Flexible working arrangements in British Workplaces: Employer provision, employee take-up and associated outcomes for employees

by
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Abstract

The thesis uses data from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey 2011 to assess the extent of flexible working provision in British workplaces, the perceived accessibility and use of the different flexible working options and the employee-level outcomes which are associated with their use.

Provision of flexible working is measured in three different ways; the overall number of options available at the workplace; the provision of a type of flexibility (hours, schedule or location); or the provision of individual options for flexibility.

The findings show support for the institutional and organizational adaptive perspectives of provision; there is little support for situational, or equal opportunities perspectives on provision, whereas there is qualified support for a link between High Performance Working Practices (HPWPs) and the overall level of provision of flexible working.

There is no strong evidence to suggest that recessionary effects either result in provision being increased (which would be supportive of perspectives which suggest that flexibility can be a tool of the employer to reduce costs) or reduced at workplaces (which would be supportive of perspectives which suggest that employers would seek to impose greater control over their workforce when facing a challenging economic climate). It is suggested that organizational strategies around flexibility including response to financial adversity is an area which merits further empirical study.

The evidence suggests that perceived accessibility and use of FWAs differ by the type of FWA under consideration. Schedule and location flexibility perceived accessibility and use are associated with a more privileged labour market position, either in terms of employment role, or with the individual characteristics traditionally associated with labour market advantage. Perceived accessibility of hours flexibility, which is necessarily accompanied by a reduction in pay, is found to be heavily associated with characteristics associated with labour market disadvantage. Taken together the findings suggest the need to consider the specific type of flexibility more carefully. Although the

findings on the perceived accessibility and use of the different options show strong associations with different individual and job characteristics, the limited evidence available suggests most employers believe that their flexible working options are available to all employees.

Perceived accessibility and use of the different types of options are found to have significant associations with certain individual level outcomes. Higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are associated with use and perceived accessibility of the schedule and location flexibility types. These findings are supportive of both social exchange theories and signalling theories. Use of hours flexibility is found to be associated with lower levels of work-related anxiety. The results suggest that employees who use flexible options do not experience better WLB than those who do not.

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Declaration

None of the material contained in this thesis has been published previously. The thesis is the candidate's own work. The thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Flexible working and the provision of flexible working arrangements by employers has received increased attention in policy and academic sphere since the 1970s when the practice began to emerge in many advanced economies. There is a general acceptance that it has become more commonly provided by employers and used by employees from that time (Dex and Scheibl, 1998). However, many questions about its provision by employers, its use by employees and the outcomes which accrue remain either unanswered or show contradictory findings depending on which research is cited and the method which has been used.

FW is seen as a means for reconciling competing demands between work and family life resulting in positive outcomes for employees while also generating positive outcomes for businesses. The positive outcomes which may be experienced by employees include the ability to continue in employment, higher levels of both job satisfaction and higher levels of organizational commitment. In turn some of these individual level outcomes may result in improved outcomes at the organizational level. It is some of these relationships which this thesis seeks to explore in depth.

According to the UK Government, flexible working (FW) may refer to a form of work organization which is designed to fit the needs of the employee [UK Government, Undated]. Implicitly it refers to reconfiguring work in ways which are more appropriate for the employee's work and home lives. Thus the employee who makes use of FW has a pattern of working which deviates from the standard or traditional model, most typically offered by the employer. This is usually achieved through the individual by agreement with their employer varying their pattern of work, either in terms of total hours worked, when the hours are worked and / or the location of the work, by making use of a flexible working arrangement (FWA). It can be seen that although FW is taken to mean work deviating from pre-established patterns in ways which support the employee, the precise form that it can take can vary from one employee to the next along those dimensions of total time worked,

schedule of the hours worked or the location at which the work is undertaken. FW is therefore an umbrella term under which different types of flexibility are provided by employers and used by employees (Fagan, 2004). It follows therefore that divergent patterns in use and in outcomes may be evident according to those different types of flexibility, and this in turn suggests a research agenda which interrogates these different types of flexibility in both the theoretical and empirical sense.

In the UK, FW received a greater profile with the Work Life Balance (WLB) Campaign launched by the then Labour Government in March 2000 (Arrowsmith, 2001). There were various changes to employment legislation which came about in light of this campaign including extensions to parental leave and maternity leave, and the introduction of the right to take time off to care for dependents. However, the major part of the campaign focused on business and equality benefits of flexible (or family-friendly) working, and stimulated much policy and academic debate (Lewis and Campbell, 2007). At the time the campaign started, flexible working was not covered by UK employment legislation, and any access to FWAs was largely a matter for individuals to discuss with their employer. In theory nothing prevented policies from being written in to any collectively agreed terms and conditions of employment, though there is little evidence, certainly in the UK context, that the issue was afforded high priority on trade union bargaining agendas (Dickens, 2000). Employers were under no legal obligation to either consider or grant requests from their employees. In some countries this remains the case, though in the UK this changed in 2003, when the legislation was changed to allow certain groups of employees the right to request FW. It is important to note that the legislation did not give employees the right to work flexibly, merely the right for certain employees to request changes to their work organization. This imposed a duty on employers to treat such statutory requests in a reasonable manner, such as by holding a meeting to assess the merits and drawbacks of such a change and by including a right of appeal in any process. Ultimately though employers are, under the legislation, able to refuse requests on business grounds provided that the process has been reasonable.

The legislation first enacted defined a narrow group of employees as eligible, though there have been subsequent extensions to the coverage of the legislation (see TUC (2017) for a concise summary). The Employment Act of 2003 which introduced the right to request FW did so initially for parents of young children up to the age of five and disabled children up to the age of eighteen. In 2007 the right was extended to cover those with caring responsibility for adults, and in 2009 was extended to parents of children up to the age of seventeen. From June 2014 the right to request FW came into effect for all employees subject to twenty-six weeks of continuous employment (Adam, 2014).

1.1 Research Aims

There are three main research themes in this thesis. The first aim is to analyse and evaluate the provision of FWAs in British workplaces assessing workplace and workforce characteristics in order to explore theories of why employers make these arrangements available to employees, and to assess factors associated with changes in provision. This draws on both cross-sectional and panel data. The second aim is to evaluate the workplace-level characteristics and employee-level factors which are associated with a) the employee's belief that they are able to use FWA options ("perceived accessibility") and b) the take up of FWAs by individual employees. The third and final aim of the study is to explore and assess the outcomes for employees which derive from the various forms of flexible working in different contexts.

Analyses are based on data from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey, and comprise a series of regressions. Data are taken from the latest two waves of the survey; 2004 and 2011 (Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) et al., 2014; Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) et al., 2015). Responses from managers, answering on behalf of their workplace, and from employee are used in order to assess workplace and employee effects. WERS questions, strengths and limitations are described more fully in chapter there.

