has been limited by only interviewing flexibly working employees by themselves. To further investigate ways that these couples collaborate or may have conflicting interests, future research may wish to interview parent-pairs or flexibly working employees and their managers. Line managers particularly may be able to reveal additional strategies relating to



coordination and work process redistribution, as well as the team-level challenges inherent in FWA implementation.

In summary, and while this research has merits, its small-scale, exploratory nature limits its generalisability to only professional, flexibly working parents in the public service. Accordingly, future research could explore and compare other populations, examine FWA experiences across the life course, and further examine flexibly working employees collaborating with others towards shared goals.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, to address the gap in empirical research concerning how professional working parents navigate the tensions of flexible work to promote their desired positive outcomes, this exploratory research qualitatively examined the experiences of 21 professional, flexibly working parents in New Zealand's public service. In doing so, it drew upon the life course perspective of work and family, social constructionist assumptions, and purposive sampling and semi-structured interviewing techniques. The findings reveal a variety of employee conceptualisations of WLB and positive work outcomes, with outcomes interconnected in both enriching and conflicting ways. With the possibility for tension between outcomes, flexibly working employees use WLB, work organisation, and career strategies. In these findings, work intensification and efficiency strategies emerge as popularly used. Nevertheless, there is a delicate balance in promoting job performance. Increasing work efficiency can advance positive work outcomes and maintain boundaries between work and non-work lives, while working longer or readjusted hours results in WLB trade-offs. This research has theoretical implications regarding the importance of studying the individual strategies used by flexibly working employees and how FWAs intersect with careers. It also demonstrates the need to further explore the tensions of flexible work and consider both WLB and positive work outcomes and their interconnections to get the full picture of flexible work experiences. Moreover, these findings endorse the life course perspective in revealing the salience of subjective meanings to employee experiences, employee agency in shaping their outcomes, as well as the influence of work and home relationships and the wider context on the tensions of flexible work. These findings have practical applications for employees and organisations in relation to using strategies and removing barriers for successful FWA use. To specify the responsibilities of organisations for managing FWA implementation, this research supports the reframing of New Zealand's FWA legislation with a focus on the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

## References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society, 4*(2), 139–158.
- Allen, T. D. (2001). Family-supportive work environments: The role of organizational perceptions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 58*(3), 414-435.
- Arksey, H., & Knight, P. (1999). *Interviewing for social scientists: An introductory resource with examples*. London: Sage.
- Arthur, M., Claman, P., & DeFillippi, R. (1995). Intelligent enterprise, intelligent careers. *Academy of Management Executive, 9*(4) 7-19.
- Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., Fugate, M., & Johnson, S. A. (2001). Micro role transitions. In B. Ashforth (Ed.), *Role transitions in organizational life: An identity-based perspective* (pp. 258-288). New York: Routledge.
- Baltes, B., Briggs, T., Huff, J., Wright, J., Neuman, G., & Murphy, Kevin R. (1999). Flexible and compressed workweek schedules: A meta-analysis of their effects on work-related criteria. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*(4), 496-513.
- Barnett, R. (1999). A new work–life model for the twenty-first century. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 562*, 32–46.
- Basile, K. A., & Beauregard, T. A. (2016). Strategies for successful telework: How effective employees manage work/home boundaries. *Strategic HR Review, 15*(3), 106-111.
- Bentley, T., McLeod, L., Bosua, R., Teo, S., Tedestedt, R., Rasmussen, E., & Tan, F. (2013). *The trans-Tasman telework survey: A future of work programme research project*. Auckland, New Zealand: New Zealand Work Research Institute. Retrieved from [https://www.aut.ac.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/432417/trans-tasman-telework-survey-report-Final-December-2013.pdf](https://www.aut.ac.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/432417/trans-tasman-telework-survey-report-Final-December-2013.pdf)
- Blair-Loy, M. (2003). *Competing devotions: Career and family among women executives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Blair-Loy, M., & Wharton, A. S. (2004). Mothers in finance: Surviving and thriving. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 596*, 151–171.
- Briscoe, J. P., & Hall, D. T. (2006). The interplay of boundaryless and protean careers: Combinations and implications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 69*, 4-18.
- Brooks, J., McCluskey, S., Turley, E., & King, N. (2015). The utility of template analysis in qualitative psychology research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 12*(2), 202-222.
- Carlson, D., Hunter, E., Ferguson, M., & Whitten, D. (2014). Work–family enrichment and satisfaction. *Journal of Management, 40*(3), 845-865.

