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Strategic management

Does part-time work make employees more efficient?
Importance of context in assessing flexible work arrangements

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HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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30 ECTS final thesis to the completion of a M.Sc. degree at the Faculty of Business Administration at the University of Iceland.

Foreword

This thesis, "Does part-time work make employees more efficient? Importance of context in assessing flexible work arrangements", is submitted towards the completion of a M.Sc. degree in Strategic Management at the Faculty of Business Administration at the University of Iceland.

The thesis is 30 ECTS and was supervised by Professor Runólfur Smári Steinþórsson. The data gathering took place between January and July 2011 in the Netherlands and the following analysis and compilation of the thesis was completed in December 2011.

The author would like to thank her friends who assisted in finding respondents to interview and the respondents for agreeing to have an interview on the subject. She would also like to thank Anna Dóra Valsdóttir for proofreading the thesis and Bryndís Björk Ásgeirsdóttir for giving some helpful tips along the way. Lastly, she would like to thank Guðmundur Kristjánsson for the support, motivation and help throughout the creation of this thesis.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine employee perceptions of flexible work arrangements with special emphasis on part-time work, in light of the different contexts they find themselves in. It further seeks to understand the effects of part-time work on employees' way of working.

The literature review discusses various contextual factors that impact employee perceptions, such as public and organisational context and management and colleague support. It further explores outcomes such as work-life balance and discusses the existing theories on work effort change and work intensification in relation to flexible work arrangements. It ends with a discussion on the role of individual factors such as personality, motivation, life situation and gender.

The study was conducted through 13 qualitative interviews conducted in the first 6 months of 2011 in the Netherlands. The goal was to get a holistic picture of the effects and perceptions of flexible work arrangements through interviewing respondents of different nationalities and professions.

The findings suggest that contextual support and trust play a significant role in determining how employees perceive their flexible work arrangement and the subsequent outcomes of it. Furthermore, they indicate that perceived efficiency increase and in some cases intensification of work seem to be a by-product of flexible work arrangements. However, they also indicate that such efficiency increase cannot be attributed to the work arrangement alone as various other factors have an impact, such as the aforementioned context as well as individual differences in personality, motivations, life situations and gender.

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1 Introduction

The last decades have seen profound transformations in the nature and organisation of work. New technologies and work practices have emerged and the social and economical consequences of an increasingly global and competitive 24-hour marketplace are far-reaching. Globalisation is calling for more effort in employment with little concern for the effects on people or societies. In fact it has been shown that a drive for efficiency leads to fewer people having to do the same amount of work (Haworth and Lewis, 2005). There is also no doubt that the increasing share of working mothers and dual earner families have forced governments to respond to the general interest among the public to allow for better combining of work and family life and implement public policies in response to these issues. Managing different roles such as being a parent, a partner, or simply being part of the community along with holding a job or building a career, in today's fast-paced environment can therefore be a challenge. The main goal of introducing flexible work arrangements in an organisation is to help employees manage these different elements in their lives. Flexible work arrangements have been defined as "employer provided benefits that permit employees some level of control over when and where they work outside of the standard workday." (Lambert, Marler and Gueutal, 2008, p.107). Avery and Zabel (2001, p.2) present another definition where flexible work arrangements are seen as "individually negotiated conditions of employment involving adjustments in the timing, scope and/or place of work." The goal is to change the time and/or place of where work is usually done in a way that is controllable and predictable for both employers and employees. Flexible work arrangements bring the focus to results as opposed to time spent in the office because as long as the work gets done it doesn't matter where and when you do it.

Flexible work arrangements constitute a part of the wider notion of work-life initiatives or work-life policies, which are designed to assist employees in better integrating paid work with other parts of their lives such as family or leisure (Ryan and Kossek, 2008). Although work-life policies can encompass more elements such as childcare provisions and financial support, flexible work arrangements are still a large

and very important element. This research will therefore frequently refer to the wider concept of work-life policies or initiatives instead of flexible work arrangements because of the close connectedness of the two notions.

There are various types of flexible work arrangements available. One of the most popular types is part-time work. If full-time work refers to working anywhere from 40 hours a week, then anyone working less than that can be referred to as a part-time worker. Part-time workers will mostly negotiate a set schedule of at what times and which days they work. In some cases the employer can make use of part-time workers to meet peaks of work demand and can also allow variation within the scheduling of the part-time worker. This requires both a trusting relationship between the employer and the employee as well as goodwill and cooperation from both parties. Working part time often proves to be a challenge, as employees, management and colleagues alike need to adjust their expectations to the part-time status (Stredwick and Ellis, 2005). Another popular type of flexible work arrangement is telecommuting which refers to occasional or regular work out of an organisations office, done from the employee's home, from a client's site or elsewhere (Nilles, 1998). Telecommuting is driven by new technology. Personal computers and mobile phones with internet connections have made it bigger than ever. Being able to balance work and home responsibilities better as well as being more productive when working away from a busy office are major benefits of telecommuting. However, telecommuting also has drawbacks such as a feeling of loneliness and isolation as working out of the office means missing out on social interaction and information sharing (Cooper, 1996; Langhoff, 1999).

The growing interest in flexible work arrangements in the last years can be attributed to several elements. Firstly, new legislation in many western countries gives employees rights to negotiate non-standard working hours, part-time work or to work compressed workweeks. A second reason lies with the increase in unpredictability of business and private life alike. Employees need to balance their private life obligations with work and employers are increasingly realising that they need to accommodate to those needs in order to get and retain the right talent for the right job. A third reason lies with the nature of work itself. In the last years an information economy has emerged which, not only through technical advances but also through the rise of knowledge work, relies

more on mental rather than physical ability and has led to people being able to do their work from any location and at the time they wish. The rise of knowledge workers puts the emphasis on employees delivering results of their work instead of being present in a physical workplace (Stredwick and Ellis, 2005). Lastly, changing demographics are also an important drive in the rise of flexibility and flexible work arrangements. The increase in the number of women in the workforce and therefore dual-earner couples along with the increased involvement of fathers in the care of their children create a changing need in balancing family life with work. In fact, as the workforce gradually becomes more diverse, employers who are able to adjust to the shifting demographics and attitudes can then profit from a higher quality workforce, which can lead to an increase in organisational performance (Kossek and Friede, 2006).

Flexible work arrangements have been shown to have a number of important organisational outcomes and attitudes. As such they have been related to higher employee productivity, higher levels of engagement, lower levels of stress, overall job satisfaction and lower absenteeism (e.g. Baltes, Briggs, Huff, Wright and Neuman, 1999; Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill and Brennan, 2008). Not only has providing flexibility been shown to potentially increase productivity and help with recruitment and retention of qualified employees but it can also lead to lower costs for example through reduction in overhead and reorganisation of offices by allowing employees to work from home (Avery and Zabel, 2001). Furthermore, it has been shown that the context and the complex interrelationships between private and professional lives of individuals, at wider societal levels as well as at the workplace and at home, affect how employees experience flexible work arrangements (Lewis and Den Dulk, 2010). Workplace support, both in the form of a supportive organisational culture as well as general management and colleague support, has been shown to be even more important than the availability of formal flexible policies (Allen, 2001; Thompson and Prottas, 2005). Hill et al. (2008) argued that flexible work arrangements were more than just formal policies and that workplace flexibility "is a mutual sense of trust and respect between employer and employee, a supportive workplace culture, and an optimal sense of control over one's job and working conditions" (p.160).

Regardless of the numerous potentially beneficial organisational outcomes of flexible work arrangements the main reasons for implementing it still seem to be to improve motivation and morale and to enable employees to achieve a better work-life balance (Kush and Stroh, 1994). Many organisations remain sceptical of offering flexibility options, such as part-time work and telecommuting and are, in many cases, unaware of their potential benefits. This may in part be due to the fact that organisations have difficulty assessing the net impact of flexibility options and costs are more easily identifiable then the benefits. However, a bigger reason probably lies with the fact that flexible work arrangements deeply challenge the traditional way of working and the basic assumptions of how work should be done. These include that presence at work equals productivity and time spent at work equals commitment, that it is difficult to manage employees well if supervisors cannot continually follow them and that competent employees should manage their work and personal lives themselves (Galinsky, Sakai, Eby, Bond and Wigton, 2010).

The importance of understanding flexible work arrangements and their implications is, however, undisputed in order for both employees and organisations to benefit. A vast majority of books and articles published on the subject in the recent years have focused on behavioural outcomes such as employee satisfaction, organisational commitment, absenteeism, turnover etc. However, limited research examines whether flexible work arrangements lead to a change in how an employee does his job. This refers to whether an employee feels he is more or less efficient when he works flexible, with the focus in particular on part-time employees. Kelliher and Anderson (2009) explored work intensification as an outcome of flexible work arrangements; when working part time and/or teleworking. Their research, combined with the personal experience of the author which was consistent with the findings of Kelliher and Anderson, provided an inspiration to further explore the area of work effort and work efficiency change following the adoption of flexible work arrangements. Furthermore, during the research process the importance of various layers of context, ranging from the culture in the country you live in to the workplace to a employee's private life situation, emerged as an influence on how employees perceive their flexible work arrangements and whether they led to a different way of working. The focus in this research is put on part-time employment as this was of particular interest to the author.

This study therefore examines the experiences of employees that work flexible; part time and in some cases also telecommute, in the light of the different contexts they find themselves in, and explores the effects on their way of working. It is based on the following questions:

- ➢ Do flexible working arrangements impact the way you work and if so in what way?
- ➢ What elements play a role in how you perceive your flexible working arrangement?

It hopes to shed a new light on and contribute to the knowledge of flexible work arrangements and their potential rewards to an organisation.

The study starts with an overview of the relevant theoretical underpinnings in the field. It explores the various layers of context in which flexible work arrangements are located and perceived, from the public context to the organisational context, discussing in particular the element of culture and workplace support through management and colleagues. A conceptual model of workplace flexibility set forth by Hill et al. (2008) is presented which was used as a reference to present the findings of this study. It then goes on to explore the outcomes of flexibility, firstly work-life balance and related personal outcomes and then theories on work-related outcomes such as work effort and intensification of work. Lastly, individual factors such as personality, motivation, life situation and gender, which also impact flexibility perceptions, are discussed. The method chapter reviews the research process, from the research design, to participant selection, the interviews and the data analysis, also highlighting limitations and quality criteria. The findings are presented in a model that illustrates the importance of contextual factors on the perception of flexible work arrangements and the subsequent outcomes. The model also emphasises the impact of individual factors on all other elements of the model. Each element of the model is thoroughly discussed. The study ends with a discussion, comparing and contrasting the findings to the theory.

2 Literature review

The literature review is organised in three big chapters. In the first one the context in which flexible workers find themselves in is discussed.

Firstly the overall framework of systems thinking is applied to flexible work arrangements. Consistent with this framework various layers of context are then examined, starting with the public context, in general and in The Netherlands in particular. Next, the role of organisational culture is discussed, the implications of a supportive culture and the challenges behind establishing such an environment in an organisation. A third element important to the context in which flexible workers find themselves is management. The chapter examines supportive supervisor behaviours as well as the challenges behind managing the employer-employee relationship. The last chapter then reviews the role of colleagues and various theories that explain colleague behaviour and interrelationships between flexible workers and their colleagues.

The second chapter covers the outcomes from flexible work arrangements. The chapter is divided in three parts. Firstly, work-life balance is discussed. The chapter covers various theories of spillover or enhancement between the work and family domains. Second, theories on effort are reviewed, moving on to discussing how increased productivity can be achieved through flexible work arrangements. Lastly, the discussion of increased effort is expanded to work intensification, how it happens and its implications.

The third chapter then discusses the role of individual factors when it comes to how employees perceive and experience their flexible work arrangements. This is done in three parts. Firstly, personality traits are examined and how these affect work outcomes. Second, the role of motivation is discussed, both general motivation theories as well as how different people are motivated and driven by different things. A comprehensive model of motivation that takes these factors into account is presented. Lastly, the role of gender and life situation is reviewed with the focus being on how employees try to adjust to their life situation and responsibilities through flexible work arrangements.

2.1 Flexible work arrangements in context

The perception and experience of flexible work arrangements depends on various contextual factors. In the following chapters these factors are reviewed. Firstly, the framework of systems thinking is introduced which locates flexible work arrangements in a multilayered and ever-changing context of an organisation as well as society. This framework is then applied as various social and cultural factors are introduced. The public context is reviewed, where a gap often emerges between public initiatives and organisational adaption. Next, the organisational culture is discussed, as the supportiveness of the organisational culture is an important factor to the experience of the flexible employee. Lastly, theories on management and colleague support and behaviours, which affect employee perceptions, are examined.

2.1.1 Systems thinking

In order to examine flexible work arrangements and other work-life policies designed to support employees with family or other personal commitments a framework such as that of systems thinking is useful. Systems thinking has been defined as a discipline for seeing the whole, a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things and patterns of change rather than the static (Senge, 1990). Flexible work arrangements are located in a wider social system that is dynamic and ever changing. Systems thinking provides a multi-layered approach of examination and recognises that flexible working policies are situated in multiple layers of context such as within the working practices, structures and culture of the organisation. It also acknowledges the wider social context, which includes social and economic factors, models of social interaction, public policies, employment, family demographics and cultural, gender and communal norms and values. Furthermore, it even acknowledges flexibility from a global standpoint (Lewis and Den Dulk, 2008; Voydanoff, 2002). Overall, systems thinking recognises the importance and influence of contextual factors on the work experience of an individual. It emphasises the interconnectedness of different systems and that changes in one system will have an effect in others, such as workplace changes might impact and change personal lives of employees. The optimal is then to implement processes in attempt to achieve systematic change at multiple levels, therefore recognising the interconnectedness between them (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006). Carlson and

Grzywacz (2008) argue that systems thinking is critical to understanding the complex relationship between work and personal life and to thoroughly be able to analyse both domains.

The challenge is that social systems are constantly changing and impacting other systems. Organisations therefore need to constantly be aware of these changes because they will keep happening whether they adapt to them or not. However, adapting to changes is difficult and often leads to opposition. This can be seen, for example, through how traditional managers struggle to manage non-traditional ways of working. Nevertheless, transitional tensions that arise because of these sorts of changes in complex social systems can create learning and innovation. The growing involvement of fathers in parenting and household chores in some countries is an example of these tensions. While encouraged by government policies and raised expectations of shared parenting, their increased involvement also creates tensions when some employers continue to expect that men should not take family leaves nor work part time. In fact, the norm of the ideal worker who shows his commitment and dedication to the job through working long hours and does not allow family to interfere with work is still very persistent in organisations and employees who do not change their hours because of personal reasons are seen as stronger, especially when at professional and managerial levels (Lewis, 2001, 2003). Ideal worker assumptions are based on commitment to work being defined in terms of the capitalism and consumerism of today's society, where concepts such as efficiency, profit and productivity crowd out individual and social needs and undermine the values of care and connectedness. The challenge is to adapt to the changing demands of the workforce and make work-life initiatives such as flexible work arrangements a part of the mainstream, so that it no longer will be an exception for certain employees who do not match the ideal worker norm and the basic assumptions of a physical presence and long work hours but a general and on-going business practice. It needs to be perceived as a mechanism, which allows for paid work to interact with and be enhanced by people's lives at a number of levels of society, such as at an individual-level, family-level, community-level and/or in the wider society (Gambles et al., 2006; Kossek, Lewis and Hammer, 2010; Lewis and Den Dulk, 2008).

Furthermore, acceptance of flexibility is affected by individual differences and beliefs; whether people feel the flexibility they are offered is fair and reasonable and whether they feel they are entitled to expect and use it. Presence of flexibility policies does not necessarily make employees feel that they are entitled to make use of them. A sense of entitlement refers to the extent to which an employee feels entitled to utilise flexible work arrangements or other work life policies. It is based on social comparison and perceptions of what is normal and reasonable and takes place both in the culture of the organisation itself as well as within the national context (Lewis and Den Dulk, 2010; Peper, Den Dulk and van Doorne-Huiskes, 2009). Lewis (1996) proposes that three elements impact an employee's sense of entitlement: gender, the socio-political context and the organisational culture. The national norms and culture therefore impact whether the employee feels entitled to use flexible policies as well as the internal culture of an organisation. Whether the employee is a female or a male then also plays a role in how the employee in question assesses the situation. Evidence shows that supportive public policies on, for example, child care provision enhance young people's feeling of entitlement to support when it comes to managing work and family both from the public sphere but also from the private sector. This kind of supportive public polices therefore also increase pressure on the private sector to accommodate to the need of the employees and provide support (Lewis and Smithson, 2001). In light of individual differences, the importance of acknowledging the diversity of society seems apparent. Experiences and motivations of individuals with different work and leisure lifestyles vary and need to be understood, allowing for recognising of the diversity of human experience and wants (Haworth and Lewis, 2005).

Economic factors also have an impact in this context as well as labour market conditions. In low wage economies families have to rely on two incomes while in more prosperous countries families can get by with one. Factors such as unemployment and job insecurity also affect both organisations and employees and how they offer or make use of flexibility options (Lewis and Den Dulk, 2010). Furthermore, flexible working policies, although in place and implemented from a national and organisational standpoint, are increasingly neutralised and undermined by global contextual factors. These include the fast pace of change, growing connectivity and globalisation of

economic and social systems as well as the intensification of work associated with global competition or efficiency drives (Kossek et al., 2010; Lewis and Den Dulk, 2008).

2.1.1.1 Conceptual model of flexibility based on systems thinking

Hill et al. (2008) created a conceptual framework of workplace flexibility based on systems thinking, locating it as an environmental attribute of the workplace. Their emphasis was to increase the focus on understanding what flexibility really is, how to measure it and connect and relate it to other concepts. They took a holistic perspective in the definition of it and established it in the larger context of organisational culture
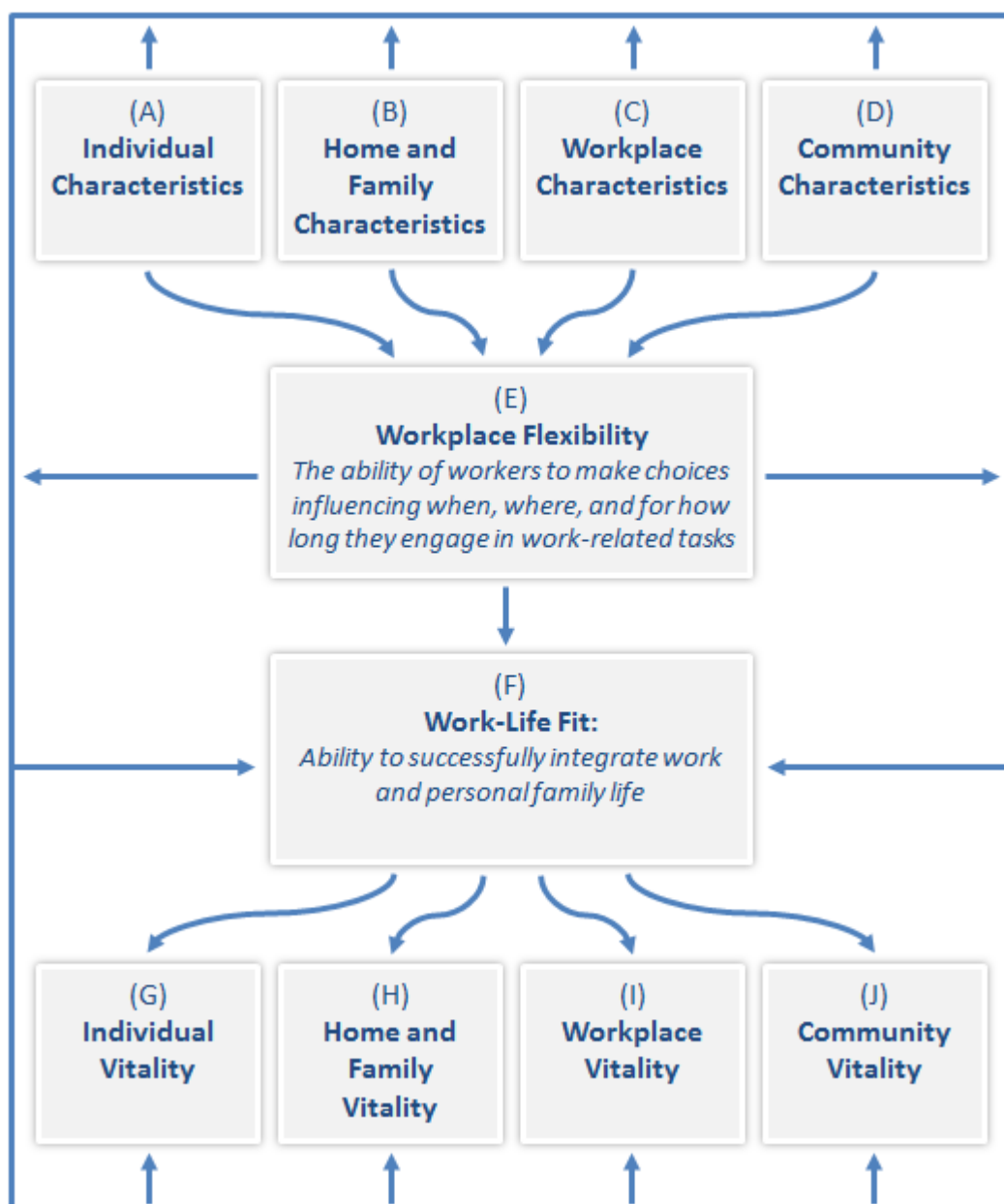

Figure 1. Conceptualising flexibility based on systems thinking (Hill et al., 2010)

change. The model situates flexibility in the middle of a dynamic environment, with numerous antecedent and outcome elements related to it, which illustrate the various processes that connect to and add to the growth of individuals, families and organisations alike. The model is shown in Figure 1. The top four variables are regarded as independent variables all affecting workplace flexibility, which is defined as the ability to choose where, when and for how long to work. Work-life fit then refers to the ability to integrate work and family life whereas the four outcome variables are thought of as dependant and are defined in terms of vitality to emphasise the positive relationship between work and other spheres. In Hill et al.'s model (A) represents demographic characteristics such as gender, age and income while (B) stands for household characteristics such as marital status and presence and age of children. (C) then refers to general workplace characteristics such as organisational culture and support and (D) refers to community in a broad sense, ranging from infrastructure such as availability of child care, transportation and internet communication, to community support and social norms when it comes to work. When it comes to the outcome variables (G) represents various personal factors such as health, life satisfaction and personal success. (H) refers to life at home thus marital satisfaction, parenting and child behaviour and housework, to name a few. (I) refers then to life at work and work outcomes such as performance, turnover, satisfaction and commitment and (J) stands for participation and involvement in the community for example in community organisations. The relationships between the variables are complex as the four antecedent variables not only affect flexibility directly but also all the other variables of the model. Flexibility then affects work-life fit and all the subsequent outcomes directly while work-life fit is suggested to affect all the outcome variables directly.