Six FWAs are considered in this study[1]. **Flexi-time** is where an employee has no set start or finish times, but instead there is an agreement to work a set number of hours per week or per month. This may or may not include a commitment to be at work during specific core hours. **Job sharing** schemes operate when a full-time job is shared between employees. The option of **reducing working hours** refers to the possibility of reducing the number of contracted hours. This is commonly referred to as switching from full-time to part-time. **Compressed hours** is where the employee works standard working hours over fewer days. For example this could be a nine day fortnight. **Working from home** is where the employee works at or from home during usual working hours. A workplace would be counted as having this in place if it gave the option for employees to work for some or all of their working time at home. **Term time working** refers to the option of working only during school term times. Within the thesis FWAs are conceptualized and assessed from three different perspectives: individual FWA options; sets of FWAs defined as each offering conceptually different types of flexibility (sometimes referred to as FW or FWA bundles); and the total number (i.e. a count) of FWA options.

The thesis takes views from managers and employees at the same workplace, enabling exploration of the differences between managers' perceptions of the availability of the FW options and the employee's perception of their accessibility. The perspectives of employers and employees can vary in different ways. Different scenarios exists whereby employees and employers may have different views of the provision and accessibility of FWAs, either where employers believe their provision to be greater than the accessibility that employees perceive, or the other way where employees believe accessibility to be greater than the employers view of their provision. Employers may believe that they make FWAs available to their employees, whereas employees may believe that the policies are not accessible to them. This might be because employees do not see the policies being

[1] The selection of FWAs for consideration is determined by the choice of data, though these six represent the most common practices discussed in the literature, and align most closely with the definition of FWA as used in this study.

used at the workplace, have heard of requests being turned down, or have observed "rationing" of the policies or requests from certain groups of employees as less likely to be granted. Employee perceptions of accessibility may be narrower than the employer's view of provision because although employers may make options available, but employees do not see themselves as "the sort of employee" (discussed in greater detail below) who would need FW, and hence answer that the policies are not accessible to them. Alternatively employees may believe that the option is accessible to them, when the senior HR manager does not believe the option is provided. That could be because the employee observes informal deals negotiated between line managers and workers despite the option not being formally made available at the workplace.

Relationship between FWAs and other forms of "family-friendly" employment practices

FWAs are sometimes treated as analytically distinct or are subsumed under the broader category of policies designed to support employees who have commitments outside of work (variously referred to as work-family (support) policies, initiatives or practices (Butts et al., 2013; Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2004; Glass, 2004; Haar and Spell, 2004; Kelly et al., 2011; Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000, Thompson et al., 1999) , family-friendly policies / practices / supports (Bloom et al., 2011; Budd and Mumford, 2004; 2006; Dex and Smith 2002) work-life (balance) initiatives, practices, or benefits (Beauregard and Henry, 2009; Casper and Harris, 2008; Kossek et al., 2010; Lambert, 2000). The question of whether FWAs are seen as part of a wider package of support for "family life" or whether they are distinct may reflect assumptions about potential users of these policies (this theme is developed further in chapter four). In the former case access to policies is more likely to be considered legitimate only for employees who have parental and / or caring commitments outside of work, and in the latter scenario access is more likely to be more evenly distributed across the workforce. In this study FWAs as defined above are kept analytically separate from other forms of family-supportive working practice. Although FWAs are taken to be distinct from other forms of family supportive practices, there is still the issue of the different types of flexibility which the

options offer. It cannot be assumed that one form of flexible working option will offer the same benefits as another, rather the type of flexibility must be considered more carefully.

The nature of what is meant by FW working is also important. As noted FW may be implemented by employees making use of different FWA options. Some studies have therefore sought to consider questions relating to individual FWA options. Other studies have tried to group FWAs according to the type of flexibility that they afford. Some studies have considered the total levels of provision of FWA options, regardless of the different options which have been made available.

Each of the three approaches to measuring FW (individual policies, count of total number of practices, bundles of policies) has been used in previous academic studies to address different research questions. Individual FWA options have formed the basis of studies using both quantitative and qualitative research techniques. For example flexitime has formed the basis of studies such as Galea et al., (2014), whereas the option of working from home has been the point of interest for authors such as (Felstead et al., 2002).

Data and method

Part of this study's strength results from the data which are being used for the analyses. Using WERS data offers a statistically reliable, comprehensive and representative picture of employment relations in Britain (BIS, 2013; van Wanrooy, 2013)[2]. Moreover, its design allows linking of employer and employee data, as well as options for panel analysis (thus facilitating comparison of change over time at the same workplaces), allowing for more in-depth and sophisticated analysis compared with other large social science surveys. The link between employer and employee data provides a unique opportunity to investigate employees in the workplace context.

Prior studies of FWAs have had numerous methodological limitations. Studies analyzing employee perceived accessibility, use and outcomes have mostly been restricted to individual level

[2] Peer-reviewed journal articles using WERS data are cited throughout this work and attest to its academic provenance

characteristics only, thus these have been divorced from the context in which the flexibility is being provided. Those which have attempted to give some context have relied on employee reporting of workplace level characteristics.

Analyses have been based on specifically designed questionnaires which have targeted specific sections of the labour market, rather than being more representative of the wider population. Whether experiences of flexibility in different sections of the economy are replicated for the wider economy, or whether flexibility for particular groups of workers are experienced by different types of workers leads to concerns about whether the findings of such studies are generalizable to other sectors and / or workers. In addition to the issue of generalizability, these have typically achieved small sample sizes, leaving many unanswered questions about their representativeness to the population under investigation. Many of these studies have not been weighted to provide accurate population estimates and regressions may not be fully specified leading to inaccurate parameter estimates and incorrect calculation of standard errors.

WERS offers both a large sample size, giving greater assurances about representativeness, as well as allowing exploration of employer and employee data. This allows greater exploration of the workplace context in which flexibility operates. Moreover, the design of WERS with the panel element allows for investigation of changes over time, as opposed to only facilitating cross sectional analyses with the well-known limitations around establishing causal relationships.

The result of these different investigations means that there is lack of consensus especially about the outcomes which result from FW. To address the problem of the numerous studies which have revealed many different findings there have been attempts to resolve the issue through meta analyses. For example, Allen et al., (2013) use the meta-analytic technique to investigate the relationship between flexibility and job satisfaction. As for any meta-analysis, the technique is unable to control for bias and error in the original studies. Moreover, the technique fails to correct for different populations and measurement techniques (Beauregard and Henry, 2009).

WERS allows the large-scale picture to be established and interrogated. The large-scale nature of the survey offers greater assurances about statistical reliability, but this is at the expense of being able to design questions for specific research questions. Although WERS workplace level data can be supplemented by other workplace level data by matching the unique workplace identifier to other major social science surveys, there is no possibility to attach additional employee level data. Thus although WERS allows many individual level variables to be investigated, it does not permit exploration of some of the individual level psychological variables which are emerging in some areas of the literature (Shockley and Allen, 2009; Skurak et al., 2018; Stavrou and Ierodiahonou, 2016).