- Casper, W. J., De Hauw, S., & Wayne, J. H. (2013). Concepts and measures in the work–family interface: Implications for work–family integration. In D. A. Major & R. J. Burke (Eds.), *Handbook of work–life integration among professionals: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 35-57). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Christensen, K., & Schneider, B. L. (2010). *Workplace flexibility: Realigning 20th-century jobs for a 21st-century workforce*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Coltrane, S., Miller, E. C., DeHaan, T. & Stewart, L. (2013). Fathers and the flexibility stigma. *Journal of Social Issues* 69(2), 279–302.
- Cooper, C. D., & Kurland, N. B. (2002). Telecommuting, professional isolation, and employee development in public and private organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 511–532.
- Cooper, R., & Baird, M. (2015). Bringing the “right to request” flexible working arrangements to life: From policies to practices. *Employee Relations*, 37(5), 568-581.
- Corwin, V., Lawrence, T. B., & Frost, P. J. (2002). Five strategies of successful part-time work. *Leadership and Management in Engineering*, 2(1), 34-39.
- Daniels, L. (2011). *Job sharing at senior level: Making it work*. Oxted, UK: Capability Jane. Retrieved from <http://www.thejobshareproject.com/3434hjkv97fgb378fbv/jobsharefullreport.pdf>
- Danziger, A., & Boots, S. W. (2008). *Lower-wage workers and flexible work arrangements*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=legal>
- de Menezes, L. M., & Kelliher, C. (2011). Flexible working and performance: A systematic review of the evidence for a business case. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(4), 452-474.
- den Dulk, L., Groeneveld, S., Ollier-Malaterre, A., & Valcour, M. (2013). National context in work-life research: A multi-level cross-national analysis of the adoption of workplace work-life arrangements in Europe. *European Management Journal*, 31, 478–494.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- Dettmers, J., Fietze, S., & Kaiser, S. (2013). Theory and practice of flexible work: Organizational and individual perspectives; Introduction to the special issue. *Management Revue: The International Review of Management Studies*, 24(3), 155-161.

- Donnelly, N., Proctor-Thomson, S. B., & Plimmer, G. (2012). The role of 'voice' in matters of 'choice': Flexible work outcomes for women in the New Zealand Public Services. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 54(2), 182-203.
- Drew, E. & Murtagh, E. M. (2005). Work/life balance: Senior management champions or laggards? *Women in Management Review*, 20(4), 262-278.
- Durbin, S., & Tomlinson, J. (2010). Female part-time managers: Networks and career mobility. *Work, Employment & Society*, 24(4), 621-640.
- Eby, L. T., Casper, W. J., Lockwood, A., Bordeaux, C., & Brinley, A. (2005). Work and family research in IO/OB: Content analysis and review of the literature (1980–2002). *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66(1), 124-197.
- Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* London: Bloomsbury.
- Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act, New Zealand Statutes. (2007).
- Employment Relations Amendment Act, New Zealand Statutes. (2014).
- Evans, J. A., Kunda, G., & Barley, S. R. (2004). Beach time, bridge time, and billable hours: The temporal structure of technical contracting. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 49(1), 1–38.
- Flick, U., von Kardoff, E., & Steinke, I. (2004). *A companion to qualitative research*. Hamburg, Germany: Sage.
- Frone, M. R. (2003). Work–family balance. In L. Tetrick & J. C. Quick (Eds.), *Handbook of occupational health psychology* (pp. 143-162). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Fursman, L., & Zodgekar, N. (2009). Making it work: The impacts of flexible working arrangements on New Zealand families. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 35, 43-54.
- Gajendran, R. S., & Harrison, D. A. (2007). The good, the bad, and the unknown about telecommuting: Meta-analysis of psychological mediators and individual consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1524–1541.
- Gasser, M. (2015). Time spent on child care by fathers in leadership positions: The role of work hours and flextime. *Journal of Family Issues*, DOI: 10.1177/0192513X15597291.
- Glass, J. (2004). Blessing or curse? Work-family policies and mother's wage growth over time. *Work and Occupations*, 31, 367-394.