The complexity of relationships and interactions between systems is further advanced by the fact that improved performance achieved after implementation of innovative work practices such as flexible work arrangements does not necessarily have to be due to work practices alone. The process is complicated by the fact that organisations that take up innovative work practices may have better quality employees and, also, that organisations with better quality management teams may be more inclined to initiate new workplace practices and engage in more creative marketing, finance, and R&D strategies. Because of such factors it is hard to estimate the actual

effect of these arrangements on their own as the overall effect is dependent on more factors and will probably be higher than the true effect (Kochan, Ichniowski, Levine, Olson and Strauss, 1996).

2.1.2 Role of the public context

Public policy provides the basis for organisations to build on. It is up to the organisation to determine how such policies are implemented and whether they are supported or undermined by workplace practices and attitudes. Consequently, a gap often remains between policy and practice (Gambles et al., 2006; Lewis, Brannen and Nilsen, 2009). This can be attributed to various interacting mechanisms, in particular to institutional pressure, which refers to how organisations have to respond to outside pressure when it comes to flexibility or other work-life policies. According to institutional theory organisations adopt work-life policies due to societal pressure and for symbolic reasons without producing any necessary structural, behavioural or cultural changes within the organisation. Therefore, while these policies are not embedded in the organisational structure they may conflict with norms and values already present, remain marginalised and systematic change is not achieved. Though being a good initiative in itself, organisations often fail to promote these options and generalise them within the organisation. Furthermore, they fail to understand the needs of their employees when it comes to these arrangements, for example through imposing intensification upon them by not adjusting workloads. At the same time organisations, however, might gain external legitimacy as desirable employers as, on paper, they have implemented flexible policies (Evans, 2002; European Commission, 2005; Lewis et al., 2009; Peper et al., 2009).

Moreover, organisations adapt and react differently to public legislation on the matter by complementing it and offering their own bundle of flexible work arrangements or other work-life policies. In fact, research has shown that in countries with extensive public legislation on flexible work policies organisations show less incentive in providing supplemental policies themselves. However, when there is little legislation they also show little incentive, which suggests that cultural factors are more important than actual policies. In the Netherlands for example the family is regarded as an important social institution and both public policies and in many cases organisational

policies support this cultural outlook. This can be contrasted to a country like the United States where there is no public policy to set the guidelines and companies in most cases see work-family balance as the employee's own responsibility (Evans, 2002).

Cultural differences also impact how organisations deal with the issue, especially regarding the social constructions of motherhood, fatherhood and parenthood. Each national culture represents different norms when it comes to families. In some countries a male breadwinner is the norm while elsewhere two full-timers are more common and yet in other countries part-time work is widespread and accepted. These cultural values are then entwined with social and welfare policy that include regulations on working time, parental leaves and childcare. Industrial relations and trade unions also impact how organisations deal with the institutional environment. In some countries they are very strong and elsewhere have little power. Sector and size of organisations is also a factor when it comes to organisational reactions to public policy. The public sector is under more pressure to adapt to the institutional norms of, for example, gender equality and work-family conciliation. Larger companies are also under more pressure, as they want to uphold a certain image, are more visible and can also more easily bear the costs of these arrangements that smaller companies cannot. Interestingly though, when informal work-life policies are added to the equation the differences between smaller and larger companies are much less prominent (European Commission, 2005; Gambles et al., 2006; Kossek et al., 2010).

2.1.2.1 *Public context in The Netherlands*

Most European countries have legislation in place to enable employees to work part time, sometimes available to all employees and in some cases only to parents. The Netherlands has a long tradition of a single male breadwinner with women in the caregiver role. This long-term conservative and traditional attitude towards work and childcare has led to various barriers to employees in claiming existing or new flexibility options. In the last decades however the number of women in the workforce has risen dramatically with the majority of them being employed in part-time jobs. This has led to part-time work of women being widely accepted and seen as a solution to work-life balance issues within the whole society, regardless of career costs to women. Subsequently, the one and a half earner model has become the dominant one with the

man as the main breadwinner and the woman working a part-time job. In the Netherlands, work-family balance is viewed as a shared responsibility between the government, employers and employees. The legislation on the subject has been limited as the government has rather put the emphasis on encouraging it through for example funding projects to break down the traditional male and female role, encouraging shared care and exploring ways to move to the dual-earner model. The exception though is parental leave, which was legislated in 1991 and originally allowed parents 6 month unpaid leave to be taken part time. Since then it has been adjusted and can be taken both part time and full time. It is paid in the public sector and in some private organisations, depending on the collective agreements. This has encouraged many men to make use of this and take a daddy day, therefore work less than full time after having children (Den Dulk and Peper, 2007; Gambles et al., 2006). Another legislation, The Working Hours Adjustment Act (WAA) put in place in 2001 gives employees the right to modify their working hours. In short, the law permits a reduction or increase in hours without the quality of the job being affected, while pay and other benefits are adjusted to the alteration. A request can only be submitted when an employee has worked for the organisation for at least a year and employers are in most cases obliged to comply with it. In order to refuse a request they need to provide evidence of a serious business interest. This law has enabled Dutch workers to work full time in their early career, shift to part-time work after having children and in some cases return to full-time work, as the children grow older. Interestingly, however, a big research on Dutch employers revealed that their reasons for offering flexible working policies were to satisfy the employees and respond to their requests. Dutch employers don't see themselves as forerunners when it comes to work-life policies but are simply adapting to a changing environment without being convinced that, in business terms, this is the best way to go. As predicted by the literature, work-life policies in the Netherlands have been shown to be more likely to be developed in larger organisations and in sectors where women make up the majority of the workforce. Employers are still hesitant to accept requests for working part time particularly in the private sector and at higher professional levels, such as in management (Den Dulk and Peper, 2007; European Commission, 2005; Gambles et al., 2006).

2.1.3 Role of organisational culture

Culture plays a big role in all human behaviour. It defines the society we live in and the way we think about and perceive life in general. Culture has been referred to as a form of programming of the mind, which takes place through collective learning and adaption of rituals and behaviours in the society (Hofstede, 1980). At the organisational level, organisational culture can be defined as "shared perceptions of organisational work practices within organisational units that may differ from other organisational units" (Van Den Berg and Wilderom, 2004, p.571). The culture of an organisation thus refers to certain ways, which have evolved over time, how an organisation performs its functions and includes the shared knowledge and competence of an organisation. The focal point is on perceptions of work practices rather than how they actually occur; that organisational culture is essentially perceptual. Another approach to the culture concept emphasises values; that what characterises the best organisations are values to which employees are strongly devoted (Peters and Waterman, 1982). The culture concept is very similar to the concept of organisational climate, which is though typically more based on employees' perceptions of organisational practices and procedures. In fact, both concepts focus on the internal social environment of an organisation as a comprehensive and collectively defined context with the distinguishing feature being that climate refers to the actual situation at each point in time and culture refers more to the registration of work behaviours (Denison, 1996).

2.1.3.1   A supportive organisational culture

The culture of an organisation constitutes a big part of how an employee experiences his work and work environment and is one of the most important factors in determining whether he feels entitled to claim or use flexible work arrangements. A supportive organisational culture has been defined as "the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organisation supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives" (Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness, 1999, p.392). The supportiveness of an organisation's culture as well as the supportiveness of supervisors and colleagues are what make up the informal context in an organisation, which has been shown to be more important and appreciated by employees than the actual formal flexibility programs in place. The behaviours and attitudes that are held up and

rewarded in an organisation communicate to the employees what is valuable to the organisation and to the management. If employees perceive that usage of flexibility benefits are not a part of these behaviours they might be afraid and therefore unlikely to make use of them regardless of their availability (Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999). This is consistent with the human ecology theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which focuses on that individual decisions and choice are drawn on adaption to the environment that a person finds himself in. The importance lies in adapting to a situation or environment, be it at home or at the workplace, so that a person can function more efficiently in it.

A supportive informal context provides a base for informal flexibility, which, in many ways, contrasts the general formal flexibility policies. It is based upon a trusting relationship with one's employer where less emphasis is put on controlling of working hours and instead emphasises creating a culture of reciprocity where employees and employers consider each other needs and allow more control over working time to fit other commitments. Informal flexibility applies to a much wider range of employees including the traditional breadwinner who can then combine work with other commitments without a drop in pay or career consequences. In contrast, formal policies have been shown to often only suit particular types of staff, especially women with childcare responsibilities (Atkinsson and Hall, 2009; Dex and Scheibel, 2001).

A supportive culture therefore not only leads to more use of formal flexibility policies and has a significant influence on perceived work life balance but also plays a crucial role in employees' general attitudes, commitment and perceptions towards the organisation (Den Dulk and Peper, 2007). Thompson and Prottas (2005) discovered that the supportiveness of an organisation's culture was positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to stress, intentions to quit, and work-to-family conflict. They further discovered that there was no relationship between the availability of formal flexibility policies and outcomes such as absenteeism, work–family conflict and productivity. On a similar note, McNall, Masuda and Nicklin (2010) emphasise the power of employers in generating positive attitudes. Employees are more likely to show positive attitudes and behaviours such as more job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions when they feel employers show understanding and care that they have lives outside of work, in form of flexibility policies. This suggests that family supportive

organisational perceptions in fact mediate the relationship between family supportive benefit availability and outcomes such as job attitudes or work-family conflict.

Feldman (1990) proposed that the relationship between part-time work and work attitudes and behaviours was not only moderated by work context and demographic factors but that these factors also impact the choice or reasons why employees work part time and/or attitudes or behaviours directly. His proposed framework can be seen is Figure 2. He further suggested that work context or demographic variables mediate
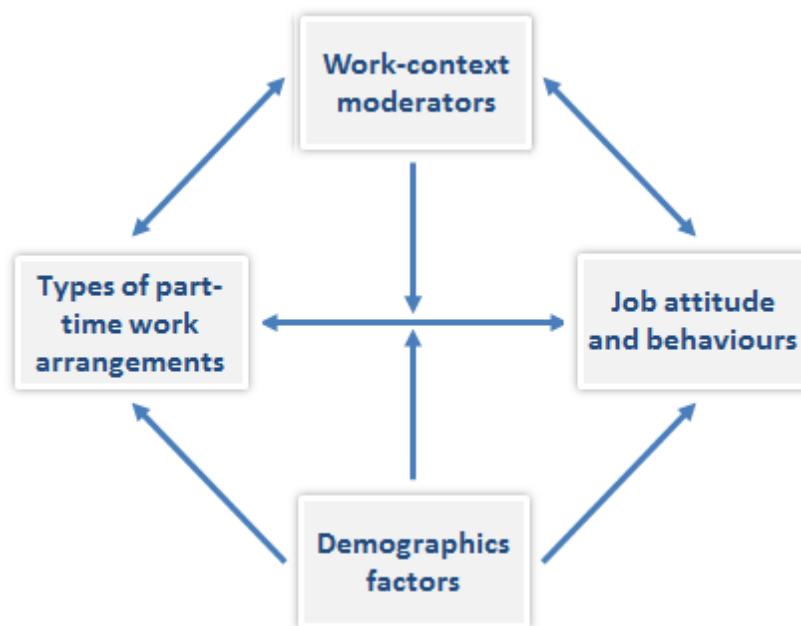
Figure 2. Relationship between part-time work and job attitudes (Feldman, 1990)

the relationship between part-time work and job attitudes and behaviours, therefore that the effect of part-time work on work attitudes may be indirect through these variables, for example through that part-time work leads to lower pay and the lower pay can then impact work satisfaction or work effort. It should, however, be noted that perceptions of an organisation's culture or other work context factors remain individual evaluations of the environment that the employees find themselves in and these individual evaluations therefore mediate behavioural responses rather than the environment itself (Allen, 2001; James and Jones, 1974).

2.1.3.2 Challenges of establishing a supportive culture

The challenge is then how to establish such a supportive work environment. As formal policies are often taken up to comply with public policies, they are therefore implemented at the employer level without consideration to the employees, which

refers again to the implementation gap discussed in the chapter on the role of public context (2.1.2). The necessary culture change then seldom follows as culture change cannot be legislated and change does not automatically follow structural changes or new developments. The taking-up of formal policies does not alter the broader values and assumptions of an organisation on how work is done, what way of work is ideal and how people who don't adhere to this norm are perceived. Likewise, when use of flexible work arrangements is not regarded as a normal part of core workplace practice, work–life initiatives can lead to a change of dynamics in the employee group, when managers view and manage flexible workers and traditional workers differently (Kossek et al., 2010; Lautsch, Kossek and Eaton, 2009; Lewis, 2001). As predicted by systems theory, for organisational change efforts to be most likely to be successful, both structural and cultural supports need to be integrated and connected within the social system of the organisation. Structural support refers to the work design and human resources policies in place at the organisation while cultural support refers to the informal social and relational support at the workplace. Cultural support then works both at the workgroup level where an employee receives support from colleagues and management and then at an organisational level referring to the culture, values and norms of the organisation in general. Without cultural and structural support of work-life initiatives being integrated the risk is that work-life initiatives such as flexible work arrangements become bureaucratic structures, more on paper then an actual part of the organisation (Kossek et al., 2010).

Another construct to the organisation-level adaption to flexibility was introduced by Lee, MacDermid and Buck in 2000. They took a slightly different approach when they set up a framework distinguishing between three different categories of organisational-level responses to part-time work: accommodation, elaboration, and transformation. Accommodation refers to when an organisation makes minimal adjustments in response to a different way of working; the employer is reluctant in agreeing to a change and only allows it in unusual and specific circumstances. Elaboration then refers to making some adjustments and develop some routines, for example through having formal policies in place, while not giving up the basics of organisation and structuring of work and making it clear that full-time work is still preferred. Transformation refers to when an organisation looks at a request for change of way of work as a stimulus and

opportunity to reorganise and review old ways of working, therefore are more accepting and see it as a natural part in holding on to their employees. Lee et al. (2000) look at these three paradigms on a scale of organisational learning. As such organisations in the transformation paradigm are those that are ready to learn, explore and experiment and could therefore similarly be more adapt to adjust to changes in the external environment. On the other end of the scale are those that fall under the accommodation paradigm who prefer the status quo and although they agree to allow employees to work part time in certain circumstances they are reluctant to generalise this across their organisation and therefore limit any transfer of knowledge. Elaboration then sits there right in between. Lee et al. (2000) therefore provide an interesting view by connecting different organisational responses to the adaptation of flexible work arrangements with a continuum of organisational learning, showing that responsiveness to flexibility can reflect organisational strategies of responsiveness to change.

Creating a supportive organisational culture is a challenge and far from all organisations manage or care to create such a work environment. When work demands contradict the utilisation of work-life policies and the organisational support for the combination of work and family life, this has been named a contradictory culture. In a contradictory culture individuals who are always available and prepared to work long hours are thought of as the ideal worker even if the organisation has all the work-life policies and support in place. This sends out mixed messages to employees and might lead to them to be less willing to make use of these policies. Contradictory culture is one of four culture types identified in the literature based on dimensions of support, such as management, colleagues and cultural support, and barriers, such as career consequences and organisational time demands on employees. A second culture type is an approving culture, where employees experience a lot of support and very few barriers whereas in the third type, conflicting culture, they experience a lot of barriers and little support. The fourth culture type is then an indifferent culture; where employees experience little support but also few barriers. How employees experience their work arrangement is therefore different depending on in what type of work culture they find themselves in (Den Dulk and Peper, 2007). On the other hand, Lee, MacDermid, Williams, Buck and Leiba-O'Sullivan (2002) differentiated between only two types of cultures: impeding cultures and facilitating cultures. In impeding cultures

effort is equated with face time and part-time work is seen as a step down. In facilitating cultures entrepreneurial thinking, flexibility and empowerment are encouraged and performance is measured by results and not face time.

Ultimately, when employers are able to make their organisational culture more family-friendly and supportive, the working environment also changes so that their employees experience a better work-life balance. Organisations can therefore play an active role in reducing work-family conflict and improving employee attitudes by establishing a family-friendly environment and culture through flexibility polices (Scandura and Lankau, 1997). Furthermore, a supportive organisational culture may become a competitive advantage to an organisation, when it is less imitable and observable than bundles of human resource practices. Nevertheless, few organisations have taken flexibility up as a deliberate and strategic step towards achieving increased competitiveness or implemented it as a part of a business strategy (Stredwick and Ellis, 2005; Thompson and Prottas, 2005).

2.1.4 Role of management

Supervisor support is an essential part of the organisation in order for informal or formal flexibility policies to work in practice. Supervisors are critical to the success of flexibility as they are the ones to communicate and implement them. Supportive supervisors can enhance employees feeling of entitlement and satisfaction as well as the effectiveness of flexible work arrangements even in non-supportive organisational cultures but also vice versa; in a supportive organisational culture non-supportive supervisors can undermine well-intentioned organisational support. A supportive supervisor also increases the perception that the organisation is putting an effort in balancing work and family responsibilities (Allen, 2001; Berg, Kalleberg and Appelbaum. 2003; Lewis, 2003; Thompson et al., 1999). Management support has furthermore been associated with greater use of flexible working (Houston and Waumsley, 2003; Thompson et al., 1999) and been shown to positively affect employee job attitudes such as job satisfaction (Thompson and Prottas, 2005). Similarly organisational culture and supervisor support has been shown to supersede formal policies because of how the implementation of flexibility policies is in most case at the responsibility of local supervisors (Lee, MacDermid, Williams et al., 2002).

2.1.4.1 *Supervisor behaviours*

A construct of family-supportive supervisor behaviours helps to understand how supervisor behaviour affects employees. Hammer, Kossek, Zimmerman and Daniels (2007) distinguish between four types of behaviours; emotional support, instrumental support, role model behaviours, and recognition of the strategic importance of work–family issues. They argue that managers' role varies depending on their role and position within the organisation, with lower-level managers being more responsible for active support such as approving changes in working hours and upper management more being role models, providing explicit acknowledgment of employees' personal needs and thereby influencing the organisational culture.