Studies which use WERS employee data which have been based on waves prior to WERS 2011 to examine questions related to FW have been limited in two senses. The first limitation relates to wording of questions around FW, and the second is a more general methodological point. First, the design of the employee questions around the FWA options in waves prior to 2011 meant that it was only possible to identify whether or not employees perceived the options to the available to them, but not whether the policies were actually being used (see for example Budd and Mumford, 2006). Thus analyses which discussed perceived availability incorporated those who believe the option to be available but are not using it as well as those who were actually using the options. Being able to identify whether policies are being used is crucial when analyzing the outcomes which accrue from FW, and taps into the debates about whether it is the use of policies which influences the observed outcomes, or their perceived accessibility. Second, analytical techniques have advanced since studies were published using earlier WERS waves. Developments in technique allow for the specifying of properly weighted multi-level models to account for the different probabilities of selection for both workplaces and employees. Earlier studies which have used WERS SEQ data were weighted only at the employee level, meaning that they were unable to account for the nesting of the employee data in workplaces. When estimating multilevel models using both workplace and employee level data It is now possible to weight these models at both the workplace level and the employee level, to produce properly calculated standard errors. This work therefore responds to

Bessa and Tomlinson's (2017) call to develop more multilevel research to facilitate better understanding of the context in which flexibility operates.

The thesis, through adding to the existing understanding of flexible working provision as well as the benefits and drawbacks for employees, contributes to knowledge in different ways. It will add to existing literature on the subject of HRM which is of value to the academic community and scholars of management practice. It will add to knowledge of theoretical understanding of the employment relationship by testing theories around flexible working. It will also be of practical importance to policymakers when considering how best to provide options around flexible working to the workforce. At the level of the workplace, it will also be relevant for managers and HR professionals who have oversight of workplace policies and are charged with handling requests for flexibility. Insights into performance of individuals in different context may challenge managers' prior assumptions about the sorts of flexibility which is possible and desirable. The debates and findings of the study are also helpful for the end-users of the policies, the employees themselves, as they consider which types of flexibility might be suitable for their own situation.

Although the study will be based on British workplaces, debates around provision of flexible working are prominent in most advanced economies and as such the study will have international relevance. This is not to say that FW operates in the same way across different national economies and societies. Studies such as Peretz et al., (2017) have shown how national cultural values may impact on both FWA use as well as their effectiveness, and comparative analysis points to the influence of different welfare state models accounting for variations in organizational levels of provision (Den Dulk at al., 2012). Changes to the UK legislative context around flexible working may prompt employers to think more carefully and strategically about the types of flexible working which they offer to their employees and the ways in which requests can be managed to both organisation and employee benefit. Due to these changes, a thorough study of practices and their outcomes is both timely and relevant.

It is likely that the topic of work organization and flexible working will experience heightened interest over the coming years given the unexpected impact from outside factors. Towards the end of the research, the global Covid-19 pandemic has had a seismic impact on people's lives across the world and in the UK. The effects on the sphere of work have been profound, with UK employees being either required to work from home or told to work from home if at all possible, generating a huge scale change in work organization for huge swathes of employees. It is, of course, too early to say in what form work will resume, though it is possible that employers will have seen benefits to working from home, and may in future be less resistant to allowing employees access to home working, or indeed other forms of flexibility. What is certain is that recent experience has challenged some of the assumptions around forms of work organization and that responses by organizations and individuals in the future will be of great interest.

1.2 Thesis Layout

The thesis is set out as follows. Chapter two reviews the legislative background relating to FW for the and then establishes definitions for the concepts which will be used to understand FWAs for the remainder of the study. The chapter then considers and reviews the literature around FWAs on each of the three substantive themes of the thesis: the provision of FWAs in British workplaces; the availability and take up of FWA options for and by employees in British workplaces; and the outcomes for employees which derive from FWAs. The literature review develops a series of research questions around the themes of provision of, use of and outcomes resulting from FWAs. These research questions are then addressed in chapters which are then considered in subsequent chapters. Chapter three introduces, describes and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the WERS data which are used to answer the research questions developed in chapter two. Chapters four to six are the results chapters, which consider in turn the research questions relating to the three substantive areas of the thesis. Chapter four examines workplace and individual level factors associated with the nature of provision of FWAs by employers in British workplaces, it considers the extent to which FWAs are made available across the workforce and examines whether there has

been changes to provision in light of recession and austerity. Chapter five examines employee views on availability of FWAs and assesses individual level and workplace level contextual factors associated with their take up. Chapter 6 examines the outcomes which result from flexible working for employees. The outcomes which are considered are Worklife Balance (conceptualized here as the extent of conflict between work and family life), work-related anxiety, job satisfaction and employee (affective) commitment. Each results chapter follows the same format, beginning with a brief introduction and the research questions are restated. Then the method of analysis which is to be used in the chapter is outlined. This is important as different analytical techniques are used throughout the thesis, reflecting both the nature of the question to be answered and the dependent variable which is to be regressed, as well as the arrangement of the data. Chapter 7 summarises the findings of the research and considers and discusses the contribution the work makes to understanding of flexible working.

Chapter 2 Literature review and development of research questions

2.1 Introduction

This chapter develops definitions of the key terms which will be used for this research. The chapter then outlines and assesses the legal and policy framework which has developed in the UK around flexible working, and in which the research is located. Literature around the three substantive areas of research (provision, use and outcomes) is then reviewed in order comprising three main sections within this chapter, and from that literature research questions for each of the substantive areas of research are defined. From the extant research, areas of interest and research questions which this work will address are developed. The research questions are summarised at the end of each section; thus there are a series of questions developed around the key areas of provision, availability and use, and outcomes.

What is flexible working?

There is no one definition of what constitutes FW (Chen and Fulmer, 2018), though there may be general mainstream contemporary agreement, at least in policy circles[3], about its purpose to provide better WLB for employees and indeed the topic is framed in that way on the UK Government website (UK Government, undated). Whether FW actually delivers better WLB outcomes for employees is a question for empirical testing.

The key defining characteristic of the type of flexibility this study is looking at, which sets it apart from other models of flexibility is that the variation to work organization is instigated by the employee rather than the employer (Lewis et al, 2016), or put another way, that employees exercise choices over their work organization in order to achieve better outcomes, such as a better balance between work and non-work responsibilities (Bal and De Lange, 2015). This is in contrast to other

[3] Different academic perspectives on flexibility and FW are explored in more detail below.

forms of flexibility which are designed to meet the needs of the employer. Employer led, or employer friendly forms of flexibility include annualized hours, zero hours contracts, various forms of shift work (e.g. two/three-shift system, split shifts, weekend shifts) (Casey, 1997; Fleetwood, 2007a).

Employees are said to achieve FW through accessing a FWA. FWAs refer to forms of work organisation which allow employees to arrange their work differently from a standard or typical model (Budd and Mumford, 2004), though what the standard or typical model might actually look like is often implied, rather than stated explicitly. There is a clear issue in such a definition of what might constitute a standard or typical model, and the importance of the normative ideal worker model, particularly a gendered or masculinized ideal worker model (Kelly et al., 2010), is a theme which runs through this thesis. The accounts of a gendered ideal worker model, and gendered organizations lead in to the debate about whether FWAs are the appropriate mechanism to deal with WLB problems. Accounts such as Jurzyck (1998) and Gardiner and Tomlinson (2009) argue that FWAs do little to challenge existing forms of work organization, reinforce existing divisions, and are imbued with assumptions about who is likely to request flexible working. The results of this means that flexible working may be seen as a second-best form of working, and is assumed to signal to the employer a lower level of commitment to the job. Hence those who take the decision to work flexibly may experience career penalties, and employees may be dissuaded from asking for flexibility for fear of experiencing negative career effects.