- Golden, L. (2001). Flexible work schedules: What are we trading to get them? *Monthly Labor Review*, 124(3), 50–67.
- Golden, T., & Moore, J. (2004). Work–life balance and working from home. *Social Policy and Society*, 3(3), 223–233.
- Gornick, J. C., & Meyers., M. (2005). *Families that work: Policies for reconciling parenthood and employment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Grady, G., & McCarthy, A. M. (2008). Work-life integration: Experiences of mid-career professional working mothers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(5), 599-622.
- Green, F. (2001). It's been a hard day's night: The concentration and intensification of work in late twentieth-century Britain. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 39, 53–80.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Callanan, G. A., Godshalk, V. M. (2010). *Career management* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of Management Review*, 10, 76–88.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Kossek, E. E. (2014). The contemporary career: A work–home perspective. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology & Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 361-388.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Powell, G. N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work–family enrichment. *Academy of Management Review*, 31, 72–92.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Resources Information Center Annual Review Paper*, 29, 75-91.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gunz, H. P., & Peiperl, M. (2007). *Handbook of career studies*. London: Sage.
- Haddock, S. A., Zimmerman, T. S., Lyness, K. P., & Ziemba, S. J. (2006). Practices of dual earner couples successfully balancing work and family. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 27(2), 207-234.
- Haddock, S. A., Zimmerman, T. S., Ziemba, S. J., & Curent, L. R. (2001). Ten adaptive strategies for family and work balance: Advice from successful families. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 27(4), 445-458.

- Halford, S. (2006). Collapsing the boundaries? Fatherhood, organization and home-working. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 13(4), 383-402.
- Hall, D. T. (2002). *Careers in and out of organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hartman, R. I., Stoner, C. R., & Arora, R. (1991). An investigation of selected variables affecting telecommuting productivity and satisfaction. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 6, 207–225.
- Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Heathrose Research (2010). *Flexible work arrangements: Literature review. Report to the National Advisory Council of the Employment of Women (NACEW)*. Wellington, New Zealand: Department of Labour. Retrieved from [http://women.govt.nz/sites/public\\_files/flexible-working-literature-review%20\(1\).pdf](http://women.govt.nz/sites/public_files/flexible-working-literature-review%20(1).pdf)
- Hersch, W., O'Herron, J., Taylor, J., & Read, B. (2001). Primetime for telecommuting anytime, anywhere. *Call Center Magazine*, 14(10), 34-43.
- Hilbrecht, M., Shaw, S. M., Johnson, L. C., & Andrey, J. (2008). 'I'm home for the kids': Contradictory implications for work–life balance of teleworking mothers. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 15(5), 454-476.
- Hudson. (2015). *The hiring report: The state of hiring in New Zealand 2015*. Auckland, New Zealand: Author. Retrieved from <http://nz.hudson.com/portals/nz/documents/HiringReport-NZ-FINAL-preview.pdf>
- Human capital. (n.d.). In *Random House Dictionary*, Retrieved November, 22, 2016, from [http://download.cnet.com/Random-House-Webster-s-Unabridged-Dictionary-WG/3000-2279\\_4-10506319.html](http://download.cnet.com/Random-House-Webster-s-Unabridged-Dictionary-WG/3000-2279_4-10506319.html)
- Kalliath, T., & Brough, P. (2008). Work–life balance: A review of the meaning of the balance construct. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 14(3), 323-327.
- Karambayya, R., & Reilly, A. H. (1992). Dual-earner couples: Attitudes and actions in restructuring work for family. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13, 585–601.
- Kelliher, C., & Anderson, D. (2010). Doing more with less? Flexible working practices and the intensification of work. *Human Relations*, 63(1), 83-106.
- Kelly, E. L., & Kalev, A. (2006). Managing flexible work arrangements in US organizations: Formalized discretion or 'a right-to-ask'. *Socio-Economic Review*, 4(3), 379-416.
- King, N. (2012). Doing template analysis. In G. Symon & C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*. London: Sage.