Building on this framework, Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner and Hanson (2009) advanced the construct of family supportive supervisor behaviours by arranging four constructs hierarchically as being subordinate to the general notion of family supportive supervisor behaviours: emotional support, role modelling behaviours, instrumental support and creative work family management (see Figure 3). Emotional support focuses on considering the feeling of the employees, talking and listening to them and make them feel they are being cared for. Role modelling behaviour is then based on supervisors setting the example themselves on how to integrate work and family, for example by working flexible themselves. Instrumental support focuses on reactive
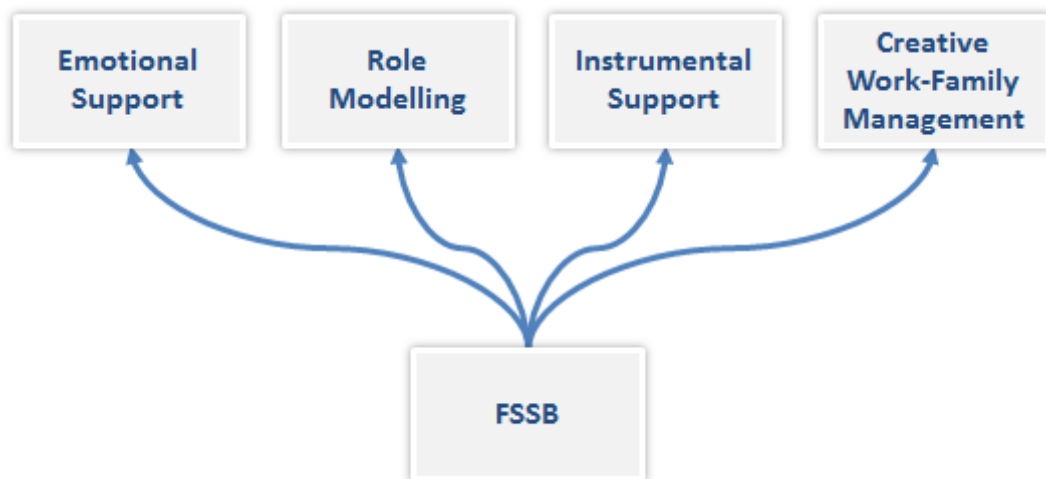

Figure 3. Construct of family supportive supervisor behaviours (Hammer et al., 2009)

support, responding to demands of employees and accommodating to their needs if approached on a daily basis. Creative work family management however focuses on a more proactive way of dealing with flexibility, management initiated and creative in finding new ways to work and facilitate employee effectiveness. Through their framework measure Hammer et al. (2009) show that family supportive supervisor behaviours are distinct from general supervisor support and clarify what behaviours are viewed as family supportive. Interestingly, they draw attention to supervisor support as independent of work culture or formal policies and therefore establish it as a unique construct allowing the attention to be drawn to the fact that it is the managers that manage how policies are implemented in practice and this therefore needs to be examined as a separate construct.

Kossek, Barber and Winters's (1999) study on managers show that peer use of flexible work arrangements has a significant social influence on other managers, supporting the use of flexible work arrangements, more so than gender, family situation, level or other well-known demographic factors. They therefore suggest that if managers themselves take up flexible work schedules they become change agents and role models and help in removing the social barriers hindering the implementation of flexibility, which is consistent with the role model behaviours described by Hammer et al. (2009). Kossek et al. (1999) also showed that the more experience managers had with their employees working flexible, the more likely they were to work flexible themselves. This reinforces that the more experimental managers are with allowing flexibility for their subordinates and preferably even trying it out themselves, the more support there will be for it and eventually a culture change can occur. Allen (2001) found that the relationship between supportive supervisors and work-family conflict was mediated by perceptions of a family supportive organisation. Allen however also found that the relationship between supportive supervisors and job attitudes was only partially mediated by a supportive environment. This can be attributed to the importance of supervisors in deciding flexibility options available to employees as well as their direct and meaningful influence on the employees experience, attitudes and perceptions of the work environment and the organisation. Viewing it from the perspective of the human ecology theory, introduced in the chapter on the role of organisational culture (2.1.3.1), shows that supervisor support is related to how

individuals perceive the success of flexible work arrangements in balancing work and family (Lee, MacDermid, Williams et al., 2002).

2.1.4.2   Challenges in managing the employer-employee relationship

However, supervisors often face challenges when managing part-time workers, particularly when the norm of the organisation is working long hours and part-time workers are a minority. Supervisors don't necessarily adjust their expectations to the part-time status, don't consider part-time workers as serious and committed workers and therefore make less use of them than other employees and overlook them when it comes to promotion or career developments (Edwards and Robinson, 2000; Lewis, 2001). There is therefore no doubt that beyond the supervisor behaviours described before attention should also be given to the employer-employee relationship being a two way street, where both parties have their own opinions and attitudes, which affect one another. Employers and employees are interested in flexibility for a variety of reasons, which may sometimes overlap, sometimes conflict and sometimes be in-line with each other. Based on this, a relationship is built between the employer and employee that at the extremes is more suiting to one party then the other but ideally is based on a mutual consensus (Reilly, 2001).

Reilly (2001) distinguished between four types of employer-employee relationships. The first one is employer-favoured, when there is no account taken of the needs of the employee such as, for example, in the case of outsourcing and imposing work changes on employees. The second one is employee-favoured flexibility, somewhat less common and mostly happens when individuals for some reason reach a strong bargaining position due to labour supply shortages or other reasons. The third type is then incidental flexibility where there may be benefits to both parties but the arrangement has more come about by accident then deliberate decision. This is, for example, the case when new legislation is imposed on organisations, giving employees more rights to negotiate flexibility. Incidental flexibility may also come about as a by-product of a cost-cutting strategy in an organisation, such as an organisation reducing accommodation space therefore giving employees the option to work from home. Mutual flexibility is then the fourth type of flexibility and the ideal state within an organisation where there is a conscious decision made on part of the employer to meet the employees' needs as

well as their own. When mutual flexibility is present it goes beyond the economic aspect and concerns itself with the social and psychological well-being of an employee. When adopting mutual flexibility emphasis is put on letting the employees voice be heard through formal or informal channels and trust is seen as a necessary prerequisite in the partnership between the employer and employee. People are involved in shaping their work and their needs are taken care of in a mutual way.

Regardless of power imbalances that may exist, recognising and dealing with the tensions between employers and employees perceived needs with regards to work–life policies is important, in order to take the necessary step towards finding mutually beneficial solutions (Kossek et al., 2010).

2.1.5 Role of colleagues

Colleagues constitute a significant part of employees' experience of their work and their work environment. Colleague support has been shown to lead to higher job satisfaction and to be negatively related to stress and work-to-family conflict (e.g. Ducharme and Martin, 2000; Thompson and Prottas, 2005). Research has also shown that employees are often reluctant to change working patterns because of the impact on their colleagues. The support or disapproval of colleagues, who often have to pick up the work from their flexible working colleagues, can in fact reduce the sense of entitlement to flexibility, as flexible working employees don't want to overburden their colleagues (Lewis and Den Dulk, 2008).

There are two theories in particular that explain the colleague relationship. Firstly, equity theory (Adams, 1965) predicts how individuals manage relationships with others. They assess the input/output ratio of themselves in comparison with others and if they feel an inequity is present they experience distress and frustration whereas perceived equity upholds positive feelings. The more distress an individual then feels, the harder he will work to restore it through changing his own inputs or outcomes, changing the comparison other or terminating the relationship. Individuals therefore constantly compare themselves to their colleagues and make their own conclusions on whether the treatment they are receiving is fair or not. The second theory that can be used to explain the colleague relationship is the human ecology theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which was already introduced in the chapter on the role of organisational culture

(2.1.3.1) and role of management (2.1.4.1), and focuses on that individual decisions and choice is drawn on adaption to the environment that a person finds himself in.

The literature shows support for both theories. Firstly, the application of equity theory can, for example, be seen in organisations where flexible working options are directed mainly to working parents. This can create a perceived inequity among the group of employees and become an issue and reduce the sense of entitlement to take up flexibility among the parents. The support from partners at work therefore significantly impacts the intention and decision of employees to take up flexible work arrangements (Almer, Cohen and Single, 2003; Lewis, 2003). Another example of the principles of equity theory in practice is when employees feel they need to do extra work to cover for their colleagues who work flexible. This can lead to low morale, resentment and impact work outcomes such as satisfaction as these employees feel they are unfairly treated and disadvantaged compared to their flexible colleagues (Lee, MacDermid, Williams et al., 2002; Lewis, 2003). Skinner (1999) identified, in a study on part-time work in a large public organisation, that in spite of a sense of a strong commitment to equal opportunities within the organisation, managers expressed concerns over full-time worker's attitude towards part-time staff. In that sense full-timers expressed some irritation and jealousy towards part-time employees and perceived them as not working as hard and never being there when needed, ignoring the fact that in reality more than half of the part-timers in this case would take work home with them or worked extra hours every week. Conflict with colleagues has also been shown to reduce employees' ability to balance work and personal life (Berg et al., 2003).

Lambert et al. (2008), who examined flexible work arrangements in the context of human ecology theory, found that predictors of use of flexible work arrangements were in most cases at the workplace: tenure, perception of colleague use, hours worked and supervisory responsibility. The most important was colleague use, possibly because seeing others working flexible means that you should be okay doing it as well. They also noted that the longer a person had worked for the company the more comfortable they would be working flexible which can be attributable to having more confidence with their work or in their work environment. Individual work effort has furthermore been linked to work group norms. An organisation may provide the work group with good

wages and laid-back work rules but expect that high effort norms be established in return. An equal exchange is ascertained between the members of the work group and the organisation, as employees value fair treatment both for themselves and the members of their work group (Akerlof, 1982). Line of work also seems to have an impact on employee perceptions. Higgins, Duxbury and Johnson (2000) differentiated between earners, women who work part time in clerical, administrative, production or retail jobs, and career women, women who work part time in managerial or professional jobs. He showed that career women are more likely to focus on productivity, getting more done in less time, while earners look at their work as more of a social interaction point, a place to have time off from domestic responsibilities for a while. Both groups felt they had too heavy workload and noted that one of their biggest problems resulting from their arrangement was lack of communication with colleagues. However, career women more commonly reported a stigma from their colleagues, that they were looked upon as uncommitted and that they would not be able to advance in the company while working part time. Higgins therefore concluded that working part time helped earners achieve a balance between work and family while career women struggled with intensification of work and high family-to-work interference. He connected this to the fact that career women mostly negotiate part time work while working in a full-time culture, while earners work in an organisational culture where their schedule is accepted and common. This therefore links back to colleagues as a part of the organisational culture, which is then the environment that employees have to adapt to, as described in the human ecology theory.

It is therefore evident that part-timers or other flexible workers often face the challenge of convincing their colleagues that their arrangement holds up and they are not just getting special privileges. In achieving this it is important to have someone in a senior management position that believes in part-time work. Supporters in senior management are ready to stand up for the part-time worker and defend his or hers working arrangement (Corwin, Lawrence and Frost, 2001). Another option is to adjust norms in the group of employees so that understandings of fair work contributions are negotiated and communicated in order to reduce the sense of inequity amongst the employees. Work contributions are therefore redefined to focus on norms for flexibility, that inputs are not measured in visible time at the office for example or contribute in an

identical way as in same place, same time and same workload for all (Van Dyne, Kossek and Lobel, 2007). Colleagues need to be educated on the subject and these arrangements be promoted thoroughly throughout the organisation in order to show their acceptance instead of it being simply put up on a website somewhere (Almer et al., 2003).

2.2 Outcomes of flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements have an impact on employees and employee outcomes in different aspects. They become a part of the employment relationship between an employee and his or her employer. The following chapters discuss outcomes from flexible work arrangements. Firstly, theories on the impact of flexible work arrangements on employee's personal lives through adjustment of the work-family life conflict are discussed. Second, theories on work effort are reviewed and how flexible work arrangements can lead to increased efficiency and work intensification.

2.2.1 Work-life balance

The interaction between personal and professional lives is a topic that has been extensively studied in the last years. Research is mostly focused on spillover or enrichment between the two domains suggesting that feelings or behaviours in one domain affect behaviours or feelings in the other domain. The underlying premise is therefore that the two domains are in conflict. This is based on role theory, which stipulates that responsibilities from different domains compete for a limited amount of time, energy and mental resources of an individual, which creates a role strain (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Through the perspective of role theory the work-family interface is seen as a continuum of conflict between work and family, ranging from little to much conflict, and that positive aspects of work and family reduce this conflict and its consequences (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). According to this theory participation in one role is therefore more difficult because of participation in the other role. The literature suggests that there are two types of role strain associated with work-family conflict: overload, when the demands of time and energy of performing the two roles simultaneously are simply too great to handle, and interference when the demands of the two roles are conflicting to the extent that it is difficult to perform them both adequately. However, the literature also provides evidence for role enhancement

theory, which takes a more positive stance to the work-family balance concept and is drawn upon that aspects from one role provide resources that facilitate the other role, therefore that participation in one role enhances participation in the other and vice versa. This can, for example, happen when work is going well and the subsequent good mood spills over to the family sphere or when private life enjoyment helps employees to deal with the stress of work, therefore provide a sort of buffer (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Thompson and Prottas, 2005; Voydanoff, 2002).

The perception of conflict, balance or enhancement between work and family is then the result of weighing out the gains and demands of the work and family roles with the ultimate goal to achieve balance between the two roles. Pittman (1994) defined this balance as work-family fit and in terms of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964); that work-family balance can be conceived as acceptability of a multidimensional exchange between the two domains. It implies that a certain degree of comfort and satisfaction is achieved with the balance and exchange between the two spheres (Pittman, 1994; Voydanoff, 2002). Work-family life balance is then achieved when individuals perceive that they have reached a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of the work and family spheres. It is influenced by a variety of contextual factors such as type of work and household responsibilities (Higgins et al., 2000).

In line with the above theories of role strain and role enhancement the work-family literature differentiates between, on one hand, work-family conflict (work interfering with family life) and family-work conflict (family life interfering with work) and work-family enhancement (work enhancing family life) and family-work enhancement (family life enhancing work) (Kelly et al., 2008). Spillover between work and family can lead to either negative outcomes such as stress and anxiety, absenteeism, less work and life satisfaction and interference with the other domain (e.g. Anderson, Coffey and Byerly, 2002; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux and Brinley, 2005) or positive outcomes such as enhancement and enrichment (e.g. Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). Enrichment and enhancement have, in fact, been attributed to employees feeling that the organisation cares about employees' ability to balance work and private life. Organisations are then affected through these individual outcomes as, for example, increased satisfaction can lead to increased commitment, loyalty and attachment. This leads to organisational

strategies that are designed to reduce this role conflict and produce positive outcomes for organisations (Kelly et al., 2008; McNall et al., 2010; Mickel and Dallimore, 2009).

Work-life policies such as flexible work arrangements are adaptive tools to deal with this role conflict and minimise it. From the perspective of stress theory they can be seen as coping strategies, responses or behaviours at both individual and family level. As predicted by human ecology theory the work-family experience, whether there is a conflict, enhancement or balance, reflects the sufficiency of fit achieved by an employee and his or her environment (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Voydanoff, 2002). The results of Warren's (2004) analysis on women in part-time jobs revealed, through examination of the leisure and financial domains in particular, that when it comes to satisfaction with leisure lives there was not much difference between full-time employees and part-time employees except for financially part-timers being disadvantaged. He therefore suggests that overall work-life satisfaction needs to be looked at in a broader perspective incorporating multiple aspects of life as they are all interconnected.

Mickel and Dallimore (2009) developed five strategies to manage the tension between personal and professional lives enacted by individuals. The most important one they found to be having a guiding philosophy, suggesting how important it is for an individual to know their priorities and their guiding philosophy in life. Engaging in on-going practice was a second strategy that emphasises the maintaining and enforcing of certain boundaries that help manage work-life balance and can be enacted through e.g. not working after a certain hour, exercise every day or spend more time with the family. A third strategy was to perceive trade-offs as not giving up anything of value or importance and what employees had to give up was a fair trade-off or investment. Applying this strategy, employees reduce the value of what they gave up and eliminate feelings of loss and it can be seen as a rationalising technique on their behalf to justify their decisions. A fourth strategy is to apply what Mickel and Dallimore call a present orientation. A present orientation refers to giving up potential gain in the future for benefits right now, i.e. career developments that are given up in order to spend more time with the family in the present. The last strategy is actually the opposite of the fourth one: future orientation. When applying future orientation an individual opts to

give something up right now in order to gain something in the future such as going back to school to get a better education in order to get a better job in the future.

2.2.2 Work effort

Work effort is determined by various contextual and individual factors, but is also greatly determined by the relationship between the employee and the employer. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) defines employee behaviour in terms of economic or social exchange. In an economic exchange the focus is on the explicit conditions of employment as a formal contract of transactions, thus that an individual exchanges his work effort and gets money or other concrete rewards in return. It considers exchange as a business deal much like purchasing a good in a shop. Social exchange, however, refers to relationships that involve unspecified future obligations. It is built on trust that both parties will fulfil their obligations in the long run, although these obligations are often unspecified, and it allows for reciprocation in form of voluntary effort or extra role acts. Social exchange explains how, when employees feel their efforts are reasonably rewarded by their organisation, they are willing to respond by resorting to innovative activities that go beyond their predetermined responsibilities or contract (Janssen, 2000). As employers are interested in getting their employees to put forward more effort then needed just to keep the job, they must induce and invest in an employee through a certain amount of commitment and trust in order to be rewarded with greater employee effort (Konrad and Mangel, 2000). This investment is often done through offering flexible work arrangements.

The psychological contract is another concept often used as a framework to explain the employment relationship and the attitudes and behaviours of an employee, in which greater commitment and effort is gained through providing employees with a certain degree of trust and security (Green, 2004). The psychological contract has been defined as beliefs of an individual concerning the terms and conditions of an exchange relationship with another party (Rousseau, 1989). It incorporates an employee's perceptions of the explicit and implicit promises regarding the exchange of employee contributions such as effort or loyalty for organisational inducements such as pay or promotion (Conway and Briner, 2002). When organisations show care for employees circumstances and wellbeing they impact the psychological contract. Scandura and

Lankau (1997) explain how this happens in four ways. Firstly, the psychological contract is affected through how the employees perceive the flexibility options of an organisation as a showing of the organisation's concern of the balance between work and family. Second, employees feel they have more control over their lives as they can work times that are more suited to their circumstances. Third, employees have a more positive perception of their employer which impacts commitment and satisfaction. Lastly, as people like to compare themselves to others, employees with flexibility options might compare themselves to peers in other organisations or in other jobs, who do not have flexibility options. This can lead to an increase in value of the psychological contract with their organisation, as the employees feel fortunate to be able to work flexible.

2.2.2.1   Achieving increased productivity

In order to better understand the impact of flexible work arrangements on effort and productivity a clarification of terminology is needed. The notion of work effort is closely related to that of productivity as well as that of motivation and a distinction needs to be made between them. While motivation refers to "I want to work hard" effort refers to "I have worked hard and put a lot of energy into my work". Performance is then the output of the work done (Christen, Iyer and Soberman, 2006). Employee productivity is then defined as total output (performance) divided by employee inputs (effort) (Samuelson and Nordhaus, 1989). Productivity indicates to what extent employees are efficiently creating output.

Introducing flexible work arrangements in an organisation can lead to improved productivity for the organisation. This has been shown to happen when flexible policies are perceived as usable; that if employees find work-family policies to be accessible and utilisable and they feel they are welcome to use them then they can lead to increased perceived productivity. This refers to both formal and informal work-family policies (Burud and Tumolo, 2004; Eaton, 2003). Additionally, Eaton (2003) discovered that control over one's time, pace of work and general flexibility is positively related to increased employee commitment and productivity. This emphasises how accessible work-family programs and work structures together with control over the place and pace of work are thus equally important in achieving increased productivity. Lambert

(2000) came to a similar conclusion when he found that the more useful and valuable workers found work-life benefits available to them, the more they would reciprocate with helping others at work and the more likely they were to submit suggestions for product and process improvement. Furthermore, as implied by the concept of the psychological contract, if flexible work arrangements are widespread and common in the organisation, employees place a different value on them then in organisations where they are less common. Employee perceptions on whether and to what extent organisations care about them and whether they perceive their flexible work arrangement as a right or as a privilege affect employee behaviour. Lambert's findings support that if employers take positive actions employees will be driven to react in beneficial ways as social exchange theory as applied to the workplace, suggests.