The notion of the ideal worker model exerts considerable influence, as the ways in which work is organized have traditionally been built up around the characteristics of those employees which have traditionally filled the jobs. This affects aspects such as the job requirements, the skills, qualifications and experiences which employers look for, as well as the working patterns which are observed. The development of the requirements around the characteristics of the employees has served to suggest that traditional forms of work organization are somehow natural, neutral, and the best (or even

only) way to organize production (Dean and Liff, 2010). These accounts which critique the gendered construction of the employment relationship and the gendered construction of the ideal worker have argued that the way in which the debates about flexibility are constructed has implications for the way in which the options are delivered (Wajcman, 2000; Lewis and Humbert 2010). Therefore the challenge is to recast employment relations and organizational cultures to move beyond discussions of flexibility being women's problems (Liff and Cameron, 1997), yet the development of various family-friendly and flexible working practices has largely failed to challenge the male model of employment (Lewis 2010).

Access to flexible working arrangements

The focus of this study is on flexible working which results from employees making requests of management to alter work arrangements, and decisions individual employees take to begin these discussions and how employers might respond are likely to be conditioned by gendered assumptions about the potential fit of the employee with flexible working. In the case of an employee prompted route, the individual employee makes a request of the employer to amend their working practices and then works a different model if the employer agrees. Even if the formal policy exists at the workplace, it would still be the case that a request would probably have to be made. The formality of the process is perhaps important to note here. FWAs may be either formal or informally agreed with the employer (De Menezes and Kelliher, 2016). When researching flexibility, it is necessary to consider both what practices are formally available as well as what informal practices exist in workplaces as formal policy and informal practice may diverge (Scheibl and Dex, 1998).

Some arrangements are more easily negotiated informally between employees and their immediate line managers, or may be more implicitly agreed. Working from home, compressed hours and flexi-time could fall into this category. Other options, especially those which would require a contractual change, and would result in a reduction in pay would require formal sign off, not least because the payroll would need to be advised. Reducing working hours, job sharing and term-time only working

would fall into this latter category. Therefore there may be some association between the process by which flexibility is agreed, and the option which is used by the employee.

The above review rather easily makes the distinction between employee and employer sought flexible working, characterized by Fleetwood (2007a) as either "employee-friendly" or "employer-friendly", though in practice it may be that such a clear division between the two is more difficult to discern. The obvious example of this is the long-established tradition of the provision of part-time work, which may have been originally constructed as a means of retaining female workers, but typically has other penalties associated with it such as low pay and lack of progression (Warren and Lyonette, 2015). However, recent research has questioned the degree to which employees may be exercising free choice in opting for FWAs and has argued that the discourse of the WLB agenda is being subverted to meet organisational imperatives rather than to address the needs of the employee (Lewis et al., 2017b). Furthermore it is not always possible from observing practice to categorise policies as either employee or employer friendly (ibid). Fleetwood's (2007a) critique argues that the emergence of FWAs, whilst purporting to address issues of WLB can be considered as part of the general flexibilization of the labour market under neo-liberalism, which has resulted in the rise of both employee friendly and employee unfriendly aspects of flexibility.

However, this study necessarily assumes that employees who identify themselves as using any of the flexible working policies have made a positive choice in selecting the work arrangement. To address the question of the degree to which that choice was constrained, or alternatively to address questions about why some workers do not make requests for flexibility would require a different methodological approach.

Many organisations across advanced economies have had policies for flexible working in place for many years – and numerous factors explored in greater detail below may account for organisations choosing to develop and retain such practices. Studies of FWAs, particularly those which are based on US data tend to link the rise of flexible working to changes in the labour supply in the 1960s and

1970s and particularly that women began participating in the labour market in greater numbers (Goodstein, 1994). Employers then responded by tailoring jobs to the workers who they believed would be best suited to fill them and in the process moving away from the "traditional" model of employment, which was based around the male breadwinner (ibid). The significance of these sorts of accounts lies not whether their explanatory mechanisms are adequate to explain changes in the behaviour of employers, but rather to highlight that in most advanced economies employers' behaviour shifted without the need for any legislation. However, more recently the influence of legislation has become more prominent.

FW and the role of legislation

In the majority of cases access to flexible working is determined through individual conversations between employee and employer, and is often not subject to legislative overview. In the UK however, and in a number of European countries, access to flexible working is covered by legislation (Hegeswich, 2009; Fagan et al., 2006).

The WLB campaign of the Labour Government was the starting point for a series of labour market reforms in the early 2000s including access to flexible working and paid leave for childcare (Lewis and Campbell, 2007). The Employment Act of 2003 which introduced the right to request flexible working did so initially for parents of young and disabled children. In 2007 the right was extended to cover those with caring responsibility for adults. From June 2014 the right to request flexible working came into effect for all employees (subject to a twenty-six week qualifying period of employment) (Adam, 2014). The drive for the policy has therefore changed in Forth et al.'s (1996) terminology from being a "focused" form of provision, designed to be used and to help a particular group of employees to a "unfocused" form of provision which could, at least in theory, be used by any employee. The drive for the changes to the legislation was announced in 2011 as part of the Conservative / Liberal Democrat Coalition Government's "Consultation on Modern Workplaces" which aimed to produce a more "fair and flexible approach at work" (Carley, 2011).

Although the coverage of the legislation has been amended over time to extend the eligibility to different groups of workers, the way in which the 'rights' are framed has remained unchanged and is undoubtedly 'soft' (Hegewisch, 2009). It is the right to request, not the right for that request to be granted. What this means is that in practice employers need only consider the request of an employee, but there is no obligation for employers to grant such requests[4]. Given its soft form, one might therefore question whether the UK legislation actually adds anything substantive over and above not having legislation in place. In any case, forms of individually negotiated flexible working pre-dated the UK legislation, and continue in economies where no legislation on the matter is in place (ibid).

In addition to this, and unlike in some other countries, there is no obligation on the part of the UK employer to grant 'reversibility' should employees want to subsequently revert back to their original working pattern (Hegeswich, 2009). The most obvious example of this is in the case of employees moving from full time to part time. Without the guarantee of being able to return to full time at a later point, this might represent too much of a risk for some employees in terms of being stuck on a part-time track, and / or being passed over for development opportunities. The lack of reversibility may mean that employees are reluctant to ask for flexibility when dealing with relatively short-term challenges which affect their WLB. This lack of reversibility has clear implications for access to flexibility for workers who may have short-term absences from the labour market. The most obvious group of employees who might be affected by this are of course women and highlights the way in which "organizational logic" (Acker, 1990) reproduces gender inequality in organizations. Apparently natural gender neutral systems are based on a "gendered substructure" which reproduce and normalize women's excluded or subordinate positions (ibid). The result of this is that for many employers, the ideal worker is a male worker (Williams, 2001). The fact that these any arrangements are agreed on an individual as opposed to a collective basis, may also suggest that

[4] This is in contrast to how legislation is framed in some other advanced economies. See Hegewisch (2009) for a discussion of the legislative arrangements in international context.

employees who are in a subordinate or disadvantaged position in the labour force will struggle to access flexibility in ways which might operate most effectively for them.