- Kirby, E. L. (2000). Should I do as you say or do as you do? Mixed messages about work and family. *Electronic Journal of Communication, 10*(3), Retrieved from: <http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/010/3/010313.html>.
- Kmec, J. A., O'Connor, L. T., & Schieman, S. (2014). Not ideal: The association between working anything but full time and perceived unfair treatment. *Work and Occupations, 41*(1), 63-85.
- Kossek, E. E., Lautsch, B. A., & Eaton, S. C. (2006). Telecommuting, control, and boundary management: Correlates of policy use and practice, job control, and work-family effectiveness. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 68*(2), 347-367.
- Kossek, E., & Ozeki, C. (1998). Work-family conflict, policies, and the job-life satisfaction relationship: A review and directions for organizational behavior-human resources research. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*(2), 139-149.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45*(3), 214-222.
- Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2009). Balancing borders and bridges: Negotiating the work-home interface via boundary work tactics. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*(4), 704-730.
- Lapierre, L. M., & Allen, T. D. (2012). Control at work, control at home, and planning behaviour implications for work-family conflict. *Journal of Management, 38*(5), 1500-1516.
- Lauzun, H., Morganson, V., Major, D., & Green, A. (2010). Seeking work-life balance: Employees' requests, supervisors' responses, and organizational barriers. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal, 13*(3), 184-205.
- Lee, M. D., & Kossek, E. E. (2005). *Crafting lives that work: A six-year retrospective on reduced-load work in the careers & lives of professionals & managers*. Montreal, Canada: McGill University Press. Retrieved from <https://webapps.krannert.purdue.edu/kap/KATALYST/public/publications.aspx?personid=103032&publicationid=7971&attachmentid=1066>
- Levner, L. (2000). The three-career family. In P. Papp (Ed.), *Couples on the fault line: New directions for therapists* (pp. 29-47). New York: Guilford.
- Loury, G. (1992). The economics of discrimination: Getting to the core of the problem. *Harvard Journal for African American Public Policy, 1*(1), 91-110.
- Mainiero, L. A., & Sullivan, S. E. (2005). Kaleidoscope careers: An alternate explanation for the "opt-out" revolution. *The Academy of Management Executive, 19*(1), 106-123.

- Masselot, A. (2014). Gender implications of the right to request flexible working arrangements: Raising pigs and children in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 39(3), 59-71.
- Mercer, D., Russell, E., & Arnold, K. A. (2014). Flexible working arrangements in healthcare: A comparison between managers of shift workers and 9-to-5 employees. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 44(7), 411-416.
- Mirvis, H. P. & Hall, D. T. (1994). Psychological success and the boundaryless career. In Arthur, M. B. & Rousseau, D. M. (Eds.), *The boundaryless career* (pp. 237-255). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moen, P., & Sweet, S. (2004). From 'work-family' to 'flexible careers': A life course reframing. *Community, Work & Family*, 7(2), 209-226.
- Moen, P., Lam, J., Ammons, S., & Kelly, E. L. (2013). Time work by overworked professionals: Strategies in response to the stress of higher status. *Work and Occupations*, 40(2), 79-114.
- Moen, P., & Yu, Y. (2000). Effective work-life strategies: Working couples, work conditions, gender, and life quality. *Social Problems*, 47(3), 291-326.
- Munck, B. (2001). Changing a culture of face time. *Harvard Business Review*, 79, 125-131.
- Munsch, C. (2016). Flexible work, flexible penalties: The effect of gender, childcare, and type of request on the flexibility bias. *Social Forces*, 94(4), 1567-1591.
- Musson, G., & Tietze, S. (2004). Feelin' groovy: Appropriating time in home-based telework. *Culture and Organization*, 10(3), 251-264.
- O'Neil, D. A., & Bilimoria, D. (2005). Women's career development phases: Idealism, endurance, and reinvention. *Career Development International*, 10(3), 168-189.
- Patton, Q. M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Perlow, L. A. (1999). The time famine: Toward a sociology of work time. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44, 57-81.
- Perlow, L. A. (2001). Time to coordinate. *Work and Occupations*, 28, 91-111.
- Pew Research Center. (2013). *On pay gap, millennial women near parity—for now: Despite gains, many see roadblocks ahead*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/12/gender-and-work\\_final.pdf](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/12/gender-and-work_final.pdf)
- Plantenga, J., Remery, C., Mairhuber, I., Meulders, D., Beleva, I., Ellina, C., ... & Emerek, R. (2010). *Flexible working time arrangements and gender equality*. Rome, Italy: European Commission. Retrieved from [ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6473](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6473)