The composition of the workforce also has an impact on the potential productivity gain from flexible work arrangements. Konrad and Mangel (2000) came to the conclusion that organisations do experience increased productivity from flexible working arrangements but the relationship is stronger in firms employing women and/or professionals. The reasons for this might lie with women experiencing more work-life conflict and interference than men do whereas professionals are scarce and important to the organisation, have more autonomy due to the nature of their work and often have childcare obligations during the years of their peak productivity. Hence, although individual job productivity and favourable attitudes can be enhanced by introducing greater flexibility, it is important that these programs are thought out and fitting with the needs of both employees and the organisation in order for them to work properly (Kossek and Ozeki, 1999).

A common way to encourage employees to work more efficiently, frequently brought up in the literature, is to implement innovative or also sometimes called new work practices. Innovative work practices is a wide concept and can include different elements such as increased employee involvement, increased flexibility, cooperation and worker participation. The basis of innovative work practices lies with increased autonomy and self-regulation. Likewise, it can involve generation, promotion or realisation of ideas that allow for modification of oneself as an employee or the work environment, through i.e. different work methods, with the goal to improve the fit with

job demands. When managers adopt these kind of work arrangements that encourage and reward employee involvement and that enable them to work smarter through greater empowerment, but without added pressure, positive outcomes are more likely to be seen and employee well-being to be enhanced. The employment relationship becomes more satisfying for employees when their experience of knowledge, information, rewards and power increase. This is however also dependant on contextual elements (Janssen, 2000; Macky and Boxall, 2008).

Innovative work practices have been shown to improve business productivity and perceived performance. This happens when work-family initiatives are altered and implemented at multiple levels in an organisation with the goal of increased employee participation and increased flexibility in the design of work. It is therefore in line with the principles of systems thinking (Kochan et al., 1996; Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000). Similarly, innovative work practices such as job rotation, teamwork and increased autonomy, have been shown to lead to an increased voluntary effort from employees and also to affect involuntary effort, in particular through involuntary mental effort. Therefore, these work practices seem to increase motivation as they give employees more opportunities to take responsibility and be active participators in their organisation. Additionally, they appear to put more pressure on employees to use their cognitive skills to learn, communicate and solve problems (Ollo-Lopez, Bayo-Moriones and Larraza-Kintana, 2010).

2.2.3 Work intensification

Work intensification refers to the effort that employees put into their jobs during their work time and may therefore be defined as increased work effort by an employee (Burchell, 2002). Whereas increased productivity refers to producing output more efficiently without necessarily altering any inputs, intensification means that more input is put into work thereby potentially leading to increased productivity. Work intensification affects employees at all levels and regardless of whether they work flexible or not. Increased efficiency drives due to global competition and pressures have the effect that fewer people must accomplish the same amount of work and jobs are being reorganised and enlarged to include more functions. Work intensification has increased in proportion with the introduction of new location independent technology

such as iPhones, BlackBerries and wireless laptops, allowing people to access work at any time and from any place. More importantly, in many occasions, what is possible has become what is expected and employees with access to this technology feel they need to make use of it in order to demonstrate commitment to their career and their company. Because of these technologies high effort employees who take work home with them can become more productive and the productivity potential of work done outside office hours is therefore raised. In that sense organisations manage to pass increased competitive pressures on to their employees and often find ways to encourage and manipulate employees to put in more voluntary effort and make them feel obliged to work harder to improve performance. Employees have also been shown to feel that they will not get everything done regardless of how much work they do. Even if employees are not working more hours they still might feel like their work is making greater demands on them and therefore impacting their quality of life (Gambles et al., 2006; Green, 2004; Johnson, Shannon, Richman, 2008; Lewis et al., 2009; Roberts, 2007).

Research has also shown that those working reduced hours report that they tend to accomplish as much as they had in full-time work, through an intensification of work (Kelliher and Anderson, 2009; Lewis, 2001). This is consistent with the findings of Johnson et al. (2008) who found that full-time employees feel they are spending 15-20% time on low-value work that does not contribute to their or the company's success and they feel is a waste of time. This suggests that cutting back on hours will not affect productivity.

Kelliher and Anderson (2009) present three ways that intensification of work takes place in an organisation. Firstly, work intensification can be imposed when workloads are not adjusted to an employee reducing their hours. Lewis and Den Dulk (2008) found that managers and colleagues would often support reduced hours in principle but workloads and expectations were not reduced proportionally to the reduction in work hours, or work was redistributed to colleagues, resulting in overload for part-time workers and their colleagues. This would occur even in national contexts where policy and cultural support for part-time work was present. In fact, the importance of context becomes relevant once again as flexible workers may often experience the failure to

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complete particular work in time to be a personal shortcoming rather than a result of excessive workloads, as they internalise the performance needs put forward by their employer. They therefore fail to blame the organisational norms and workloads for the resulting stress and anxiety (Gambles et al., 2006).

Second, work intensification can be enabled because the flexible work arrangements facilitate working harder. This can happen, for example, when employees work from home and have fewer distractions and interruptions then at the workplace or employees have more energy to put into their work because they work fewer hours. Kelliher and Anderson (2009) found that flexible workers making use of telework felt they were able to work more efficiently when away from workplace distractions. They would make better use of time else spent in commuting to work in actually getting things done when able to work from home. This was explained by the fact that people would exercise greater intensive effort and be able to focus more on their work when working away from workplace distractions. Fewer meetings and interruptions indeed seem to be the main reasons for greater productivity of telecommuters. However Belanger (1999) found that this was not necessarily followed by better performance, which has more to do with the quality of the work done and whether it is done on time. Kelliher and Anderson (2009) also noted that part-time employees had more energy to do their work because of not working full time. However, in some cases, this would lead to increased stress because of the pressure to complete their workload in the time they had on hand.

Third, work intensification can come about as an act of exchange between an employee and employer. In that sense an employee might exercise more effort because he is thankful to his employer to be allowed flexibility; he is more motivated and feels more committed to the organisation (Kelliher and Anderson, 2009). This is in line with principles of social exchange theory, discussed in the chapter on work effort (2.2.2). Kelly et al. (2008) found that increased productivity can be a by-product of work–family policies because employees might put more effort in, in exchange for working in a more supportive environment. An employee can then be more productive and influence business outcomes by increasing revenues.

Research has shown that successful part-timers manage to create a business case for their schedule through redesigning of their work so that they, in effect, end up doing the same amount of work but more efficiently. Those part-timers that achieve this heightened productivity have also been shown to be highly motivated, committed self-starters with a proven record of squeezing more work into less time (Corwin et al., 2001). The capacities that employees bring to their job also affect the effort they exert. Better-qualified employees, who are better able to contribute to their organisation and are aware of this, are more likely to exert more effort than the bare minimum required (Kmec and Gorman, 2010).

Work intensification is a double-edged sword. It can lead to productivity gains for organisations but research has shown that managerial approaches that intensify work are likely to have negative outcomes for employees such as stress, increased work-family tension and declined job satisfaction and overall well-being (Burchell, 2002; Green, 2004). Work intensification also raises the issue of equity. If part-time workers work less hours and get less pay while still producing the same output then it is possible to say that full-time workers are being paid more to work less efficiently (Lewis, 2001).

2.3 Role of individual factors

Even if different contexts can lead to different outcomes the role of individual factors should not be underestimated. The following chapter gives insight into how different personalities respond and react differently to various contextual factors, as well as have different attitudes towards work. It goes on to review theories on motivation and presents a model on motivation, which recognises the role of individual differences. It furthermore reviews how employees' gender and diverse life situations also incite different reactions to work.

2.3.1 Personality

Individuals have different values, ethics, background and characteristics and how they perceive or react to their environment is based on these individual differences. The same applies to how they respond to their work, how they experience their supervisor, and colleagues and how they react to pressure and expectations. Furthermore, these factors also influence motivation. The question is therefore not how people are

motivated but who is motivated by what. In order to understand individual differences better in this context an understanding of personality is needed.

The Five-Factor Personality model is the most common and widely used structure of personality in our time and was first introduced in 1961 by Tupes and Christal. It consists of five different personality traits: Neuroticism, which refers to the inclination to show poor emotional adjustment in the form of anxiety, stress and depression, extraversion which refers to the inclination to being dominant, outgoing and positive. Openness to experience represents creativeness, flexibility, curiosity and being unconventional while agreeableness refers of propensities to be gentle, kind, trusting and loving. Lastly, conscientious individuals are achievement-oriented and reliable, organised and calculated (Judge and Ilies, 2002).

2.3.1.1   Impact of personality traits on work outcomes

Neuroticism and conscientiousness have been shown to predict performance motivation more than the other factors. This might happen because personality affects performance mostly through motivation and these two traits are the best predictors of performance. However, neuroticism, referring to traits such as stress and anxiety, tends to be a stronger correlate of performance motivation while conscientiousness, referring to being dependable and organised, is a stronger correlate of job performance. This can be explained by how conscientiousness affects performance through more ways while neuroticism mainly affects it through motivation. This specifically happens as the traits of conscientious individuals, such as being organised and decisive, in themselves may give these individuals a performance advantage in many jobs (Judge and Ilies, 2002).

Wayne, Musisca and Fleeson (2004) studied whether the five personality traits predict conflict and/or facilitation/enhancement between work and family roles. They found that personality traits had significant influence on how conflict or facilitation was experienced. Neuroticism was related to both work-family conflict as well as family-work conflict whereas extroversion was related to both work-family facilitation as well as family-work facilitation. Persons high in conscientiousness experienced less family-work conflict as well as less work-family conflict which might be explained by the fact that because these individuals are so organised and able to complete their tasks in less time, they are also better able to relax at home or vice versa. Wayne et al. (2004) also

looked into the relationship between these traits and work outcomes such as job satisfaction or work effort. They specifically found two relationships; individuals higher in conscientiousness exercised more effort and individuals high in neuroticism were less satisfied with their jobs.

In order for flexible work arrangements to be successful and lead to perceived employee effectiveness the importance of acknowledging personality traits therefore seems apparent. In fact numerous research show the importance of personal characteristics. It has been shown that the success of a telecommuting program depends on finding trustworthy employees with the right work ethic, who possess enough loyalty, self-discipline and motivation and have the need to set their own work schedules. Furthermore, they should possess certain traits such as the ability to work independently with little supervision, honesty, resourcefulness, initiative and dependability. Employees need to be familiar with the organisational culture and norms in order to function within the organisation without being present at the office (Lomo-David and Griffin, 2001; Olmsted and Smith, 1994). Kearns and Gardiner (2007) found that having a clear purpose for one's career does not only boost morale but is also the most important behaviour to influence perceived employee effectiveness. Planning and prioritising was also found to be important; that those who plan their time and prioritise their tasks feel they are more effective. However, they found avoiding interruptions and being organised not to have any significant influence on effectiveness. Furthermore, a research on the success of part-time arrangements revealed that 8 of the top 15 factors contributing to the success of the arrangements, as identified by the respondents, were individual characteristics. These included a strong performance record, flexibility in responding to work demands, commitment and hard-working nature and an organised and concentrated work-style. The other 7 factors that contributed to the success of the reduced-load arrangement were then contextual, therefore related to the work environment of the employee (Lee, MacDermid, Williams et al., 2002).

Seen from the perspective of human ecology theory different personality characteristics, such as temperament characteristics, bring out different responses from the social and organisational environment and impact interactions between the employee and individuals in his work environment. Individual characteristics can

therefore be regarded as moderators of work-family policies such as flexible work arrangements and the subsequent outcomes (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

2.3.2 Motivation

Being motivated means being energised or activated to do something while unmotivated people have no inspiration to act. Motivation can vary not only in level but also in orientation, referring to what underlying attitudes, reasons and goals give rise to act.

Self-determination theory differentiates between behaviours that are originated from one's sense of self and are accompanied by feelings of freedom and autonomy and those who are not. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are the two terms used to distinguish the orientation of motivation. When an individual is intrinsically motivated, he or she will do their job because it is gratifying and interesting as the individual gets something out of it such as enjoyment and personal satisfaction. When a person is extrinsically motivated, he or she does the job because it has some instrumental value such as the work being a means of obtaining an income or staying at school because ultimately studying will help you get a job (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The two can sometimes conflict with each other especially can extrinsic rewards undermine an individual's intrinsic motivation (Bénabou and Tirole, 2003).

It has been shown that employees believe that their organisation is helping them balance their work and family lives if they experience high intrinsic rewards from their jobs (Berg et al., 2003). Autonomy has also been connected to intrinsic motivation in the sense that by allowing employees more autonomy they will feel more intrinsically motivated. However, it is noteworthy to mention that an individual will not be intrinsically motivated to do something unless he possesses interest in the activity; it has some appeal, value or is a challenge to the individual (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Internal motivation has furthermore been shown to be achievable in three ways. Firstly, the employee should feel personally responsible for the outcomes of his job. Second, the employee should experience work as meaningful so that his contribution is affecting the organisation. Third, the employee should be aware of how effective he is in turning effort into performance (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Richard Walton (1979) examined how productivity gains can be achieved from work innovations and the

motivation that drives employees. He notes that even if pay dominates the relationship to the job, an employee remains responsive to playing an innovative and creative role in the production process. He also makes a note of how important it is to create balance for an employee to both find meaning in the workplace as well as minimising the time spent there.

Flexible work arrangements can be used as an extrinsic motivator especially when employees experience a lot of stress at their work. However, when people receive pleasure from their work itself, they are highly intrinsically motivated and flexible work arrangements, which can then be seen as an extrinsic motivator, are of little importance. Flexible work arrangements that allow increased control over one's schedule can consequently be of use to organisations when offered to reduce work-related stress (Barney and Elias, 2010).

The Big-Five personality traits have furthermore been linked to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Individuals high in openness to experience rate the importance of intrinsic motivation higher as well as meaningfulness at work and possibilities of responsibility in terms of autonomy. Individuals high in conscientiousness and extroversion have also been shown to rate intrinsic motivational factors as important (Bipp, 2010).

2.3.2.1   An integrated model of motivation

Amar (2004) argued that due to the changes in technology and work practices in the last decades a new outlook on motivation is needed. He introduced an integrated model of work motivation of knowledge workers. Amar firstly distinguishes between five motivating behaviour drivers. The sociological driver is based on the fact that work is not only about work but also about the people around you and work is also about satisfying one's social needs. Work sociology has also been influenced by the change in demographics with regards to the increased attention on work-life balance issues and family. The second driver is the psychological driver, based on human behaviour that is built on positive reinforcement, mainly of a financial nature. It implies that with the right incentive employees will do their best for their employers. This is, however, changing as employees now look for more self-fulfilment through their work and not only financial rewards. The third driver, the generational driver, refers to the difference between generations of workers, and how different approaches need to be taken to

motivate them. The fourth driver is concerned with the knowledge worker and the evolution of technology in the last years, which has revolutionised work and workplaces. It requires a new understanding of designing and managing jobs from a motivational point of view. The fifth driver is then cultural referring, in particular, to the spread of globalisation in the last years. It is concerned with the increased movement of people and that employees might have colleagues of different nationalities who have various different cultural values. Furthermore employees can be located in one country but have their supervisor and colleagues in another one, due to the technological telecommuting possibilities of today.

Amar then goes on to define antecedents of motivations, which are factors that will excite and energise employees and work through their mind to motivate them to innovate. He classifies them into three parts, based on their source. The first, job antecedents, is concerned with the pleasure of executing one's job, the job content and design. Job antecedents can be organisation-wide, thus attractive to all employees, only attractive to certain employees or organisations can allow an employee the flexibility to load his job with antecedents significant to him. The most important job antecedent is to design a job in such a way that the employee is so enthusiastic about it that he does not want to stop working. Another job antecedent is fit with family requirements, therefore to design a job so that it fits with family responsibilities. This can be done by providing flexibility. The second antecedent of motivations is concerned with outcomes; contingent or non-contingent rewards from a job. This can therefore refer to financial rewards but also non-financial such as work-life benefits or training opportunities. The third source of motivation antecedents is the organisational system, which refers to the work environment, system, practices, culture, policies, economic situation etc., in short all organisational factors that have a direct or indirect impact on employees and their work. If an organisation manages to create an environment where employees are content, feel free in and feel they belong in they will be motivated and more likely to innovate. This can, for example, be done by reducing control on employees, therefore granting them more autonomy or also through sharing responsibility with employees so that they have a chance to participate in the management of the organisation.

Amar (2004) then connects all these elements into an innovation motivation antecedents model shown in Figure 4. It conceptualises motivating behaviour drives, categorises the antecedents of the desired motivation and provides guidance for management to load them into sources of motivation from where motivation will emerge. The emphasis is that the environment is dynamic and in order to keep employees motivated, organisations need to put in deliberate effort to study the drivers of their employees motivating behaviour, react to them by creating and adjusting reactive motivation antecedents and load them into the major sources of motivation.
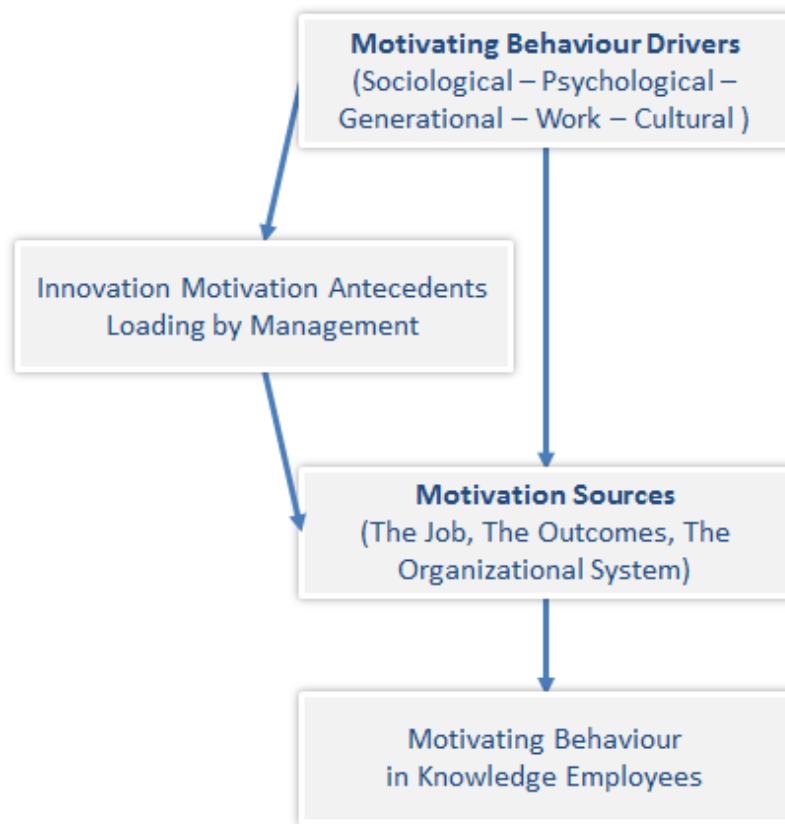
Figure 4. An integrated model of motivation based on systems thinking (Amar, 2004)

2.3.3 Gender and life situation

Not only individual characteristics and motivational orientation influence how people experience their work and their work arrangements. The choice of an employee to participate in flexible work arrangements also depends on elements in their private life, such as children or household responsibilities. Gender has also been shown to be a consistent predictor of past, current and future use of all kinds of flexible work arrangements. In general more women work part time than men and with higher

proportions of women working part time in a country the trend shows that fewer of them would like to move to full-time. Part-time women also report more satisfaction with their work-life balance then full-timers. Men, on the other hand, have been found to be much less likely to take up part-time work or other flexible work arrangements, which has been attributed to the pressure in society to stay on the fast career track. The disadvantage of these gender differences are that part-time employment may enhance gender inequality and occupational segregation as part-timers receive less pay and tend to be restricted to lower status occupations (Almer et al., 2003; Evans, 2002; Kossek et al., 1999).

The good provider role of men who, after having children, tend to increase their work effort in order to better provide for the family has been challenged in recent years. More men choose to share the nurturing role with their wives and sacrifice work time in order to spend more time with their family (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 2000). Regardless of this the male model of work, where no personal commitments interfere with the continuum of long workdays visually spent in the office, is still providing a barrier to a fully supportive work culture. Flexible work arrangements are linked to women, especially part-time work, and often seen as a benefit or a favour instead of entitlements. Employees who opt to work part time are aware of the disadvantages that come with it, such as fewer benefits, less career advancement possibilities etc. and see this as the price that has to be paid for working less than the socially constructed norm of full-time or more (Lewis, 2001).