Echoes of the employer voice in negotiations behind the legislation can be noted in the government's website (UK Government, undated b) which lists a number of business-related reasons[5] which the employer may use as justification for refusing a request. Some of the reasons might appeal to a common sense logic and may preclude the use of certain types of FWA for certain roles. For example , it would not be possible for retail assistants in shops to work from home, although for such workers a range of other flexible options would be suitable. Other reasons stated on the government website -for example "flexible working will affect quality and performance" – rely on the judgement or opinion of the employer, and may be difficult for an employee to successfully challenge such a view. In any case, if employers are not minded to grant requests, the legislation does not provide employees with the statutory right to appeal the employer's decision, though the employment tribunal option does exist, and it is considered best practice for employers to have an appeals process (see Acas, 2013 for a full review). Ability to challenge employers on business grounds is notoriously difficult though challenges may be more successful if other pieces of legislation are invoked – such as the 2010 Equality Act (UNISON, 2017).

[5] The reasons are:

the burden of additional costs
an inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff
an inability to recruit additional staff
a detrimental impact on quality
a detrimental impact on performance
a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work
a planned structural change to your business

The nature of the legislation has led to criticism from various quarters. When the right to request was extended in 2014, there was disagreement among social partners (employer groups and trade unions) as to the wisdom of the legislation (Adam, 2014). Employer groups questioned the need to regulate an area of employment which had largely been characterised by informal arrangements between individual employees and their employers. On the other side of the debate, the soft form of the legislation was questioned by trade unions for not being directive enough and allowing too much management prerogative to be exercised (ibid). It should be noted though that the issue of informality raised by employers remains an important consideration in discussion of FWAs. The fact that legislation is now in place does not mean that informal arrangements between employers and employees will no longer operate. The question of the nature of formal versus informal arrangements is something which is discussed in greater detail below.

2.2 Mapping flexible working provision in British Workplaces

This section outlines some of the trends in the provision of FW in Britain before going on to assess the existing research on factors associated with FW provision.

Two principal large-scale data sources provide information on the provision of FWAs in Britain – WERS and the UK Government sponsored Worklife Balance Survey (WLBS). WERS has asked questions related to FW provision since the 1998 wave, and the number of questions about flexible working has increased over time, perhaps reflecting its increased importance in debates about work organization. The topic of FWA provision has accordingly been a feature of the WERS team's publications (Cully et al., 1999; Kersley et al., 2006; Van Wanrooy et al., 2013). The Government-sponsored WLBS, has been carried out four times since 2000, to provide evidence on the policies and practices of employers in relation to FW (Hogarth et al., 2001; Woodland et al., 2003; Hayward et al., 2007; BIS 2014).

WERS and WLBS both supply excellent information on the provision of FWA options at British workplaces. There are some differences in the precise measures of FW between the two sources,

though as would be expected the two surveys show some of the same general trends in the provision of FWAs over time. Both surveys indicate that there has been an overall increase in provision of FWAs since the beginning of the 21st century. WLBS suggests that there was a legislative effect from the introduction of the right to request which the largest increases in provision noted between the 2003 and 2007 waves (BIS, 2014). This legislative effect may be an artefact of the way in which provision is typically measured in surveys by the existence of a formal workplace policy. The legislative changes may have prompted employers who were already negotiating arrangements with individual employees to codify their practice and establish more formal processes for handling requests. Since the legislation was enacted rates of increase of provision have slowed and on some FWA options estimates about the levels of provision have decreased between survey waves. WERS 2011 shows significant decreases in provision for the options of reducing working hours (62 per cent to 56 per cent), and for job sharing (25 per cent to 17 per cent) between the 2004 and 2011 waves. WLBS also shows a significant decrease in the provision of job share though the point estimates are much higher than for WERS (54 per cent in 2013, compared with 59 per cent in 2007). WLBS has different measures from WERS for reducing working hours, which do not show any significant change between the 2007 and 2013 waves. Although as noted provision of some options are estimated to have decreased, this trend does not apply across all the FWAs. WERS shows statistically significant increases in provision for the options of compressed hours and working from home. Van Wanrooy et al. (2013) do not consider in detail what the drivers of such change might be, but suggest that part of the increase in working from home is driven by advances in communication technologies between 2004 and 2011, facilitating both employees working at home and employers being able to monitor their work. The increase in provision of compressed hours however, could not be explained by technological changes, and the causes of this change are less clear. WERS finds no significant changes were observed for the provision of flexi-time or term-time working between the 2004 and 2011 waves (ibid), and for WLBS apart from the significant decrease in job share, no other options showed significant change between the 2007 and 2013 waves (BIS,

2014). The picture therefore is somewhat mixed with differential trends evident for the different FWA options.

The above section has outlined the levels of provision of the different FWA options in British workplaces, but has stopped short of examining factors which are associated with their provision by employers. Although the overall levels of provision of the different options give some information about what is happening at the aggregate level, this reveals nothing of the patterns within that aggregate picture as to how the arrangements are provided across different types of workplace and for different workforces. The following section therefore discusses the workplace and workforce characteristics which are associated with employer provision of FWAs and discusses the link with different theoretical explanations for that provision.

Perspectives and indicators of Flexible Working Provision

When the Labour Government launched its WLB campaign the stated aim was to ask employers to consider both the business and social cases for FW policies (Arrowsmith, 2001). Arguments about arranging work around the business case or the social justice case pre-dated this discussion in the UK about how to arrange flexible working. Debates in the academic literature have long recognized the tensions between the arguments over business case and social justice perspectives on equality matters (Dickens, 1999). Broadly these debates centre on whether employer motivation for providing benefits to the workforce is informed by questions of employee and organizational performance (the business case), or whether motivation results from concern with themes of equality and well-being for employees (the social justice perspective) (Dickens, 1999). Nevertheless, by promoting a discussion of FW in terms of both business case and social justice concerns, there is a danger that the business case arguments will be to the forefront, and the social case arguments are relegated to secondary importance. Given the concern with the business case, it is therefore no surprise that there are numerous studies which seek to establish the degree to which FWAs affect organizational performance. There is a concern from the social justice perspective that

if business arguments are to the fore, then employers will be motivated to provide FWAs only when there is a demonstrable positive business effect. Leaving aside all questions about measurement of business effect and of causal directions, if the business case informs employer provision, then this will inevitably result in partial provision of FWAs (Colling and Dickens, 1998; Dickens, 1999), and / or rationing of FWAs to employees who are deemed to be high performers and who have earned the 'right' to their flexibility (Fagan, et al. 2006). This may cut across the stated aims of the WLB campaign to achieve better outcomes for employees. Alternatively it might be the case that although FWAs do not produce large positive effects on the bottom line of the business, employers choose to make the options widely available , because they are a relatively low cost option for employer (Bloom et al., 2011). In such circumstances employees might achieve positive outcomes even if there is no discernible business benefit.