- Putnam, L. L., Myers, K. K., & Gailliard, B. M. (2014). Examining the tensions in workplace flexibility and exploring options for new directions. *Human Relations*, 67(4), 413-440.
- Raley, S., Bianchi, S. M., & Wang, W. (2012). When do fathers care? Mothers' economic contribution and fathers' involvement in child care. *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(5), 1422-1459.
- Ravenswood, K. (2008). The role of the State in family-friendly policy: An analysis of Labour-led government policy. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations*, 33(3), 34-44.
- Richie, B. S., Fassinger, R. E., Linn, S. G., Johnson, J., Prosser, J., & Robinson, S. (1997). Persistence, connection, and passion: A qualitative study of the career development of highly achieving African American—black and white women. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 44(2), 133-148.
- Schieman, S., Whitestone, Y. K., & Van Gundy, K. (2006). The nature of work and the stress of higher status. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 47, 242-257.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shaw, S. M., Andrey, J., & Johnson, L. C. (2003). The struggle for life balance: Work, family, and leisure in the lives of women teleworkers. *World Leisure*, 45,(4), 15–29.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Shepard, E. M. S., Clifton, T. J., & Kruse, D. (1996). Flexible work hours and productivity: Some evidence from the pharmaceutical industry. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 35(1), 123-139.
- Shockley, K. M., & Allen, T. D. (2010). Investigating the missing link in flexible work arrangement utilization: An individual difference perspective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76(1), 131-142.
- Smith, N., & McDonald, P. (2016). Facilitating sustainable professional part-time work: A question of design? *Journal of Management & Organization*, 22(2), 205-223.
- Smith, V. (1997). New forms of work organization. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 315-339.
- Sprinkle, T. A. (2012). *Beyond a need-based fairness perspective: Coworkers' perceptions of justice in flexible work arrangements* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. (3518120)

- Stone, P., & Hernandez, L. A. (2013). The all-or-nothing workplace: Flexibility stigma or “opting out” among professional-managerial women. *Journal of Social Issues, 69*(2), 235–256.
- Sullivan, S. E., & Arthur, M. B. (2006). The evolution of the boundaryless career concept: Examining physical and psychological mobility. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 69*, 19-29.
- Sullivan, S. E., & Baruch, Y. (2009). Advances in career theory and research: A critical review and agenda for future exploration. *Journal of Management, 35*(6), 1542-1571.
- Swiebel, J. (1999). Unpaid work and policy-making: Towards a broader perspective of work and employment. *DESA Discussion Paper No. 4, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/1999/esa99dp4.pdf>
- Van Dyne, L., Kossek, E., & Lobel, S. (2007). Less need to be there: Cross-level effects of work practices that support work-life flexibility and enhance group processes and group-level OCB. *Human Relations, 60*(8), 1123-1154.
- Vranken, M. (2009). *Death of labour law? Comparative perspectives*. Carlton, Vic Melbourne University Press. Retrieved from <http://search.informit.com.au/helicon.vuw.ac.nz/fullText;dn=646017467516083;res=IELBUS>
- Watts, J. H. (2009). ‘Allowed into a man's world’ meanings of work–life balance: Perspectives of women civil engineers as ‘minority’ workers in construction. *Gender, Work & Organization, 16*(1), 37-57.
- Weeden, K. (2005). Is there a flexiglass ceiling? Flexible work arrangements and wages in the United States. *Social Science Research, 34*(2), 454-482.
- Weinreb, A. (2001). *A state-centered political capital approach to the explanation of demographic differences: With special reference to regional/ethnic inequality in sub-Saharan Africa*. Paper presented at the General Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), Bahia, Brazil. Retrieved from <http://www.src.uchicago.edu/prc/pdfs/weinre01.pdf>

## Appendix A

## Interview schedule

**Section I: Employment background**1) Tell me about your current work situation?

- What are your main areas of responsibility?
- How long have you been with your current employer?
- How was your FWA established?
- Why did you decide to use a FWA at work?
  - What conversations did you have with your partner about your decision to work a FWA?
  - What is your partner's work schedule/FWA like?

**Section II: Conceptualisation of positive work outcomes and WLB**2) What does having WLB mean to you?

- Do you value having more than one domain in your life, for example work plus family?
- What needs to happen for you to have a balanced life?

3) What does having positive work outcomes mean to you?

- What are your career goals?
- What do you want to get from your work?

**Section III: WLB**4) What are the challenges of balancing work, family, and personal time?

- Can you prioritise work, family, and time for yourself?
  - Why/why not?

5) What do you do to make time for work, family, and personal time?

- How do you and your family structure your days?
- Some people prefer integrating their life domains but others prefer to keep things separated:
  - What do you do/prefer?
- How do you negotiate household chores and childcare duties with your partner?
  - How do you both decide who does what?
- Do you use social networks/paid services for childcare or household duties?
  - Why/why not?

6) How successful have these things been for your WLB?