The same kind of gender segregation appears among managers. Female managers are considerably more likely to work part time and make use of leaves then male managers. Furthermore, the availability of flexibility policies has more effect on attitudes of women managers then men. They are more sensitive and appreciative of the availability of these policies while no difference has been registered among male managers. The presence of children under the age of 18 has also been found to moderate the relationship between flexible arrangements and outcome variables such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Employees with a family are more likely to take up flexible work arrangements than those that don't have one, which indicates that spouse approval and increased family time are important factors in their

decision. This shows how policies on flexible work arrangements are more relevant for employees with children (Kossek et al., 1999; Scandura and Lankau, 1997).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecology theory applies in this context as well. The main reasons individuals choose to work reduced hours have been shown to be to spend more time with their family and create a work–family balance. Through part-time work individuals manage to adjust to their situation and better meet their personal needs (Lee, MacDermid, and Buck, 2002). In line with the work-family spillover or enhancement literature discussed before, the personal environment then also shapes how an individual perceives his work. Factors at home, such as spouse disagreement and family support or criticism, can easily affect the work sphere (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). As individuals adapt to their environment at work and at home, flexible work arrangements are used as an adaptive strategy and choice made by employees to adjust to their environment. Adaptive strategies however fail to serve their purpose when they are viewed as a necessary yet not desired adjustments to work-family conflict and therefore implemented without adaptation of the overlapping family or individual goals. These goals or strategies are furthermore restricted by diverse factors, such as availability and characteristics of jobs, societal norms and economical factors (Voydanoff, 2002). This means that even if an individual would want to work less hours, or even less hours then he already does, he might encounter hindrances to that such as the nature of the job not allowing it, financially he cannot afford it or even that he would encounter societal judgement if he would do it. Furthermore, Lambert et al. (2008) also found that personal lifestyle preferences, referring to a number of personal reasons why an employee would take up flexible working, had a significant effect on willingness to use flexible work arrangements. The explanation for this probably lies in that individuals with diverse lifestyle preferences choose to work flexible to gain more control over their environment especially when not in management positions as they have less control over their time, whereas supervisors already have significant autonomy.

It is clear that an employee's family situation and gender is in most cases what motivates him to take-up flexible working. As suggested by Amar's (2004) model introduced in the chapter on motivation (2.3.2.1), if organisations manage to

accommodate to the needs of their employees based on their individual family and life situation and provide the antecedents to load into the motivation source, they can motivate their employees to do their jobs better.

3 Method

This study examines flexible working arrangements with particular emphasis on part-time work and was based on the following research questions: Do flexible working arrangements impact the way you work and if so in what way? What elements play a role in how you perceive your flexible working arrangement? It was designed as a qualitative research to be able to gain in-depth information through the different opinions and experience of the respondents. The respondents were selected through recommendations of friends and acquaintances and had to meet certain criteria such as working 36 hours or less per week. 13 semi-structured and in-depth interviews were then conducted where the same interview framework was used, allowing for the same major questions being asked in every interview. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed based on grounded theory, allowing for certain themes and categories to emerge. Special emphasis was put on transparency in methods, procedures and handling of data to enhance reliability and validity. Nevertheless, the study contains certain limitations.

3.1 Research design

This research makes use of a qualitative framework as described by Silverman (1993). Qualitative research puts the emphasis on words rather than numbers and allows for theory to emerge from the data. It furthermore stresses understanding of the social world through the interpretation of it by its participants and allows for social properties to be examined as outcomes of interactions between individuals rather than a separate phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The qualitative research method is based on examining the practices and interactions of the subjects in everyday life and is characterised by openness towards the research objects in their own milieu. It therefore allows for new discoveries and developments to emerge as well as the creating of empirically grounded theories (Flick, 2006). The qualitative method was considered ideal for this research, as the aim was to gather in-depth information about flexible work arrangements through the different opinions, experience and standpoints of the respondents.

This research is furthermore designed as a cross-sectional qualitative study as a number of people are interviewed to explore different contexts at a single point in time to then be able to draw some patterns from the data gathered. As the focus is on producing general findings instead of focusing on the different contexts of the subjects, which is characterising of the multiple-case design, the cross-sectional research design seemed more appropriate (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

3.2 Participant selection

Participants were chosen out of a selection of candidates that were recommended through various channels such as friends, acquaintances and colleagues. Chosen participants had to match several given parameters. First, the candidate had to make use of flexible working arrangements on a regular basis. In the context of this research flexible work arrangements referred to working part time although in some cases respondents also occasionally telecommuted. Part-time was referred to as working 36 hours a week or less or 4 days a week or less. Second, the candidate should work in middle management or below to enable the researcher to factor out the high pressure that often results from upper management positions and thus strengthening the findings of the research. Third, the candidate should work in an office environment limiting the research to only office workers. Lastly, there was emphasis put on having as an equal divide of sexes as possible amongst the respondents. The aim was also to have as much variety amongst the respondents as possible, regarding their nationalities, the companies or institutions they work for, their jobs and how many hours they work per week.

3.3 Participants

Interviews were conducted with 13 people, 5 males and 8 females, living and working in either the Netherlands or Iceland. Overview of the participants can be found in Figure 5. Three of the interview respondents were British, six were Dutch, one was German, one was Australian and two were Icelandic. All of them have young children and all except two are in a relationship. All of them work less than full time, ranging from 16 hours to 36 hours a week. Six of the respondents work in middle management and have the title of manager and three of those had staff working for them. The other seven are

specialists in their area. A majority of the participants can work from home either on a regular basis or occasionally.

Figure 5. Overview of respondents

Respondent	Gender	Work Environment	Field of work	Hours worked per week
1	Female	Dutch	Finance	26
2	Male	International	IT	28
3	Female	Icelandic	Tourism	35
4	Male	Dutch	IT	32
5	Male	Dutch	Government	32
6	Female	International	NGO	32
7	Female	International	Shipping	32
8	Male	International	Telecom	32
9	Female	Dutch	Insurance	24
10	Female	Dutch	Finance	28
11	Female	International	Legal	32
12	Male	Dutch	Government	36
13	Female	International	Shipping	16

3.4 Interview framework

An interview framework (see appendix I) was created based on the research questions so that the same major questions were asked each time, however, at the same time the researcher was free to collect more information by asking unprepared questions. The research questions were covered through a series of questions on the nature of the participant's flexible working arrangement, their motivation for this working pattern and their perceptions and experiences of flexible work, including the impact on their work and on them personally. The interviews were therefore in-depth and semi-structured and carried out in a way to allow additional information regarded as important by the respondents to emerge. Through this manner of interviewing already after the first interview the framework was slightly adjusted to cover factors in the respondent's work environment, which emerged as strong contributors to how the respondents perceived their arrangements. Additional questions were then added to allow a better idea of the organisational context of each participant. During the interview process as well as the data analysis process the research questions were rephrased and modified several times in order to include these organisational factors as well as other unexpected factors that emerged during the course of the analysis.

3.5 Interviews

Data was collected through 13 qualitative interviews taking place between January and July 2011. Participants were contacted through e-mail. They were sent a brief description of the research as well as a more thorough research information sheet, which contained a summary of the research proposal. The time and place of the interviews were then arranged the same way. Ten interviews were conducted using English. Three interviews were conducted using Icelandic, but translated into English in the transcribing process. All interviews except two were conducted face-to-face in the respondent's home, at their office or at the researcher's home. Two interviews were conducted using Skype. The respondents were given the option to suggest a location for the interviews. Five interviews had the spouse of the respondent present, in all cases with non-relevant interruption from their part. The interviews took from 25 to 50 minutes in length depending on the respondent. All interviews were recorded using a laptop after the respondent had given his or hers consent and then transcribed shortly after they took place by the researcher. The recording of one interview failed so the researcher wrote up everything she remembered shortly after the interview took place and then allowed the respondent in question to review it to make sure the information was correct.

3.6 Data analysis

The interviews were analysed based on the grounded theory framework (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory initially involves developing categories, to illuminate the data and then try to further saturate these categories with several appropriate cases to show their relevance. These categories are then developed into more general frameworks or theory that can be shown to have relevance outside the setting of the research in question (Silverman, 2010).

Each interview was analysed separately and paragraphs or segments that corresponded to the research questions were highlighted. These coded segments were then drawn into categories and the categories into themes. The categories and themes were then compared across interviews and different perspectives contrasted. Already during the interview process certain themes began to emerge. The data collection thus

became iterative where analysis and data collection proceeded in tandem, repeatedly referring back to each other (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

3.7 Quality criteria

In order to ensure quality in business research it is necessary to be familiar with a few important terms. Reliability refers to the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. This is related to another criteria of research: replication. To be able to assess the reliability of a measure of a concept the methodology and procedures that make up that measure must be replicable (Bryman and Bell, 2007). These concepts are more commonly of concern in quantitative research. However, they also refer to qualitative research in two ways in particular. On one hand the origin of the data needs to be put forth in a way that makes it clear to distinguish between statements of the subjects in question and the interpretation of the researcher. On the other hand the procedures of the data gathering need to be clear and explicit in order to make comparability of different interviewers better. Thus, in short, the procedures and handling of data need to be clear because the reliability will be better when the whole research process is described in detail (Flick, 2006).

Validity is another criteria relevant to qualitative research as it refers to the question of whether the researcher sees what he thinks he sees and therefore refers to the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. The question is whether the relationships would look the same if they were not being researched and whether the researcher's version is indeed grounded in the field or in the issue itself (Flick, 2006). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) divide validity in the context of qualitative research into internal validity and external validity. Internal validity refers to whether or not there is a good match between the data and the theories that are developed from it while external validity refers to whether the findings can be applied to social settings.

In fact qualitative research is often criticised on being too subjective and impressionistic, relying too much on the researcher's views and interpretations. It is said to be difficult to replicate and hard to make generalisations to a bigger population as the sample is too small. Additionally, it suffers from a lack of transparency in the sense that it is difficult to establish what exactly the researcher did and how he came to these conclusions (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

In view of these criteria concerned with qualitative research, when working on data gathering and analysis the researcher emphasised to apply the same methods every time, be as objective as possible and treat and analyse every piece of data the same way. In fact, during the process of analysis, several different categories emerged that the researcher had not anticipated in the formulation of the research. Generalisation to a greater public will however not be justifiable as only 13 respondents are not enough to be able to generalise the findings. The findings will however provide indication and increased understanding of flexible work arrangements and provide a basis for further research.

3.8   Research limitations

As with most other existing research in the field of work effort and work efficiency the evidence presented here is based on self-report. This entails that the study relies on the recollections, perceptions and personal opinions of the respondents. However, as the interest of the study was to get a comprehensive picture of how the they experience and perceive flexible work arrangements, the self-report serves a purpose in this case.

Furthermore, ten out of the thirteen interviews on which this study is based were conducted in English. This can be regarded as a limitation as English is not the mother language of the majority of the respondents in question. However, the respondents all spoke good English, so presumably this did not affect the outcome of the study.

4 Findings

Analyses of the data lead to the discovery of several different categories, which were subsequently grouped together. Public context, organisational culture, management and colleagues were put under the umbrella of contextual factors, which influence the respondent's experience of their working arrangements. Their working arrangement then affects both their private life, therefore their work-life balance, and professional life, including elements such as perceived productivity and work intensification. Individual factors, consisting of elements like life situation and gender, individual traits and motivations, also emerged as factors of influence on the respondents' experience of their work arrangements. The different categories are discussed in the following chapters. A model illustrating the different categories and the connections between them is then presented at the end of the chapter.

4.1 Contextual factors

The importance of a supportive work environment was emphasised by all respondents. Here this is discussed in three sections. Firstly, the respondents' perceptions of the public and social environment as well as the culture of their organisation are discussed. The role of management is then looked at through the eyes of the respondents. Finally, colleague response is assessed.

4.1.1 Public context and organisational culture

Many of the respondents mentioned the culture or atmosphere in their organisation when referring to their working arrangement and how they feel about it. Several used words such as friendly and relaxed when describing their organisation's culture. This relaxed friendliness seems to be built on a sense of mutual respect and trust and one respondent went on to explain how everyone in his organisation knows each other fairly well and know what they can expect from each other so that they will pick up each others work if one of the team is too busy. A male respondent appreciated the casual laid back atmosphere in his company explaining that although he might have deadlines he never feels anyone will walk up to him and yell at him if there is a delay for some

reason. Another respondent contrasted her present working environment to what she knew in her previous job:

> R: But I think certainly in terms of me feeling comfortable working flexible hours is that everyone around me is either doing it as well or they are totally fine with you doing it. Because at my last job I worked part time in a full-time environment. And I was expected to work doubly hard. And the pressure was so awful that I couldn't stand it. I mean I did the work but… but this way working less hours but with this kind of relaxed…
>
> Q: Attitude?
>
> R: Atmosphere. I am still working just as hard. It is just that nobody is on my shoulder telling me to. I am doing it for myself. I am not sweating but… (Respondent 1)

She went on to explain how she now has more personal goals and wants to achieve certain things at work but they are not expecting her to keep up with everyone else so in this environment she feels more relaxed and happy about it. A male respondent described a similar situation where at his previous job in a full-time working environment he was looked down upon for not doing 40 hours or more in the week and told that because he was young he should work full time or more and anything else would be bad for his career. At his present job his working arrangement is however much more accepted and respected. This illustrates how differently the respondents perceive their working arrangement when colleagues and management also work flexible because of the general understanding between everyone and the lack of pressure or snobbery. All the respondents also agreed they don't feel any less than the others because they are working part time and are respected and considered one of the team regardless of them not being there full time.

One respondent explained how trusting the culture is at her job when it comes to personal things; that they will allow people to use the internet and phone for personal things within reasonable limits and be very open about it. She explained how they respect that their employees might have to attend to personal things during work hours but expect respect towards work in return. Another respondent used the words "personal touch" to describe the culture in his organisation:

> I would like to look at it as there is almost like a personal touch to it. The company is not very big. Each individual is seen as a very important and

valuable asset. I guess my bosses listen maybe more then in other companies to the individual wants and desires of the employees. (Respondent 4)

Another element that a number of respondents mentioned is that of hierarchy. They agreed that the less of hierarchy there is, the more comfortable they feel about their work and working arrangement. One respondent described how she and her colleagues are more or less self-managing with no hierarchy at all and that is the way the owner and manager of the company wants it. The lack of hierarchy is such that she is not even sure who her boss is and if she has questions she will simply ask whoever is around. She explained that this laid-back and relaxed culture is very deliberate and actually emphasised by the owner. She went on to elaborate:

No, well they are not really a traditional company and they don't want to be either (…) Their whole aim is that they want to be open and relaxed, they don't have formal meetings, they don't have a formal Christmas party but after Christmas we'll have drinks, in the end of January, stuff like that. So it is very relaxed and very, very laid back. (Respondent 9)

Another respondent who has been in her job for 6 months explained how strange it feels to her to have a laid back and casual connection with the director of her company:

And it's very amusing because for me he is god and yet he doesn't treat me like anyone else. It's so bizarre. But I have to work on that, I have to get used to the fact that bosses don't expect to be treated like bosses. I find that very difficult. (Respondent 1)

Another element of culture also came into play in the interviews, which was that of national culture. In the Netherlands working reduced hours is widely accepted and very common in particular among women but also among men. There is therefore a widespread acceptance towards this kind of working arrangement, more than in most other countries. All but one of the respondents work in the Netherlands but half of them for international companies, half for Dutch companies and one works in Iceland. In spite of this general acceptance in the Netherlands analysis of the data did not show this to have any clear effect on the respondents' perception of their work arrangement. It did emerge that they felt secure in asking to reduce their hours and the employers did not oppose to it. This is contributable to, as was mentioned by many, the fact that they are obliged by law to allow parents to cut down on their hours after having children. In

some cases the respondents reported that they were also more accepted as part-time workers because "people are used to it". One respondent, who works for an international company and recently got a new German manager, feels she is not quite getting equal treatment to her colleagues and attributes that to her manager's nationality. She explained that her manager is probably not used to how accepted it is in the Netherlands to work part time, thus the work culture in the Netherlands, and therefore treats part-time employees differently. However, overall no significant difference emerged between those working in an all-Dutch environment and those that worked in a more international environment or in Iceland.

To sum up, a friendly and relaxed culture where the respondents feel trusted and respected, ideally in an organisation with little hierarchy and where flexibility is endorsed, seem to be key to them feeling comfortable with their working arrangement. It also seems such a culture or atmosphere combined and intertwined with general management and colleague support is a bigger contributor to the respondents´ perception of their part-time work arrangement than the actual national culture itself.

4.1.2 Management

Management support emerged as a very important contributor to the perception of the respondents' work arrangements. All respondents mentioned the importance of having management support which in most cases was based on a good relationship with their supervisor. Open communication was a key element in this respect:

> My supervisor is quite personal and it is easy to get him to chat if there is something you need to discuss. Then he is quite open about things and lets you know when he is happy with you. (Respondent 7)

Other respondents agreed in that their supervisors are always there for them when they need them and are always open to have a talk at any time. One respondent added that the open communication she has built up with her manager has helped her to become more confident and relaxed towards her work. She noted that through a combination of openly communicating with her manager and her own conscious decision she has managed to stop overworking herself and gotten a better balance between her work and personal life. Another respondent mentioned how he and his manager create a set list of goals on what is expected of him to achieve in the hours he

works and communicate openly on how he is doing in achieving them. He feels this way of working helps him to grow and get better at his work. He compared this to his old job where he had more of a personal relationship with his manager but very little guidance in how to do his work better. Another respondent made a similar comparison to her old job where expectations and pressure towards her were overwhelming. In her present job, however, she has a set list of tasks to achieve in a week communicated to her and she feels expectations towards her are realistic and achievable.

A male respondent added a note on open communication when asked if he felt stressed about his work arrangement:

> Sometimes, sometimes yes. But then I always discuss it with my manager and I say: Yes, it is just sometimes too much. And then I decide the priorities with my manager, what to do first and then he knows that I can't do the other things. (Respondent 8)

Many of the respondents also mentioned trust as a crucial element to them feeling good about their working arrangement. One respondent explained how she is allowed to get on with her own assignments at work:

> R: They are not really meddling with you, when we finish our assignments or following the daily activities; we just take care of ourselves.

> Q: You are trusted and respected to do what has got to be done?

> R: Yes. And I actually really like it. I know what I have to finish and what I have to do and I don't need anyone that is following me and asking if I have done this or done that. So I find this way of working very good actually. (Respondent 3)

Most of the respondents felt similar, that they know what they are supposed to do and feel trusted and respected by their manager in doing their job. Many mentioned that as long as they deliver what they are supposed to then they are left to do their work without interference. One respondent described how her managers have no way of really monitoring their employee's working hours:

> Yes, and everyone works hard and there is no one that you think this is a bit of a slacker. They just trust you to do your right hours because they really have no way of monitoring it. Because, say, if for any reason one person who has got a permanent seat is away, then someone else is going to go sit there and use their space. So they have really got no way of monitoring how long you work. (Respondent 9)

One respondent described how the trust has to go both ways when talking about his employers, that even though employees are given liberty to determine their own work hours and schedule their own workweek then they are equally expected to be around when the company needs them:

> But they also know that as soon as something really needs to be done and they really need to be in the office. Really need to be in the office; then they will be there. They will be and they will just switch around days, that kind of stuff. (Respondent 5)

On that note, another respondent who herself works part time and manages a team, talked about how to deal with this trust from the manager's end. She explained how she has had to have a talk with team members who don't pull their weight:

> It is a little bit of a feeling. It is not that I am looking at who is in and who is out, I am not always there and I am always the last in and first out so I can't be like that. But at some point you just know this. When it is busy, it is always the same who say I can stay and do this and finish, always the same people. So at some point you just know it is not OK.