Five perspectives, which might prompt employers to provide FWAs have been identified in the literature (Oliver, 1991), mapping on that larger conversation about the relationship and tensions between business performance and equality and diversity (Lewis, 1997; 2001; Dickens, 1999).

This section discusses these five frameworks. Indicators for the different frameworks are discussed in greater detail in the sections on workforce and workplace characteristics, though some indications of testing variables are also provided here. The work of Oliver (1991) identified five perspectives on family-friendly management. This work exerted a significant effect on subsequent research, which then sought to subject these perspectives to empirical testing (Goodstein, 1994, 1995; Ingram and Simons 1995; Osterman 1995; Wood et al., 2003).

1) Institutional perspectives

Institutional perspectives stress the importance of social legitimacy which is concerned with being seen to a be a "good employer" – abiding by laws in letter and in spirit and also to strongly held normative assumptions about business practice. pressure (normative societal pressure). For Paauwe (2004) this means that organizations whose concern is with achieving this legitimacy will be under

greater pressure to respond, as they have more to gain by doing so (or perhaps more to lose). Firms which are less concerned by issues of social legitimacy are less likely to respond to feel compelled to respond to these societal pressures and would be less likely to provide FWAs to their employees. Social legitimacy will be a more salient issue for larger organizations and public sector organizations, who will therefore experience greater compulsion to respond to societal pressures by providing FWAs.

2) Organizational adaptive perspective

This is a variant of the institutional perspective. Organizations' responses are influenced by societal pressure to conform, though the question of whether they do respond is influenced by local issues and / or local characteristics. In short, management exercise strategic choice over the response to external institutional pressures rather than being passive responders to the external environment (Goodstein 1994, 1995). This suggests that although organizations may be subject to the same external normative pressures their response will be shaped by the needs and demands of the workforce. The process of management interpreting the institutional environment may encompass technical factors, local situational factors, economic concerns as well as normative or ethical views on management's role in helping employees balance work and family life (Wood et al, 2003). The second important point about this perspective is that it assumes that management will have some method of interpreting the needs and desires of the workforce. From the above it can be seen that the degree to which organizational adaption theory assumes management's free hand to respond to institutional pressure means that identifying appropriate predictors is more challenging. Following Wood et al. (2003) organizational adaption theory may be tested by: the degree to which management value employees having a balance between work and family life; the degree to which management is aware of employee needs as denoted by various forms of representative channels at the workplace such as unions (Budd and Mumford, 2004; Hoque and Bacon, 2014) which may advance employee requests or HR specialists who may act as issue interpreters (Milliken et al.,

1998); higher proportions of female employees; higher proportions of skilled employees (as denoted by the proportion of managerial and professional employees).

3) Equal opportunities perspective

This perspective is perhaps less commonly referenced in the literature in relation to motivations around provision of flexible working, though where it is identified (e.g. Wood et al., 2003) it is argued that the primary issue influencing the employer is a concern with removing discrimination at the workplace. The motivation for employers to provide FW is motivated by concerns about equality and diversity, rather as a means to secure higher levels of performance from the workforce, though this does not discount the possibility that there may be some positive performance effects or desirable organizational outcomes. It has been argued that if organizations promote flexible working as part of a business case approach rather than as part of a more integrated equality and diversity strategy, then actual access to the policies will be based on privilege and is likely to be narrowly available to a group of high performing or strategically important employees (Dickens, 2007). Studies which have tested for evidence of an equal opportunities perspective have typically used the existence of an equal opportunities policy as the independent variable in regression analyses (Wood and de Menezes, 2010). Evidence of an equal opportunities perspective may be denoted by the association between FWA provision and an equal opportunities policy (Wood et al., 2003). The testing of equal opportunities perspectives using the existence of a formal equal opportunities policy as the indicator may be somewhat problematic. Although many organizations have equal opportunities policies, the degree to which these translate into substantive practices can be limited (Hoque and Noon, 2004), thus raising questions about whether the policy is a symbolic or substantive engagement with the idea of promotion of equality within the workplace.

4) Situational perspective

This approach – also labelled as the 'practical response perspective' (Osterman, 1995) rejects the institutionalist arguments and argues that local circumstances are the principal drivers of employer

behaviour, rather than societal norms. This tends to suggest that characteristics of the workforce are likely to be important predictors of FWA provision, and as such the response of the employer is motivated by a desire to address a business need. Greater proportions of employees with specific out of work commitments or demands on their time which could be addressed by FWAs would suggest that FWAs are more likely to be provided. The situational perspective differs from the organizational perspective, in that the response to normative pressures is not the starting point for considering whether or not to introduce FW. The situational perspective implies that there is a workplace problem to solve through changing work organization, whereas the organizational adaptive perspective does not. Accordingly the situational perspective may be tested by regressing FWA provision on to variables such as the proportion of female employees; proportion of employees with childcare responsibilities; and proportion of employees with other caring responsibilities. Studies have tended to do this using cross-sectional data (Wood et al, 2003; Osterman, 1995). Typically such an approach would raise questions about causality in any case, but here it could plausibly be argued that the causality runs in either direction. People with caring responsibilities may choose to work at an establishment because it already has policies designed to support them and allow them to manage their work with their other commitments, or alternatively a workplace or organization which already has a large number of workers with caring responsibilities may choose to develop FW options in response to the profile of its workforce. In the absence of longitudinal data it is impossible to answer those questions about causality

The situational perspective aligns to business case arguments for provision. Employers are motivated to provide FW if they believe issues at the workplace to result from employees struggling to cope with out of work demands. For example, employers might consider that levels of absenteeism or high levels of turnover are a result of employees struggling to reconcile the demands of family life with the working patterns of the organization. Employers may assume that family problems are more likely to be experienced by female employees with dependent children. In such a situation allowing the employees to access FW might allow them to continue working for the

business and also reduce levels of absenteeism. It might also have other positive outcomes for the employee, such as improving WLB, though under the situational perspective, this is not the primary motivation for employers providing flexibility.

The situational perspective, with its association with business case accounts, might also suggest that provision is limited to those employees who have specific identified needs, rather than being made widely available across the workforce, although if the costs of provision of an option are low, there will be little incentive for employers to apply restrictions to certain parts of the workforce

5) High Commitment / High Performance Working Practices

This approach argues that performance gains can be achieved by securing higher levels of commitment from the workforce, and that FWAs are part of a larger suite of HRM practices which employers may offer to secure greater organizational commitment, thereby driving up performance and encouraging employees to expend discretionary effort (Osterman, 1995; White et al, 2003). Thus the HPWP perspective may be tested by association of FWA provision with management practices associated with high performance working, and a series of research questions on this theme are developed below. The HPWP perspective demands particular attention given that elements of the HRM bundle can be considered inimical to some of the WLB aims of FWAs (White et al, 2003; Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2004). The relationship between levels of HPWP adoption and individual level WLB outcomes is discussed more fully in the section on outcomes, given that HPWPs may be considered to be incompatible with some of the WLB aims of FW.