- Did they achieve the things you wanted?
- What made some things work and others not?
- What about the context made it work/not work?
- Could they have worked in another situation?

#### **Section IV: Positive work outcomes**

##### 7) How is using your FWA at work challenging?

- Have work/career outcomes been hindered by your FWA?
  - Why?
- How has your FWA challenged how work tasks are done?
  - Why is it different?
  - How is coordinating tasks with colleagues different?
- Have work relationships been affected?
  - Why?
  - Might this become an issue over time?
- How supportive of FWAs is your organisation's culture?
  - Do people view flexibly working employees as less committed to work?
  - Are there long-hour cultures?

##### 8) How do you address these challenges to promote positive work outcomes?

While working flexibly, how do you:

- Promote your individual and group performance?
- Coordinate with others?
- Motivate yourself to work?
- Meet project deadlines?
- Promote your work relationships?
- Make you being away from the office easier for your colleagues?
  - How do you show that you are available to colleagues?
- Manage your professional development opportunities?

##### 9) How successful have these things been for positive work outcomes?

- Did they achieve the things you wanted?
- What made some things work and others not?
- What about the context made it work/not work?
- Could they have worked in another situation?

**Section V: Interconnection between WLB and positive work outcomes**

10) How does achieving WLB and positive work outcomes influence one another?

- Are there ways that achieving one can help the other?
- Have you encountered any tensions or sacrifices between the two outcomes?

Table A1

*Interview Questions in Relation to Previous Research Prompts*

Interview questions	Prompts from the literature
How is using your FWA at work challenging?	Richie et al. (1997): Common work-related problems, ways of handling problems and related stress?
How do you motivate yourself to work?	Musson and Tietze (2004): How they motivated themselves to work?
How do you manage your professional development opportunities?	Watts (2009): What training and CPD opportunities have you had?
Can you prioritise work, family, and time for yourself?	Haddock et al. (2001): Prioritising family, work and self-care?
What kinds of things do you do that help you to make time for work, family, and your own personal time?	Haddock et al. (2001): What are some of the strategies that you use at home and at work to successfully balance family and work?
How do you and your family structure your days?	Musson and Tietze (2004): How teleworkers and their families structured their days?
Some people prefer integrating their life domains but others prefer to keep things separated: What do you do?	Haddock et al. (2001): Use of segmentation or integration strategies?
Do you use social networks/paid services for childcare or household duties?	Haddock et al. (2001): Drawing on social support networks?

## Appendix B

## Participant information sheet



An exploration of the individual strategies employed by flexibly working parents

## INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

My name is Natalija Andrejic and I am a Masters student at the school of Management at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my Masters thesis.

This project aims to explore the experiences of parents who use formally-established flexible work arrangements such as flexible schedules, compressed work weeks, working from home, part-time, and job-sharing. It aims to examine the challenges of working flexibly and the strategies that parents use to negotiate these challenges, balance between their work and personal lives, and promote their career opportunities. This will provide beneficial information to employees and organisations of ways to promote the effective implementation of flexible work arrangements.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you in a place convenient to you. I will ask you questions about your experience with using a flexible work arrangement. The interview will take approximately one hour. I will audio record the interview and write it up later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study up to four weeks after the interview. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

This research is confidential. I will not name you in any reports or presentations, and I will not include any information that would identify you, such as your name or organisation. Direct quotations from your interview will only be presented alongside a pseudonym and a generic type of role descriptor such as 'Senior Manager'. Only my supervisors and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any

recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 5 years after the research ends. The information from my research will be used in my Masters report. I may also use the results of my research for conference presentations, and academic reports.

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Student:

Name: Natalija Andrejic

University email address:

natalija.andrejic@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisor:

Name: Dr Sarah Proctor-Thomson

Role: Senior Lecturer

School: Management

Phone: 04 463 9982

sarah.proctor-thomson@vuw.ac.nz

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee with approval number 0000022960.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

## Appendix C

## Participant consent form



An exploration of the individual strategies employed by flexibly working parents

## CONSENT TO INTERVIEW

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: Natalija Andrejic, School of Management, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I understand that my identifying information will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor and that direct quotations from my interview will only be presented with a pseudonym and generic type of role descriptor. I understand that the results will be used for a Masters research report and a summary of the results may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I have added my email address below as I would like to receive a copy of:
  - The final report Yes
  - A two page summary of the research findings Yes
- I agree to the information covered in the Information Sheet. Agree  Don't Agree



Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_