She went on to explain further:

> R: If we are happy with what he does it is OK but… it is a feeling. It's trust, it's… and you know when your trust is broken. I don't know why.
>
> Q: Yes, it's something that you …
>
> R: If you know your team and the people in it, then you know. (Respondent 10)

When working flexible trust becomes a big issue, as management has to trust their employees to do the work they are assigned to do, sometimes working from home and sometimes working reduced hours at different hours or different days. One respondent explained that sometimes on a day that he is supposed to be working from home he doesn't really get much done and might use the time to go to the supermarket or do other chores instead. He goes on to elaborate that: "But then there are days that you work very, very hard. And people know that. They expect it." Many of the respondents mentioned that there is a certain discipline needed to work flexible, both the occasional work from home as well as working part time. Several mentioned the struggle between the traditional manager, who finds it hard to manage people that are not in the office

40 hours a week, and the more open-minded manager, who is ready to explore alternative work arrangements. Many respondents have limited flexibility in the sense that they are allowed to work part time but their managers remain very strict on which days and what times they work. One respondent mentioned that many managers find it difficult to deal with managing flexibility, in this case particularly working from home:

> They start to lose control a little bit. I know there is one program manager that has a little bit of difficulty with it. He is almost sixty, I think, so he is used to the old way of working. So he has to see you to know that you are working. So when you are not there he is like: What is he doing? Is he working? Is he not working? So he calls you and then: No, I am working. (Respondent 5)

When asked if they felt that management in their organisation was offering flexibility in a strategic way, a big majority of respondents answered with a clear no. In the majority of cases flexibility was offered as a way to accommodate to the employees needs. They all also agreed that their employer would prefer them to work full time and that they prefer in general that their employees work full time. In spite of this none of them had any problems reducing their work hours but several also mentioned that their employer had no choice as employers are, by law in the Netherlands, obliged to allow people to cut back on working hours after they have children. Several mentioned that their employer is simply doing it because they have to and not because they see any gain from it. One respondent working for the government explained that his employers are aware of the disadvantages of what they are offering to their employees:

> …Certain discipline within your work to just be at home, turn on the computer and sit behind it and not do the groceries, not take care of the little baby boy or walk the dog. So they are aware but they are also aware of the advantages, because it gives people more joy. They can decide for themselves what are good hours to come into the office and what are good hours to be out of the office. So they are very aware of it. (Respondent 5)

Another respondent even explained that she sometimes feels that her employers are doing her a favour in allowing her to work part time. She noted how strange that is given that they are at the same time expecting the same from her but also paying her according to her work hours, thus less than the full-time employers. A few respondents, however, seemed to have more open minded management and one of them commented on the policy of her company on part-time work in particular:

Well, in the interview they said that by giving people what they want they will get what they want back in return. That sounds a bit cryptic in English but I can't remember how she said it in Dutch now. But she said that by kind of getting your own way stimulates you to give back. (Respondent 1)

Another respondent felt like a role model as she as a manager works part time and still manages a team. She went on to explain:

It is something that is starting so because I am a manager people are now seeing me do it. So I expect that there will be more people that think: Hey, this is the way you can work as well. Then it will be a bit exciting to see how everybody will adjust. Because I have my results and targets to achieve so I will achieve them. But not everybody is that committed. (Respondent 10)

Another one mentioned how his manager set an example years ago when he decided to work reduced hours and have one day a week with his children. He explained how this was frowned upon by many and regarded to be a killer to his career, which however did not turn out to be the case as his manager is today holding an upper management position. A number of other respondents also explained that their managers either work or at some point worked part time and subsequently were more understanding towards part-time work. One, in particular, felt a big difference after her old manager that worked 4 days left the company and she got a new one that worked full time. She feels as even though her new manager is also understanding towards her working arrangement that her old manager was a lot more easy-going about it and showed more trust and respect then the new one. Another respondent, whose managers job share and therefore both work part time, described that she feels that flexible working is stimulated in her company by the fact that the managers endorse it themselves.

In fact it emerged clearly that it depends very much on the manager how the respondents experienced their work arrangement. It seems it almost solely comes down to his or hers personal attitude, respect and understanding towards it. Some explained that their managers were fine with part-time work but would not allow work from home. A few even mentioned they would like to have the option of that but their manager would not offer that as an option. As one respondent explained when asked if she was seeing flexible work more around her:

I am not sure if it is really becoming common sense. A lot of people are talking about it: New working, you have to be flexible, you can solve traffic

problems but it is a lot of talking and no acting. You need an open-minded manager who can trust the people. I am not sure if this will be everywhere. (Respondent 10)

To conclude, the data suggests that a key element when it comes to management support is having a good relationship with your manager based on open communication and trust. It also appears that flexible work is not yet offered strategically but more in response to employee's needs and that many managers still struggle with managing flexible workers. However, it seems that a manager that himself is open to it and himself works flexible becomes a role model and lays the ground for his employees.

4.1.3 Colleagues

It is not only management response that contributes to how the respondents perceive their working arrangement. Another very important contributor to the perception of flexible working arrangement is the response of colleagues. The respondents had very mixed responses from their colleagues. A number of them experienced irritation and annoyance regarding their work arrangement. One respondent, who works 7 hours a day, 5 days a week, described how some of her colleagues react to her leaving work:

> However I have also noticed that my colleagues are often very surprised why I am leaving so early which I don't like at all because I am also not being paid 100%. But I have gotten comments when I am leaving at 3:30 like: O, so you are done for the day? (Respondent 3)

The underlying cause for such comments can in many cases be jealousy as was reflected through one respondents comment on how the attitude in her old job was towards her part-time work arrangement:

> But it really was frowned upon and bitched about by the other colleagues because there was another mother there who worked four days and wanted to go down to three but they wouldn't let her so she quit. (Respondent 1)

She also explained that in her present job her working part time came up at a meeting and one of her colleagues, a new one, asked why she had to deliver less than the rest of them. When someone then explained that she worked fewer hours than the rest of them everything was fine, and generally people are so used to it that no one is bothered about it anymore. Another respondent, a team leader, described that there is always a part of the group that feels that she should be there to check if everyone is

there at 8 o'clock and feel that she cannot really manage the team unless she is there watching them all day long.

A female respondent, that works 32 hours a week, noted:

> Once we were at a meeting and it came up, I don't remember why, but it came up if possibly I would work less. Then one guy in the group said that that would never work in this group, if someone was to work even less, referring to me. So if I would work even less it would be seen more negatively. (Respondent 7)

In fact many respondents brought this point up, that the less hours someone works the more negatively they are perceived by their colleagues. One respondent, who works with people that work 50%, described the attitude towards them:

> And then there are some that are working only 50% and with them you hear the irritation sometimes. Cause if you are 50% you are working half a day here and half a day there. Then you hear comments, also from close colleagues, that are like: When is she at work? She is never at work? Something like that. When I hear that I wonder what do they say when I leave??

She went on to explain that these people are seen as not getting much done:

> Yes, that is the atmosphere a bit. People look down upon it, make comments about yes she is never at work and never does anything and so on. So I think it does affect people. And in general if everyone is really busy then there is little understanding that someone else is only there for 4 hours, it is seen as being lazy. Like she is going home to have a nap but that's of course not what she is doing…. (Respondent 3)

Another respondent agreed that those that work 60% or less are dealing with a very different attitude then she, who works 80%, is. She explained that she herself perceives those that work less than herself as coming to work to have a chat and a coffee, do some very simple work and then be off again, wishing people a good weekend on a Tuesday afternoon. Another respondent who works 3 days added that the more days she works the more challenging work she gets.

One respondent described how the attitude builds up towards people who are less present at work, in this case a colleague that works remotely from abroad:

> …but still there are sometimes people that get annoyed and think or assume that he hasn't done anything or has done something but he is not right there to defend himself. (Respondent 4)

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However, most respondents felt nothing but understanding from their colleagues. One respondent who works only 40% described how she and her colleagues cooperate at work, share the workload and allow it to pass from person to person depending on who is working each day of the week. Two respondents, both government employees, explained how common flexible work is and accepted at their office to the point that so many of their colleagues are either off on Fridays or work from home that the office is mostly empty on those days. One of them gave up coming into the office on Fridays and took up working from home, as there was no one there and him coming in just didn't justify the long commute to work. A female respondent explained how comfortable she is now with her part-time work arrangement because almost everyone around her also work part time. A few respondents also mentioned that their life situation also has an impact on how the others perceive them. One female respondent described how she feels no irritation towards her at work:

> …they know that I am a mum and this is the way it is. My boss is also a mum and also the other person that is part time. All the full-timers are young and have no family yet. But I think as soon as they are a bit older and have their own family then they will go into the same package... (Respondent 11)

Another one explained that his working arrangement is generally accepted because he has the perfect reason for working part time:

> R: It is accepted; they know that you are not working on Mondays. Also with meetings. If they need to plan meetings which you need to attend they know that you are not available on Mondays. So they accept it. It is normal.
>
> Q: Your colleagues understand it?
>
> R: Yes they understand it. So it is convenient for me that I have a good reason for being off one day in the week. And if I didn't have that; if I was just working 4 days instead of five days without the reason of being a father I personally would have a hard feeling with that.
>
> Q: See it differently?
>
> R: Yes. (Respondent 8)

One female respondent explained how she works in a very competitive environment and her colleagues are very passionate about their work and competitive in reaching

their goals. She also took part in this race for a long time, constantly trying to keep up with them. Another respondent felt the same pressure to keep up:

> I still have the feeling that I want to perform like my other colleagues. So want to be in the same… keep up. (Respondent 8)

More respondents agreed on this point; that they work hard to keep up with the others and not deliver less. Additionally, a majority mentioned that they are aware that at certain hours they are not in the office so they will do what they need to do so that their colleagues don't have to take over their work on their day or days off. A female who works 7 hours a day explained how she feels the need to keep up:

> And I think it also matters that it is only an hour that I work less. And I am working hard to not deliver less. Like you were saying before, I think I am working harder because I feel like I have to deliver like the others. That are working full time. I don't think like: I am only working 75%, so it's ok. It is more like I have to work harder because…. Work as hard as the others. (Respondent 3)

A fourth of the respondents mentioned a different attitude from foreign colleagues or people they are in contact with in other countries. All these respondents work a lot with internationals. The reaction they felt was in some cases irritation or even disbelief that they are not present at certain days of the week. More often mentioned was, though, that they felt jealousy from these colleagues, with one citing a colleague who can't believe this is possible in the Netherlands and saying that he would also like to have a day off in the week. Another one explained that people overseas simply don't understand that working part time is accepted in the Netherlands and especially since his small Dutch company got taken over by a large global enterprise he has found himself in difficult situations:

> R: And I also don't like to reject especially these international meetings.
>
> Q: Miss out on those because they are on a Monday?
>
> R: Yes, if there is a meeting with lets say 10 people and nine of them accept then you are the only one who rejects and…
>
> Q: Then you miss it.

R: Yes. Especially for my foreign colleagues who do not know that this is my standard day off they would think: Why does he do that? That is not very nice. (Respondent 8)

In summary, it is clear that colleague response has an impact on how the respondents perceive themselves at work. Many feel they need to keep up with their full-time colleagues and work harder to achieve the same results. Some feel irritation from their colleagues while most feel support and understanding, however both seem dependent on how much you work and why you do it, as well as if flexibility is generally accepted and thus entwined in the organisational culture.

4.2 Outcomes of flexible work arrangements

All respondents reported changes to both their private and professional lives after taking up flexible work arrangements. This is discussed in two parts. Firstly, the respondents' outlook on the effects on their private life with special focus on work-life balance is reviewed. Second, the effects of their work arrangement on their overall experience of work and way of work are discussed.

4.2.1 Private life

The respondents all agreed that their flexible working arrangement has an impact on their lives at home. All agreed that they have better control over their work life balance and can better enjoy time with their family. Many of them used the word relax to describe how they felt such as this male respondent:

> I think having a day free from work gives you a chance to just relax and recharge your batteries. It makes the whole week different if you get up on Monday morning and you know you are going to be working every day until Friday evening; it is very different from knowing that you have a day off during the week to look forward to. (Respondent 2)

Many of the respondents work four days a week and they all felt this one day that they have off in the week makes all the difference for them. A few felt it even matters which day of the week it is. One respondent described how he feels that because he has the Wednesday off he feels that at any point of the week he is a maximum of two days away from the weekend or a break so there is no need to build up stress or worries. Others who have their day off in the beginning of the week or at the end of it in fact also described a feeling of being more relaxed at home:

Well, yes, my weekends are longer which is really nice and cosy. And the working week is also shorter. So yes, it is in that way more relaxed. But it is more that I am more relaxed at home then that I am relaxed at work. (Respondent 7)

Another one who has also worked three days but currently works 4 days a week described the difference between working 3, 4 and 5 days:

R: I felt like I almost wasn't working when I was working 3 days. It was a huge difference compared to 5 days. I thought it was wonderful. Working 4 days however, is OK, it is fine. There is such a huge difference with that one day, I think. (...)

Q: At home mainly?

R: Yes, I feel like I can't do anything, I have no time for no one, not for the family, the friends, the house, no time to cook or buy groceries, clean the house. Or whatever, you know. When you just have the weekends.

Q: There is a big difference?

R: Yes, a huge difference. (Respondent 11)

Two respondents who work part time everyday instead of having days off in the week had a similar story of how not working a full work day allows them time to be more relaxed with the family like, for example, simply to be able to eat breakfast without stress. They also described how it allows time to tend to hobbies and have other things going on in life than just work. One of them described how her work life balance has changed since she went from full-time work to part-time work:

There is really a difference between work and private. Somehow. Sometimes in the evenings I check my mail or make a phone call but still there are hours in the day when I am doing a completely different thing. So I think my work-life balance has improved. (Respondent 10)

Many respondents used the word luxury to describe how they feel about working part time. They described how they feel they are privileged to be able to do this and that their employer allows them to work part time. One respondent described how elsewhere she might not be allowed to work like this. Another one that works for the government felt like him being allowed to work part time is a luxury thing that comes with being a government employee, as the government is obliged to follow the law on providing flexibility for parents while companies might try to avoid it. Two respondents

mentioned the luxury of working part time from an economical perspective. One of them emphasised that it is a choice:

> My feeling is that it is definitely a luxury that a lot of my colleagues can afford. All of the people that work less then five days have obviously chosen to work less instead of making more money. (Respondent 4)

And the other one felt fortunate:

> Well, I know not everybody can arrange this. Some people cannot arrange it because of the economical consequences and some of them cannot arrange it because of their job and the regulations at work. So I feel quite happy that I am able to do this so I really enjoy it. And I wouldn't want to miss the time with the kids that one day in the week. Ofcourse you have the weekends, but that one day in the week is really, lets say, your own day without your wife around… (Respondent 8)

A number of the respondents described that they have and in some cases still struggle with thinking about work at home. Half of them can actually work from home on a semi-regular basis and have an agreement with their employer to work from home if needed. However all share a similar attitude as a male respondent described it:

> Q: So you try to keep it away.

> R: Yes I try to. Also because of my kids and my wife. Because before I had kids I wasn't that strict in checking emails and picking up the phone. You were just more flexible. These days you aren't that flexible. The time I have at home I want to spend really at home with the family. (Respondent 8)

All the respondents shared this attitude; that they want to keep work at work and don't want to be lured into checking their mails or do a little work here and there at home unless really necessary. However, for many it took time to get to that point, it seems to be a learning curve to detach from work on the days that you are off:

> In the beginning it was difficult for me to get away from work on Wednesdays because I was not used to being at home in the middle of the week. But now I am completely detached from work on those days. I don't think about it, I don't turn on the computer anymore, I don't even look at the computer anymore. So it has made me a little bit more relaxed. (Respondent 5)

Although most felt more relaxed working part time, one mother who works three days and has to do a 2-hour commute each way to work felt complete exhaustion:

I am more tired because I went from being a full-time mum. I am bloody tired the whole time. Just exhausted. I don't know what it is because I used to work full time before but now there is no way I could do it. My work days are long, I am usually gone by seven and back 15 min past seven if the trains are all right but I am just exhausted. It is just exhausting. (Respondent 9)

Two other respondents have more than an hour and a half commute to work but both have the option to work from home. They both noted that if they feel they don't need to be in the office, for example if few people are present on that day or their assignments can just as easily be done from home, they will opt for working from home to avoid the exhaustion of the long commute.

Summing up, working part time seems to lead to a feeling of being more relaxed in your private life and to a better work life balance, although heavy commuting has an impact in this respect. It is perceived as a luxury; something people feel very fortunate and privileged about getting to do. Although sometimes struggling, the respondents try their best to keep their work and private life separate and let their time at home be their time at home.

4.2.2 Professional life

Working part time has effects on life at work in various ways. More than half of the respondents experienced that their work responsibilities were not adjusted to them reducing their hours. They said that they have the same assignments and workload as before and that they have to find their own way to deal with that. A female respondent explained the rush she experiences:

I always have to hurry to get things done because I have too many things to do and I work fewer hours then others. And still have equal or more assignments to take care of. So it is not because of the motivations but more the time pressure that I have, because I only work 7 hours a day. I am trying to hurry to get everything done. And I can't work overtime because I have to pick up the kids at 4 o'clock and if I am not on time… well that just doesn't work. (Respondent 3)

She went on to explain how she has to come to terms that she simply can't do everything and has to prioritise, reorganise and determine what can wait and what can't. A male respondent really misses out on the day of the week that he is off because he simply can't do the 40 hours worth of work he is expected to complete in the 32 hours he works. He explained that he does let his manager know if certain things are

not done or will not be done because of the less time that he has and said they will accept and understand that. He explained that he feels an intensification of work occur:

> I have to admit that I do less then in 40 hours but I do much more then you would expect in 32 hours. So it feels like, lets say, that I am working for 36 hours. That I can do work equal to 36 hours. So in one way or another I think you do it more efficiently. (Respondent 8)

A majority of the respondents, regardless of whether they feel their work responsibilities were adjusted to their work hours or not, expressed that they feel they work more efficiently because they work part time. They also frequently mentioned that they are more organised or have to prioritise more. Interestingly though, when asked about whether they feel they work differently when working part time a big majority of them were hesitant and had to think about their answer. It therefore seems that the change to the way of working is something that happens unconsciously and without any deliberate planning. A number of respondents speculated on whether they are actually doing the same amount of work now as when they worked full time, which is consistent with the male respondent who feels he can do work equivalent to 36 hours in the 32 hours he works (see above). In fact there seemed to be a general consensus that there is not so much of a difference. One respondent, who recently went up to 4 days a week from 3 days a week, added a note on the reasons behind this:

> I don't know, maybe you can do the same amount in four days as in five days. I think maybe you are just hanging around more at work if you are working five days, doing more personal stuff or something. I can imagine that is it. Like I could in fact do my job in three days as well, there was no one covering me, it was of course a bit heavy but there were also other factors influencing that I wasn't quite as busy. But still I think that there is a point there. That people work better. (Respondent 11)

Another one felt that people do work more efficiently because they are not too tired and don't feel like they are more at work than at home with the family. A female respondent described that she feels that maybe she is working a bit faster because she only has the limited time at work. Another respondent explained how he works differently now:

> I guess I am more effective in the time that I am there. You work more efficiently I guess. You prioritise more, what's really important you do first and then you just work your way down. And then something pops along that

you really have to do. And you delegate more to other people. (Respondent 5)

Another respondent explained how she tries to delegate to her team members to deal with her workload:

Q: Do you feel you have to delegate more then before?

R: Yes, of course. It is a good thing. And sometimes I have to learn. But my son is done at school at a certain time so I have to be there. I have to let go. Lets say around seven I can check again and see maybe oh they did it, ok well, its ok. Sometimes it is not OK. But then in the morning you go back and then you adjust some things. So everybody is learning. You have to let go. That is also a good thing. (Respondent 10)

This process of learning she mentioned is in fact frequently mentioned by the other respondents; how it has been a learning process both for them and the organisation to adjust to them not working full time. One female respondent discussed the learning process she had to go through with her organisation when she first cut back on hours. In the beginning she felt she needed to work harder to show them she was good enough and would do extra hours to get everything done. If she would leave early for some reason she would compensate the hours, and often not only compensate but overcompensate. After a while the stress of dealing with her work arrangement in this way got to her to the point that she would feel burn out and today she has changed her work attitude and controls her own workload much better. A male respondent feels in control of his workload even if it hasn't changed since he reduced his hours but this however took some learning for the organisation to get used to it:

…I am just doing what needs to be done. But I am not pressured into finishing it quicker or earlier or at a different pace. I just told everybody: Look, I am going to work less, it might take a day longer to get something done and if you really need it in a rush then ask somebody else. That took a little bit of time for them to get adjusted to because they were used to me being there on Wednesdays and doing the work. (Respondent 5)

Another male respondent said he deals with his workload by having regular discussions with his manager about his work assignments and feels in control of it because of that. He said he can always ask for more or less work if needed or if something is not going well. Up to now he has never had to ask for less work though as he is able to do his work quite quickly.