Following on from the discussion of the theoretical perspectives why employers might choose to make FWAs available to their employees, various workforce and workplace characteristics which provide indicators for those perspectives are outlined, beginning with workplace level characteristics.

2.3 Workplace level characteristics associated with FWA provision

The size of the workplace may affect the formal FWA provision provided. Size effects are common in respect of other workplace characteristics such as union recognition or the presence of voice mechanisms (Adam et al, 2014). Studies have also tended to find that larger workplaces are more likely to provide both FWAs and family friendly working practices (Dex and Smith, 2002; Forth et al., 2006; Hogarth et al., 2001; Woodland et al., 2003; Hayward et al., 2007, BIS (2014)). A positive relationship between size of workplace and provision of FWAs has been reported by the WERS team for the 1998, 2004, and 2011 waves (Cully et al., 1999; Kersley et al., 2006; van Wanrooy et al., 2013) though these effects have been found typically for total number of FWAs provided, rather than considering a typology of FWAs. These effects are found to hold, even when controls are included for other variables which are also associated with larger workplaces.

Size effects may be the result of institutional factors and size has been included in studies to proxy for institutional pressures (Wood et al, 2003). Large firms and organizations, are more likely to be subject to institutional pressure in a number of different ways. Larger workplaces are generally more visible and face greater social pressures to conform to normative versions of good employment practice, and may therefore also be prompted to instigate policies associated with the Equal Opportunities Perspective. It may be important for large employer to demonstrate to customers that they are socially responsible employers, and may face greater pressure from employees and trade unions to adopt practices associated with social responsibility. There is some evidence that institutional pressures may also be being pushed down into medium sized enterprises. Large firms are likely to monitor the practices of medium sized establishments in their supply chains and hence it is important for such business to demonstrate good employment practice (EHRC, 2016). Institutional theory would suggest that the concern for the employer is the existence of the policy as a marker of social legitimacy, rather than whether or not the policy is actually used. It may also be the case though that larger workplaces are more likely to have employees with a wide range of personal circumstances, meaning that there is some internal pressure for flexible arrangements, and

hence larger employers may be more likely to respond along the lines suggested by the organizational adaptive perspective. A workplace policy on FW might be seen as means of codifying and managing requests by employees. In addition to these points, there is the practical explanation that larger workplaces and organizations are more likely to be able to accommodate various different work patterns and arrangements, simply because they have more employees and are less likely to end up as reliant on particular employees for work to be carried out. As the association between size of workplace and provision of FWA options has been confirmed by the numerous studies above, one would in any case need to include size in regression analysis as a control variable.

The sector in which the workplace operates is often held to be a proxy for institutional effects, and it is often assumed that public and private sector workplaces will respond differently. Public sector workplaces are subject to different normative and legislative pressures compared with private sector workplaces meaning concerns about social legitimacy may be felt more keenly in the public sector (Gardiner and Tomlinson, 2009), and there is a tradition within the public sector to be seen as a model employer (Heery, 2006) which may influence the development of a greater range of equality practices in public sector workplaces. The "model employer" model in the public sector has come under question since many of the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s which have altered various aspects of the employment relationship and these changes and challenges are well documented (Brown, 2004;Corby, 2000; Morgan and Allington, 2002; Stuart and Martinez Lucio, 2000); Public sector workplaces may face different pressures in regard to providing formal policies for FW – particularly due to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Although the reflexive approach of the duty raises questions about whether it will result in substantive equality (Fredman, 2011), nevertheless it may exert pressure on public sector workplaces to instigate more FW opportunities. It should be noted though that, under the duty, developing FWAs does not appear to be a major priority for public authorities. Indeed the topic of flexible working practices was not mentioned at all by the EHRC report which looked into the aims and effectiveness of the duty (EHRC, 2018),

though it could have been considered under the duty's obligation to promote equality of opportunity.

The link between sector and provision of FWAs has been found in previous research (e.g. Dex and Smith, 2002), and van Wanrooy et al.'s. (2013) work shows the general pattern that provision of all six FWA options is higher in the public sector than in the private sector, and that between 2004 and 2011 for the six individual measures of FW different patterns of change can be discerned in the public and private sectors. The arguments around the links between FWAs and workplace sector responses to recession also suggest that public sector workplaces are likely to have higher levels of provision than in the public sector (Lewis, et al., 2017a, 2017b). This position suggests that FW discourse may not only be concerned with issues of equality. Due to the austerity measures which the public sector experienced in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis (Bach, 2016), public sector workplaces may have seen FW as a means of cutting costs. Larger proportions of employees working from home, combined with a policy of hot desking would be one way in which the public sector could drop costs associated with running expensive office space, while at the same time having a limited impact on front line services. Other cost reducing FWA options such as reducing hours, job share, or term time working might be more acceptable methods (to various stakeholders) of reducing overall headcount, in situations where cuts cannot be avoided, compared with the alternative of compulsory redundancies (Lewis et al, 2017a).

If public sector workplaces are more likely to respond to equality type arguments for the provision of FWAs, then it would also be expected that the provision in such workplaces would be more likely to be provided to all employees compared with private sector workplaces, where provision might be more likely to be restricted to certain groups of employees. Evidence of a business case perspective might therefore be associated with provision of FWA options which are restricted to certain employees only, whereas provision available to all employees may be more suggestive of an approach which is informed by concern with equality and social justice. The degree to which provision is made available across the workforce is examined in chapter four.

The nature of the relationship between trade unions and FWA provision in the UK has been researched previously and seemingly contradictory findings have emerged. For example, Dex and Smith (2002) use WERS 1998 data to provide a comprehensive review of the sorts of workplaces which were more likely to offer some family friendly working policies, finding that unionization is significantly associated with family friendly provision, and the specific FWA options of flexi-time and job sharing. Dex and Smith (2002) found no significant relationship between unionization and home working; a finding which was confirmed by Budd and Mumford (2004). Felstead et al (2002) also used WERS 1998 data and found that unionization was negatively associated with the provision of working from home, though this research did not examine union effects on other forms of provision. The explanation for the different findings for the provision of the working home in these studies, which used the same data source, may lie the controls which were included in the different regression or perhaps in the way in which unionization was measured. The two studies which found no relationship both used a measure of union recognition, whereas Felstead et al.'s (2002) analysis uses union density at the workplace as the predictor.