Two thirds of the respondents mentioned that not being there on certain days or times leads to them missing out on communication and meetings which they believe is one of the biggest problems of working flexible. One of them explained how his company deals with this. They have one day a week when everyone in the company is present that is organised for meetings, meaning that most employees are in meetings more or less throughout the day. Another one explained that she feels she is missing out on quite a lot when missing a meeting, as the meeting minutes can't really cover all that was communicated during the course of it. Another disadvantage that is frequently brought up is the career consequences flexible work arrangements have. Two respondents felt that they are not getting as exciting assignments as the rest of their group and feel that it might be due to not working full time. They both however wondered whether it is deliberate or done in an attempt to be nice and give them a break because they are both mothers of young children. Another respondent, also a mother of young children, had a different story though and feels she gets just as challenging projects as the rest:

> I don't think that just because I am working part time that they give me minor tasks. I am still getting my own projects and stuff to do, and there is kind of no set path that everyone goes on. You just kind of find out yourself… (Respondent 9)

A few respondents thought working part time would most likely affect their career prospects in their organisation in the sense that most likely someone working full time will be hired rather than a part-timer. A male respondent explained:

> I think the disadvantage of working part time is that if you want more of a career I think it would be difficult for me to go for a better job within the company or even to move sideways into another department. I think they are more likely to be looking for full-time people then part-time people. (Respondent 2)

Others however felt that the career consequences are overrated and have seen it first-hand that when people are good at what they do they will get promotions regardless of whether they are part-timers or not.

Another term that frequently came up is that of feeling more content or happier with work. This relates to the notion of a better work life balance already mentioned in the previous chapter (4.2.1). A female respondent, who has her workload well-adjusted to

her work hours, explained how she now feels much more satisfaction than in her old job where her workload was not well adjusted. She feels that because her deadlines are more reasonable she is not under unreasonable pressure and stress. Enjoyment of work also seems to come from the fact that it is no longer the biggest part of your life as many respondents find more time to enjoy hobbies and family. Another female respondent described how she enjoys work more now:

> Maybe because I work less I enjoy it more. I find it easier to come to work when I know that there are not five days ahead but four. It is more positive somehow, you know... That the biggest part of the week is not work. (Respondent 11)

One went so far as to say that "by allowing people to work the hours that they want makes them much more friendly in themselves." Many also mentioned that you have to set the line down yourself and say stop when it comes to workload so that you are not overloaded and overstressed. One speculated on what can be gained from flexible working arrangements:

> In general I think people would be more happy if they can choose. There are people that naturally love to wake up at five o'clock and why don't we let them? And then we have people who love to start at one o'clock in the afternoon, then they are feeling right. Why not? (Respondent 10)

To summarise, a majority of the respondents didn't experience any change in workload when cutting back on their hours, which was then followed by increased stress to get things done in the time available. Additionally, regardless of whether the workload was adjusted or not most respondents felt that they work more efficiently. An efficiency increase therefore seems to take place regardless of workload adjustment; thus a feeling of getting more done in the time they work. However, many reported it to be a learning process both for the organisation and themselves, on how to deal with workload when working reduced hours. Career consequences were a concern as well as missing out on communication and meetings at work when working part time. Generally the respondents reported enjoying their work more, which seems to be linked to having a better work-life balance, as work is not the biggest part of their life anymore.

4.3   Individual factors

All respondents agreed that their motivation for working flexible is their family situation and their child or children. These personal motivations have a direct influence on how the respondents perceive their work arrangement. All the men explained that they want to see their kids grow up and be there for them. Two of them mentioned that they don't want to be a father who only sees their kids late at night or on weekends. They all emphasised how important their day or days off work are for them to connect to their kids and how they try to keep this time only for the kids and nothing else. One of them added that his flexibility helped him to adjust to having a wife and kids and that he appreciates that he has the flexibility to move his schedule around if needed:

> Right now I am working flexible, as in not working 40 hours a week, so that I can spend more time with family, generally speaking enjoy life more and have the feeling that if at any time I need to spend the day at home for whatever reason I can switch my schedule around in such a way that I can accomplish that. (Respondent 4)

Although the female respondents also work flexible because of their children they seem to experience more stress and more of a rush because of their working arrangement then the males. They used less emotional language to describe their experience. Many felt their schedule to be completely packed:

> R: But you know talking about motivations behind working flexible. I do struggle with the fact that my flexibility is actually in a stranglehold. Because my flexibility, if you take the whole day, is actually completely inflexible because I have no window of opportunity to do anything else (laughter). I get up, deal with the kids. Then when I leave for work, Jack takes over and when I leave work I take over with the kids until bedtime. And even when they are in bed there are still then things to do. Obviously it is good that I can work around their school times but…
>
> Q: It means every minute is kind of…
>
> R: Yes, every minute is taken up. (Respondent 1)

Another female respondent described a similar situation:

> I have to drive a pretty long way from work to home and back and if I would work 8 hours I would be getting home, make dinner and then the day is over. I think working 7 hours is perfect because then I have time to pick up the kids and maybe do something before the day is over. But it has

disadvantages when it comes to the money cause I don't get 100% pay. (Respondent 3)

Many of the female respondents seem to work as few days or hours as they can financially. All of them would absolutely not want to go back to full-time working unless obliged to because of financial reasons and most of them would actually like to work even less than they do now if they could. One female explained how it works for her:

> I wouldn't be working like this if I didn't have the kids, then I would be working full time. The main motivation is the family. I would be motivated to work even less if my husband would not be home also one day. (Respondent 7)

One respondent openly admitted that she works part time because she financially doesn't need to work more and feels she is very lucky to be able to do that. She also noted that she feels that: "If you have kids you shouldn't work full time because then you have got other people looking after them."

The motivations driving the respondents to this working arrangement also have a direct impact on their daily work as many of them have to be out of the office at a certain hour to pick up the kids from school or day-care. One female respondent explained how it affects her work:

> And I can't work overtime because I have to pick up the kids at 4 o'clock and if I am not on time… well, that just doesn't work. I have to be there at 4. And I remember before I had kids I would work until seven and was just chilling because I had time and could finish things in my time but now I just have to finish it before 4 and there is no other choice. (Respondent 3)

In a couple of cases rush hour traffic also plays a role in motivating the respondents to go home. Whatever the motivation is a number of them explained how they have to choose their assignments to fit into their daily schedule or how they might have to rush at the end of the day to get things done before they have to leave. One of the male respondents explained that usually this would not be the way he works but he has no choice:

> Well, I am not somebody who really looks at the clock and only works at the times you are asked to work. However, I don't want to come home too late because of the family at home. Because my wife expects me to help with the kids and with dinner and things like that. (Respondent 8)

A female respondent explained how she is aware that she needs to leave at a certain hour but feels less guilt leaving work early because a lot of people in her department also work flexible and when she leaves a few have already left. The understanding in her workplace is such that her boss once even came up to her and told her that she was running late to pick her kids up.

The personal motivations not only directly affect the work life through the stress of being home on time but it can also be argued that they impact both private and professional life through the increased need to balance the two. Because of the children and the family the respondents don't perceive their work as their number one priority anymore and value their private time more than before. One respondent explained how his attitude changed when his wife moved to the Netherlands:

> I had a 36-hour contract but I was there 45 hours a week. Which at the time didn't bother me, it was fun to do. My wife was in the States so I was here by myself basically. So I just kept working. But things change. I do like my private time, to spend time at home. So as soon as we moved back I immediately said I am not going to be working 45 hours a week anymore. (Respondent 5)

This illustrates how personal situations can lead to a change in priorities making work life balance become more important.

While most feel they work more efficiently now when they work reduced hours half of the respondents however also acknowledged the role of personality when it comes to working harder or more efficiently. These respondents all describe themselves as hard workers by nature; that they don't like to leave things behind and want to have their things under control and that is just the way they are. One female respondent who has gone down from full-time work to working 2 days a week over a period of a few years explained how her work ethic hasn't changed:

> R: I still work the same, I still work as hard. I still do the things as good as I ever did, I feel anyway.
>
> Q: So it hasn't really got much to do with working less hours, in your opinion…
>
> R: No, because if I was a slacker I would be leaving more for my colleagues and leaving rubbish for them to sort out or you know not getting things

done but I couldn't work like that. That is not me. I like to do things well. You know, work efficiently. (Respondent 13)

Another female respondent agreed that she always pushes herself and that she is not really sure if it has anything to do with working less hours or not. She explained how she would always do her work to the best of her ability no matter what. A number of the other respondents have a similar work ethic; that generally they are not the ones to be looking at the clock and they will always be there for their employer when they are really needed. One had to think for a while about whether she is more or less organised now that she works less, as she feels that she is usually very organised anyway. A female respondent told a story of a colleague that has cut work down to 24 hours a week but she sees her constantly push herself and work more hours than she should even in weekends and evenings. Having been in this position herself she really feels she should not work this hard. Her opinion is that when an individual pushes himself this hard for whatever reason, it might deliver results in the short run but in the long run the stress will get to them and they will suffer from exhaustion and even burn out.

Personality doesn't only encompass working hard, being organised or pushing yourself. For example, personal characteristics also determine how easily an individual can detach from work. Some respondents had no problem disconnecting from work such as this female who has had no problem leaving work both when working full time and after having children and moving to part-time:

> I always left on time then too. I have never been the type to work until 10 in the evening or something like that. So there is not really any change there. (Respondent 11)

Other respondents shared this view that when it is time they will go home and even though they now work fewer hours they remain very cool about dealing with their assignments such as this male respondent:

> But I am not pressured into finishing it quicker or earlier or at a different pace. I just told everybody: Look, I am going to work less, it might take a day longer to get something done and if you really need it in a rush then ask somebody else. (Respondent 5)

Another one is on the opposite end and will think about work on her day off:

R: You just organise things differently. I don't feel like I am working any less harder then I did. I always try to do my best and use the time to the very best I can. I have not become any more relaxed working less.

Q: So you experience it...

R: I don't feel stick free. I am often thinking about whether I should have needed to do something, thinking about work on a Monday and stuff like that.

Q: Yes, when you are not supposed to be working?

R: Yes. (Respondent 7)

A respondent who manages a team of people described the dilemma of pushing yourself and the need to prove oneself that many of the other respondents experience:

...but if I am not a manager I have to make sure that everybody knows who I am and what I am doing and what I am capable off in terms of projects. So you have to be aware of the fact that you are working flexible and that people don't see you on normal times or normal occasions. (Respondent 10)

It therefore seems to be largely contributable to the respondents' own personality how they experience their flexible work arrangement. Furthermore, personality traits directly influence how an individual deals with work in general, as it is largely their personality that determines their work ethic. Personality therefore not only influences perceptions of one's work arrangement but also how one deals with it, how one deals with work and private life and the balance between the two.

To sum up, the data shows that what motivates the respondents the most to work less is their children. The male respondents seem to have a more appreciative view on being able to have a day or days at home while the women seem to be doing it more to make the whole family schedule come together and would like to work even less if they could. Additionally, the necessity of picking up the kids at the end of the day creates some stress in the respondents' work schedule. Personality also seems to have an impact on how the respondents perceive their work arrangement. For example, the hard workers describe themselves as still being hard workers regardless of how many hours they work in the week. However, both motivations and personality also impact professional and private life directly. This happens because the motivations, the children and family, as well as personal characteristics work in a similar way. They

determine and change the way the respondents deal with and value work and private life and the balance there between.

4.4 Flexible work arrangements in context - model

The findings suggest that contextual factors of social and cultural nature, such as public context, organisational culture, and management and colleague response, impact perceptions of the respondents work arrangement. Furthermore, individual factors such as motivations, life situation and personality also impact these perceptions as well as interplay with the professional and private lives of the respondents. The interconnections between these different categories that emerged from the analysis of the interviews can be put up in a model, which is shown in Figure 6.
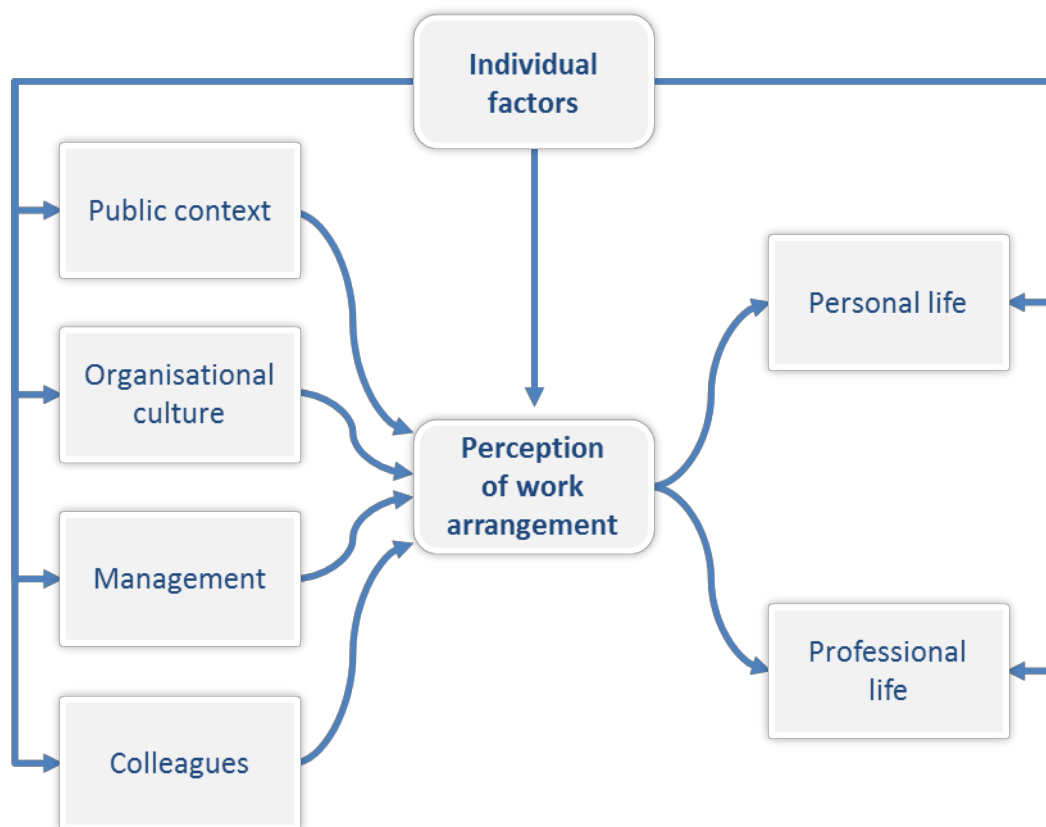
Figure 6. Flexible work arrangements in context

The model illustrates how the contextual factors surrounding work directly influence the respondents' perception of their work arrangements. The public context, including the laws and regulations as well as societal support, impacts the respondents. Management and colleague support impact how usable and comfortable the respondents perceive their work arrangement and organisational culture can provide an

atmosphere of support or resentment to the flexible worker. The respondents' perceptions of their work arrangement, based on these contextual factors, then impact their private life and how they perceive their work-life balance. It also impacts their professional life; whether they feel they are more or less productive, stressed, content etc., and whether they experience work intensification. A last factor added to the model is that of individual factors consisting of elements like life situation and gender, individual personality traits and motivation. Individual factors therefore refer both to the respondents' private life situation; for example whether the respondent has children and then how their situation motivates them with regards to work, but also to their personality and the role of their personality when it comes to work. Individual differences therefore impact all the other factors in the model because how an individual perceives his or hers management, colleagues and other environmental factors is dependent on their personality, life situation and motivations. Similarly these differences impact work ethic and capacity to balance work and private life.

The model that emerged from the analysis of the data has similarities with models in the existing literature in the field of flexible work arrangements. The model and the interconnections it presents will be further discussed and contrasted with existing models from the literature in the following chapter.

5   Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the experiences of employees that work flexible; part time and in some cases also telecommute, in the light of the different contexts they find themselves in. In particular, the study sought to answer which elements play a role in how the respondents perceive their flexible working arrangement as well as whether flexible work arrangements impact the way they work and if so in what way.

The findings suggest that social, cultural and personal factors impact how the respondents perceive their work arrangement and that these perceptions then determine how they experience their work-life balance and whether there is a change in way of work. The model presented at the end of the previous chapter (4.4) illustrates these findings. Its design is in line with the logic of systems thinking (Senge, 1990). It offers a conceptual image of the complexity of interrelationships between the various antecedent and outcome variables and flexible work arrangements that are revealed by the findings of this study. The model has similarities with the framework of Hill et al. (2008), which takes a holistic perspective in the definition of flexibility, looking at it in the larger context. However, the model presented here is distinctive from the model of Hill et al. in the emphasis it puts on individual factors as a crucial attribute to the perception and ultimately success of flexible work arrangements. While Hill et al. locate individual, home and family, community and workplace characteristics at the same level, as having an impact on all other factors of their model, the current model takes what they call individual characteristics and home and family characteristics specifically out and draws attention to these factors in particular. Therefore, in the current study, these two factors are collectively defined as individual factors and it is argued that they directly affect the antecedent variables: public context, organisational culture and management and colleague support. Furthermore, it is argued that individual factors not only affect perceptions of the flexible work arrangement but also perceptions of private and professional lives directly regardless of the employee's work arrangement.

The three following chapters illustrate in more detail the dynamics of the model in the context of previous research in the field. The first chapter discusses the elements,

which play the most significant role in how an employee perceives his work arrangement. The second chapter assesses the impact of flexible work arrangements on private and professional life with specific focus on way of work. Finally, the third chapter concludes with a discussion on what can be learned from this study and suggests which areas are important in future research.

5.1 Contextual factors

The findings suggest that several contextual factors influence how the respondents experience working flexible. These consist of social and cultural factors as well as personal factors. The following four subchapters will discuss them one by one and connect them to literature in the field. The chapter ends with a summary where the interrelationships between the various contextual elements are further demonstrated.

5.1.1 Public context

Overall, although the findings of the study did show that the public context has some role in the respondents' perception of their work arrangement, this was not a major influence to the perceived success of working flexible. The societal acceptance and public legislation in place did give employees the right to negotiate part-time work and in general be accepted as part-time workers because of how common it is. However, as a big majority perceived their employers to be offering flexibility only because they are obliged to, the findings are consistent with institutional theory, which stipulates how organisations adopt work-life policies due to societal pressure and for symbolic reasons without producing the necessary structural, behavioural or cultural changes within the organisation (Lewis et al., 2009; Peper et al., 2009). This can further be seen through the fact that all respondents felt that their employer would prefer for them to work full time and that they were being done a favour by being allowed to work part time. Therefore, even though societal norms provided some sense of comfort for the respondents in working part time, the organisational culture or management attitudes were not necessarily consistent with these norms and part-time work remained marginalised. In fact, it seems that the organisational-level response of the employers of the respondents in most cases fits the elaboration paradigm (Lee et al., 2000). Elaboration refers to the organisation developing some routines and making some adjustments to part-time work such as having formal policies in place while not giving

up the basic structuring of work and making it clear that they prefer the ideal worker who works full time and is not distracted by other obligations.

5.1.2 Organisational culture

The elements that the respondents placed the most value on when it came to the organisational culture was for the work environment to be friendly and relaxed and built upon mutual trust, respect and reasonable expectations. Therefore, they placed high value on the supportiveness and respect of the informal context of an organisation: the organisational culture and attitudes and behaviours of management and colleagues alike.

The lack of hierarchy, mentioned and valued by many respondents, presents a certain attitude within an organisation where, through a lack of superiority, a laid-back and relaxed culture or attitude is upheld. This attitude shows the employees what is valuable to the organisation and its management and as the employees see and feel these behaviours and attitudes are held up and rewarded in the organisation they will compare themselves and adjust to these behaviours (Thompson et al., 1999). If part-time work, in this case, does not fit, this impacts part-time workers attitudes and satisfaction with their work arrangement, and ultimately the success of it. These same principles can be applied to trust, as a culture based on trust was highly valued by many respondents. In fact, a number of respondents mentioned that their employers explicitly created an atmosphere of trust but expected their trust to be rewarded. Therefore, through themselves trusting their employees they expect the same kind of behaviour in return. These principles are furthermore consistent with the human ecology theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which emphasises the adaptation of an individual to his environment. The application of the human ecology theory in practice is further demonstrated as some respondents compared their present work environment to their previous jobs where they worked in a full-time culture and experienced less support and more pressure. They agreed that they feel more comfortable and secure with their work arrangement when the work environment and culture supports it, illustrating the importance that acceptance of flexibility needs to be more than just bureaucratic and rather entwined in the organisational practices.

The findings can also be interpreted in terms of Feldman's model (1990), which provides another perspective on the importance of organisational support. Feldman suggests that work context not only affects the relationship between part-time work and job attitudes and behaviours but the work context also impacts the choice of working part time or job attitudes and behaviours directly. The findings provided some evidence of this through, for example, the fact that many respondents felt they could not work any less than they do now both because of the work itself but also because of the general culture in their organisation where employees who work less than a certain amount of hours are frowned upon. This attitude therefore hindered the respondents to cut down in hours although otherwise they might want to.

Furthermore, when the cultural constructs of Den Dulk and Peper (2007) are applied to the findings it seems that in most cases the contradictory culture construct applies, in which a higher value is placed on the ideal worker who works long hours even if flexibility policies are in place and employees even feel informal support as well. A few respondents felt more support than that and less barriers and the approving culture construct could therefore be applied.

5.1.3 Management

Management support constitutes a big part of the organisational culture and the respondents' perception of their work. Trust is again the key element mentioned as well as establishing open communication with one's supervisor. Furthermore, a number of the respondents mentioned how managers become role models through their own behaviours and endorsement of flexibility to their employees. They felt that when managers themselves work flexible they set the example for others to follow in their footsteps. This is consistent with the construct of family supportive supervisor behaviours of Hammer et al. (2007) and Hammer et al. (2009) in which role modelling is one of the four behavioural constructs and with Kossek et al. (1999) which highlight how managers can remove barriers and become change agents through role modelling.

Furthermore, the respondents felt that supervisors were the most important element affecting how they perceive their work arrangement. They felt that when it came down to it, it was their supervisors personal attitude, respect or understanding of the work arrangement that played a much bigger role than any other elements, such as

the organisational culture or formal policies. A number found this particularly prominent after changing supervisors or jobs and therefore getting a new supervisor which in some cases was less understanding and in others more understanding then the previous one. This is consistent with Allen (2001) who found that the relationship between supportive supervisors and job attitudes was only partially mediated by a supportive environment; therefore highlighting the influence supervisors have on employees' experiences and perceptions. Therefore, when supervisors are themselves unconvinced of the benefits of flexible work arrangements, for example because they are accustomed to the traditional way of working and find it hard to trust people to perform as expected when they work flexible, their attitude is soon spread to other employees of the organisation. This conflict between the traditional way of working and flexible working was also frequently mentioned.

However, when mutual trust and respect are achieved the employer-employee relationship is taken closer to Reilly's (2001) definition of mutual flexibility, where the needs of both employer and employee are considered in a mutual way and trust is considered a necessary prerequisite. Many respondents described their relationship with their supervisor as somewhat similar to Reilly's definition of mutual flexibility. As such they valued being trusted, that expectations and goals were clear and that their wellbeing was cared for through respect of their private obligations. However, although a number of the respondents may have built a relationship with their closest supervisor where the values of mutual flexibility apply, none of them experienced it with their organisation as a whole. These values may therefore be upheld in the relationship between the employee and his or her supervisor but do not seem to apply to all management or the culture of the organisation in its entity.

In fact, when the respondents' relationship with their closest supervisor is omitted the employer-employee relationship can, in general, rather be categorised more in the line of incidental flexibility (Reilly, 2001). This is explained by the fact that most of the respondents have been allowed to work part time due to their special circumstances because of the legal obligation of organisations in the Netherlands to obey to such requests. Similarly, management can be seen as providing instrumental support, which

is another construct from the framework of Hammer et al. (2009), which refers to the support being reactive and accommodating to the needs of employees if approached.

5.1.4 Colleagues

The findings of this study seem to support equity theory (Adams, 1965), as in individuals constantly comparing themselves to others and if they feel inequity is present they respond in a negative way with frustration and annoyance. One of the frequently mentioned responses from colleagues was, in fact, irritation and annoyance. Furthermore, the less employees work, thus fewer hours per week, the more the irritation. Experiencing irritation not only affects the respondents' sense of entitlement to take up flexibility as the literature predicts (Lewis, 1996). It also seems to lead to them doing everything they can in order for their colleagues to not have to pick up their work on the days they are off. They therefore try to keep up with them and restore the equity. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the fewer hours an employee works the less chance they have to completely restore the equity which seems to lead to a persistence of irritation towards these employees. These attitudes might, however, also be a reflection of the persistent image of the ideal worker and therefore reflect the attitude that people are not seen as pulling their weight the same way as others if they are not present 40 hours a week.

There is also evidence for equity being achieved, as many respondents experienced understanding from their colleagues, particularly in the cases where the organisational culture was adjusted to flexible work arrangements. A number of them also felt acceptance and understanding because they are parents, which suggests that this somehow impacts the input/output ratio comparison between them and their colleagues.

The colleague relationship can also be interpreted in terms of the human ecology theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in the sense that if the workgroup morale is such that most work full-time and the pressure is to apply to the full-time norm, the employees will do their best to keep up with that in order to avoid annoyance and frustration from their workgroup members. They try to adjust to the workgroup norms, which in many cases lead to working harder during the time they work and can cause stress.

5.1.5 Summary

One of the goals of this study was to examine what elements play a role in how an employee perceives his work arrangement. The abovementioned elements: public context, organisational context, management and colleague support emerged as the strong contributors to these perceptions, which is consistent with existing literature in the field. The more overall support the respondents felt from all actors in their work environment the more comfortable and satisfied they were with their work arrangement and the less stress they felt. However, the findings show that for most of the respondents even if they work flexible, flexible work arrangements were in most cases not endorsed throughout their organisations, not offered in a strategic way and agreed to only to accommodate to the employees' needs. Many respondents felt they needed to prove themselves and keep up with their full-time colleagues to show that their work arrangement was justifiable.

This is, however, where the role of individual differences kicks in. Some respondents were completely secure about their work arrangement and made no excuses for it nor allowed it to impact their work. Others were very aware of their work environment and the consequences of their work arrangement on others such as their supervisor or colleagues. These differences seem to be contributable to individual differences, such as personality traits or confidence level which, moreover, also affect an individual's interpretation of organisational responses. Furthermore, the life situation of the respondents also affects not only the perceptions of the respondents themselves but also their colleagues. The respondents' reasons for their work arrangement were their children and many reported a different perspective and a different value on work since becoming parents. Their colleagues were also more tolerant towards them because of them being parents and therefore reacted differently because of their situation. Therefore, individual differences, be it personality, life situation and therefore motivation, or other individual factors, seem to have a big impact on the respondents' experience and perception of their work arrangements.

5.2 Outcomes of flexible work arrangements

Having discussed the influences of context on how an employee perceives his work arrangement, the next step is to examine the effects of their flexible work arrangement

on their life at home and life at work. The current study gives indications on how working flexible affects personal lives as well as the work life and particularly way of work. However, as with the context, both personal and private lives are also subject to individual factors and interpretations. Each one will be discussed in the following chapters.

5.2.1 Private life

There are two key words that emerged from the findings when it came to the effects on life at home. The first one was being more relaxed. The respondents felt that they had more time to enjoy their family and hobbies, were less stressed and overall had a more relaxed private life. Their flexible work arrangement therefore seemed to help them to achieve better balance between their work role and family role and therefore reduce the role strain (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). By having one or more days off work in the week the work-family conflict seems to be reduced as they have more time to fulfil their home duties. Furthermore, many also reported more satisfaction at work because of working part time. This is consistent with role enhancement theories (Voydanoff, 2002), in the sense that because they can better perform their family role they are also more content in their work role and enjoy it more. Kelly et al. (2008) define this as family-work enhancement. The findings of this study therefore suggest that flexible work arrangements and part-time work in particular may work as an adaptive strategy to work-life balance issues. A sufficiency of fit achieved by an individual between work and family, as predicted by human ecology theory, is better achieved through part-time work (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

The second word frequently mentioned is luxury. Many respondents felt very fortunate to be able to work part time and perceived this as a luxury not everyone is so fortunate to afford. The respondents felt like they would probably not be able to work like this elsewhere. As they compare their employer to others and compare themselves to other people in their environment, a clear increase in the value of their psychological contract with the organisation as described by Scandura and Lankau (1997) can be observed. The respondents value their employer differently and feel that they are showing concern for the balance of their employees between work and family life.

5.2.2 Professional life

Most of respondents felt that they worked more efficiently because they work part time, sometimes deliberately and out of necessity and in other cases non-deliberately. There are numerous reasons that may explain this.

Firstly, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) predicts that if employees feel they are reasonably rewarded they are ready to go the extra mile for their employers beyond their predetermined responsibilities (Janssen, 2000). There was however no direct sign that the extra effort put forward by the respondents was due to some form of gratitude for being allowed to work part time. Even if feeling fortunate to be allowed to work flexible can be viewed as a form of gratitude this did not seem to lead to more effort but rather to greater commitment and loyalty to the organisation.

Second, the respondents in many cases experienced imposed work intensification, as predicted by Kelliher and Anderson (2009), when their job responsibilities were not adjusted to their part-time status. They therefore raced to keep up with what was asked of them in the time they had at work and felt like they were under constant time pressure.

A third reason for the perceived increase in efficiency might lie with equity theory (Adams, 1965); that employees want to keep up with their colleagues who work more in order to be viewed in the same light as them. They want to have the same chances within the organisation and not be considered as inferior employees.

Lastly, a number of respondents also mentioned that they were more energetic and content at work because they had achieved a better work-life balance through working part time. This suggests that the family-work enhancement mentioned in the previous chapter (5.2.1) therefore might lead to more energy at work, which might be a reason for the increased perceived efficiency. This is furthermore consistent with the principles of enabled work intensification, described by Kelliher and Anderson (2009).

5.2.3 Role of individual factors

Although imposed and enabled work intensification and equity theory might provide answers to the reasons behind the respondents' perceived increase in efficiency another likely reason has still not been discussed. This is the role of individual factors. The data from this study is not elaborate enough to analyse the characteristics of the

respondents in any detail. However, a majority of them describe themselves as hard-workers who will not leave work behind for anyone else and want to do their job as well as they can. This resembles the outline for a conscientious individual as presented in the Five-Factor personality model (Tupes and Christal, 1961), but conscientiousness has been related to less work-family and family-work conflict and more effort (Wayne et al., 2004). Similarly, many respondents described themselves as being organised and committed and as a having a hard-working work style, which is consistent with the findings of Lee, MacDermid, Williams et al. (2002) research on factors contributing to the success of part-time work arrangements.

As human ecology theory predicts, these different personality characteristics both impact the perceptions of the individual of its environment but also bring out different responses from the social and organisational environment and impact interactions between the employee and individuals in his work environment (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000). In Feldman's model (1990) demographic factors, which include individual characteristics, were, together with work context, seen as a variable that not only affect the relationship between part-time work and job attitudes and behaviours but also affect the choice to work part time or job attitudes and behaviours directly. The current findings also provide evidence for this, for example through those respondents who described that they always work hard regardless of whether they are part-time, showing that their individual characteristics affect job attitudes regardless of their work arrangement.

The validity of Feldman's model can also be seen through those respondents who reported having no problems leaving work at work regardless of their part-time status, which again suggests that it might be individual factors rather than the actual work arrangement that affect job attitudes. This ease of disconnect is, in fact, a good example of the impact of individual differences on job outcomes. People have different attitudes and some disconnect with more ease than others, which does not necessarily have anything to do with part-time work. Another example is how the respondents dealt with their imposed work intensification. Some internalised it and raced to keep up with their workload while others took a more relaxed view on their heavy workload and did what they could in the time they had.

However, it seems that not only individual characteristics play a role but also individual life situation and even gender. The change of values and priorities regarding work and family after becoming parents has already been discussed in chapter 5.1.5. Some respondents also experienced time pressure because of their children, as they are bound by having to pick them up from day-care at a certain time and therefore have to take care of the daily tasks in the time they have. Furthermore, the female respondents seemed to have a harder time dealing with working part time and managing different responsibilities. This might be due to a greater sense of responsibility for the household, which means their role at home might be bigger than the males, and they therefore experience more role conflict.

Having recognised the possible reasons behind a potential efficiency increase following the adaption of flexible work arrangements, management can use them to motivate employees to put that extra effort in. Amar's model (2004) suggests that management needs to recognise the motivational drivers behind employees' behaviours and respond to them by adjusting motivation antecedents. These antecedents can be job oriented; thus designing the job to accommodate to employees personal situation, they can be outcome oriented, therefore concerned with rewards; financial or non-financial, and lastly they can be organisational referring to all the various organisational factors that have an impact on employees and their work. Amar stresses that management has to recognise the diversity of its employees and their needs, and adjust the motivational antecedents accordingly to motivate their employees to do their work better. This is in line with the findings of this study, which emphasises the importance of individual differences and the respect for them so that they can be used for the success of the organisation. Part-time work can be seen as one type of job oriented motivating antecedent because it allows for recognition of employees needs and helps them reduce strain in their lives and shape their environment to better meet their personal needs (Lee, MacDermid and Buck, 2002). However, as has been discussed before, part-time work needs to be endorsed in the organisation in order to achieve the increase in motivation and potential positive outcomes that can ensue. In fact, such endorsement can be seen as an organisational motivating antecedent according to Amar (2004).

Other theories view flexible work arrangements as an extrinsic motivator when adopted as a coping strategy in response to excessive stress or role overload (Barney and Elias, 2010). However, in light of the importance of trust in the findings of this study, it appears that flexible work arrangements should rather be regarded as a way to increase intrinsic motivation. Trust is the basis of job autonomy, increased responsibility and a feeling of work being meaningful which are all elements of intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This is also consistent with the notion of innovative work practices where flexibility, employee involvement, cooperation and self-regulation are key concepts. Trust furthermore provides the ground for a positive social exchange, as predicted by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), where employees put that extra effort in because of gratitude and commitment to the organisation instead of intensification being imposed on them.

5.2.4 Summary

This study indicates that flexible work arrangements can help employees to balance their work and family life, even to the point that they experience family-work enhancement. The findings suggest that organisations can increase the value of the psychological contract by allowing their employees to work part time, which can lead to more organisational commitment, more effort and increased efficiency.

The findings also showed that the respondents felt they were more efficient at work because they work part time. This is consistent with previous literature in the field. The reasons behind this are, however, unclear. Many respondents experienced work intensification and in most cases more stress because of their job responsibilities not being adjusted. However, imposed work intensification has been shown to lead to increased stress, increased work family tension and a decline in overall well-being (Burchell, 2002; Green 2004), and is therefore never positive in the long run. Other respondents felt more energetic and less tired at work because of their part-time status and several experienced a feeling of having to keep up with their colleagues regardless of working fewer hours.

Finally, it is important to note that there were respondents who explicitly described themselves as hard workers. They explained that they would do their job just as good regardless of the number of hours per week they had to do it; this was simply their work

ethic. Similarly, others explained that they valued their home time more now that they had children and would do what they need to be home in time to enjoy time with their family. These are individual factors or differences that not only impact how people work but also how they experience their work-life balance. The value of work and home lives therefore seems to differ based on personality, life situation, gender, age etc. and people react to and interpret situations in their own specific way based on these factors. This indicates that increased efficiency cannot be attributed to working part time alone but that various other factors also play a role in this efficiency increase, which is in line with the principles of systems thinking (Senge, 1990). The goal must then be to achieve this increased efficiency without the negative outcomes of increased stress or work-family conflict.

5.3 Making flexible work arrangements a success

The aim of this study was twofold. Firstly to examine what elements play a role in how you perceive your flexible work arrangements and second to find out whether flexible work arrangements impact the way of work and if so in what way. Potential answers to each one of these questions have been discussed in the above chapters, based on the findings of this study.

However, it is important to note that due to the qualitative nature of this study its findings cannot be generalised and are not statistically relevant. Therefore, they can only be viewed as indications for management and flexible workers as well as give ideas for further research in the field. Furthermore, the study is based on the employee's point-of-view only and omits perceptions and views of the employers, which is a limitation to the relevance of the findings.

Given these limitations, the findings of this study present a few fundamental practical suggestions for management on how to implement flexible work arrangements in such a way that they can become a success for employers and employees alike and potential efficiency gains can be achieved. Firstly, the organisational culture should not only be open to part-time work but it should be endorsed through and through in the organisation. Managers should become role models and change agents when it comes to attitudes and actions and colleagues need to be educated and understandings of fair work contributions need to be negotiated and communicated to reduce any irritation or

annoyance within the employee group. The overall environment should to be such that employees experience flexible working as an actual usable option and they feel entitled to use such arrangements without repercussions. Through systematic endorsement and support and a change of focus to results instead of visual time at the office flexible work arrangements should therefore become a mechanism to reduce role strain in employees' lives.

Furthermore, organisations need to realise the fact that implementing flexible work arrangements such as part-time work is not sufficient in itself to achieve positive outcomes such as increased employee efficiency. With support and trust present at multiple levels within an organisation where individuals are valued and motivated based on their differences, individuals should be motivated to do their work better or more efficiently than else. They should also experience more overall well-being when their private life situation is respected and they feel support for creating a balance between work and family.

This study puts the emphasis on the role of individual factors as an influencing factor on the outcomes of flexible work arrangements. Surprisingly, most existing studies in the field seem to omit this factor when examining the outcomes of flexible work arrangements. The outcomes, such as organisational commitment, work-life balance, increased productivity and job satisfaction to name a few, are instead in most cases attributed to the implementation of flexible work arrangements alone. The findings of this study suggest that previous studies have taken a too simplified approach. In order to get the most out of flexible work arrangements they need to be recognised as a part of a dynamic and interrelated environment of multiple actors and elements that affect each other in various ways. The impact of individual differences therefore provide a venue for further research, so as to get a clearer picture on what individual factors are important for the success of flexible work arrangements.

Furthermore, the limitations of this study also provide ideas for further research in the field. Firstly, as this study discusses flexible work arrangements solely from the employee's side and omits the employer's view, including the different opinions of employers in a future research of a similar focus should provide a more comprehensive view on the subject. Second, a greater diversity of respondents both in nationalities

and jobs would allow for a more diversified perspective on the subject. It would be especially interesting to add respondents in various organisations in several countries to try to get a more broad view on the role of culture when it comes to flexible work arrangements. Third, a large sample quantitative study based on a study like the one presented here would provide findings that could be generalised to the greater public. A combination of such a study with numerous qualitative interviews should give interesting results that can be applied in organisations worldwide.

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Appendix I: Interview framework

Background:

A. What is your job title and can you describe your work responsibilities shortly?

B. How long have you worked here?

C. Do you have a family? If so, do you have children and can you describe their demographics?

D. How long does it take you to travel/commute to work? And how do you travel to work?

Flexible work arrangements:

1. How do you work flexible? (Home connection, reduced hours, compressed work week)

2. Can you describe how working flexible has affected your life (for better or worse)?

3. How are your work responsibilities adjusted to you working flexible?

4. How is the attitude in general in your workplace towards flexible work?

    a. Are your employers understanding and supporting towards people who need flexibility?

    b. If applicable, are your direct reports understanding and supporting towards you working flexible?

    c. Do your direct reports work flexible themselves?

5. Do you think your employers are aware of the advantages or disadvantages of flexible work arrangements?

    a. Do you feel they are in general more accepting and take initiative or are they sceptical and criticising?

Motivations:

6. What are your motivations for working flexible?

    a. Children, to avoid commuting, more free time…

    b. How did you end up working like this instead of the regular 9-5, 5 days a week?

7. How do these motivations impact how hard you work during work hours?

     a. Do you feel more or less driven to get things done?

8. How do you feel your employer is motivating you?

     a. Do you feel respected and trusted?

     b. What ways do they use to inspire you (intrinsic, extrinsic)?

9. Do you feel you have more control over your work life balance because you work flexible?

Work effort:

10. Do you think you work differently because your work is flexible?

     a. Do you put more/less effort into it, are you more/less organized… How is it different?

11. How is the pressure from your employers towards you compared to the full-time 9-5 employees?

     a. Is the pressure adjusted to you working flexible?

12. How about their expectations towards you as an employee?

     a. Do you feel it is different? Do they expect more/less?

13. Can you describe what you feel the difference is between working full time at the office and working flexible when it comes to how hard you work?

14. What do you think are the main advantages and/or disadvantages of working flexible?