Budd and Mumford (2004) also use WERS 1998 MQ [6]data to assess the relationship between unions and the presence of a range of family friendly policies (rather than FWAs as defined in this study) Their research looked into the two FWA options of working at home and job-sharing, as well as parental leave, special paid leave, subsidized child care and job-sharing. Budd and Mumford (2004) find that unionization positively is associated with parental leave, special paid leave and job sharing (as per Dex and Smith, 2002), with their explanation being that unions' monopoly power gives them the ability to bargain for better provision of added benefits for employees. Using Bailyn et al's

[6] In the WERS 1998 MQ, the question asked of managers around FWAs asked if the various options were made available to any non-managerial employees. This is in contrast to WERS 2004 and 2011 MQs which asked if the various options were made available to any employees.

(2001) binary categorization of family friendly policies as being either supportive of the traditional model of the ideal worker and standard working time arrangements, or alternatively facilitating deviation from that model, their study suggests that unions are more effective at bargaining for the former, rather than the latter. In other words, unions are more effective at bargaining for benefits which allow workers to continue to work in a standard way, than they are at bargaining for policies which will allow workers to deviate from the standard model of work organization. The study is unable to comment on whether unions attach equal importance to these different types of policies in their bargaining strategies.

These analyses using WERS 1998 are naturally constrained by the design of the survey, which asked about very few FWA options compared with subsequent waves in 2004 and 2011. Indeed the greater coverage given to questions about FW options in the WERS survey is itself indicative of the increase in interest in these forms of working. So, although WERS 1998 data suggest that unions have no positive effect on provision of FWAs, this has not been examined systematically for the different FWA options.

Using WERS 2004, Hoque and Bacon (2014) test effects of negotiation and consultation on provision of a range of family friendly practices, which include a number of FWAs, and find that union recognition is positively associated with provision of workplace nurseries, financial help with childcare, leave for carers of older adults. For three out of four of these practices the effect was found to be stronger when unions consulted over EO practices rather than negotiated. Although union recognition was found to be associated with these family-friendly practices, it was found to be associated with only one of the FWAs (job sharing) this analysis considered. Union recognition was not associated with working from home, flexitime and term-time only contracts.

The reasons for the differences in union effects by type of working practice are not explored by Hoque and Bacon (2014). Part of the reason for lack of effects could be that unions first prioritise concessions from management which are more likely to be formalised. An alternative explanation is

that unions are unlikely to prioritise action on areas which are subject to legislation. Despite the weaknesses around right to request, unions may have chosen to prioritise other areas of family friendly support rather than those which employees could ask for in any case. Since the introduction of right to request it could be the case that unions continue to prioritize other areas rather than FWAs, or it could be the case that concerns about the form of the right to request prompt unions to push for formalisation of FWAs at the workplace level.

The extent to which unions might influence provision of FWAs could itself be dependent on other factors. Unlike the French context, where mandatory collective bargaining provides potential impetus for union mobilization around work life balance issues there is no such opportunity structure in the UK (Brochard and Letablier, 2017). The ability of unions to exercise collective voice, is likely to be stronger where negotiating platforms exist at the workplace for unions to persuade management to make improvements (Budd and Mumford, 2004; Dickens et al, 1988). Even if unions engage in equality bargaining at the workplace level, it would not necessarily follow that provision of FWAs would be covered through that bargaining process. To take this argument a stage further, even if workplace level bargaining does exist and unions choose to prioritize seeking FWAs, the likelihood of success is very much dependent on the skill and experience of the workplace representative. For the purposes of this study, the opportunity structure for unions is taken to be related to recognition of the union at the workplace.

Union decision making priorities may be considered to reflect either the characteristics of the representatives or the wider membership – the 'demand hypothesis' (Heery, 2006). Heery (2006) provides a thorough account of the voice versus choice models in determining trade union priorities or interests. Voice models suggest that union collective bargaining behaviour is influenced by the democratic structures in the union, (and by implication reflect the interests of the majority of workers) whereas choice models relate bargaining behaviour to the characteristics of those in representative positions within the union. Studies of trade union bargaining have suggested that the

process by which interests are constructed are not straightforward and can be less likely to be assumed when there is greater heterogeneity within the membership (Hyman, 1999).

Recent official government estimates indicate that women are more likely to be members of a trade union than are men, (BEIS, 2017), though according to the most recent WERS data, workplace representatives are still more likely to be older men (Angrave and Charlwood, 2016; van Wanrooy et al., 2013). Long-established research has stressed that female representation can make a difference to the bargaining agenda (Healy and Kirton, 2002; Dickens, 2000), though Heery (2006) argues that the age, rather than gender of union representatives is a better predictor of engagement with the equality bargaining agenda.

Although it is not possible to determine from WERS the priority afforded to developing FWA policies at the workplace, union effects in different workplace settings can be tested. The membership profile by gender cannot be discerned using WERS MQ data[7], though the workplace gender profile is available. As well as choice and voice models, classic accounts suggest that the structure of collective bargaining may also affect outcomes (Clegg, 1976). Centralized or multi-employer bargaining may produce greater impetus for trade unions to pursue equality matters, as senior union leaders at national and regional levels may be under greater pressure to shift unions to a more inclusive position than workplace representatives. Admittedly dated evidence suggests that multi-employer agreements are more like to result in progress towards equality matters than single establishment or workplace level bargaining (Weiler, 2000). Multi-employer agreements are much more commonly found in the public sector, having all but disappeared in the private sector (van Wanrooy et al., 2013). Evidence of any private sector union effect on FW would therefore probably be explained in terms of voice / choice mechanisms at the local level.

The rationale for examining union effects on provision of FWAs is partly informed by wider questions of the roles of trade unions, particularly in regard to trade union stance on equality practices.

[7] WERS WRQ does however provide information on the membership profile of the union by gender.

Unions have sometimes been criticised for the tendency to defend the position of one group of employees with respect to other employees groups, resulting in pre-existing inequalities being reinforced rather than broken down (Colling and Dickens, 1998, Dickens 1997). However, more recent accounts of union activity suggest that greater priority is being given to matters relating to equality (Dex and Forth, 2009; Hunt and Rayside, 2000). Union strategies to organize around more vulnerable workers, or different recruitment strategies designed to attract new workers to the unions in the light of falling membership numbers may have contributed to unions becoming more engaged with equality debates.

In the UK the debate has largely been framed in different terms about whether flexible working and family friendly working policies have been adopted due to concerns about equal opportunities or whether they represent a "rational" business response to work production problems.
When attempting to test the equal opportunities perspective, studies such as Goodstein 1994, Wood et al have used the presence of an equal opportunities policy to test whether this results in greater levels of provision, on the individual FWA options or on the count measure of FWAs. As a method of assessing the equal opportunities perspective these approaches are not entirely satisfactory. As noted, the presence of a policy may not translate into substantive equal opportunities practices (Hoque and Noon, 2004). If the equal opportunities perspective (the social case) was important in the decision of management to make FWAs available to employees, then one would expect not only the policy to be provided at the workplace, but the coverage of the policy to be extended across employees (Colling and Dickens, 1998; Dickens, 1999). After all, if FWAs are available at a workplace, but are only accessible by a small proportion of workers, then this does not indicate that the policies are integrated into the organization's practices in any meaningful sense (Kossek et al., 2010). Therefore, in order to gain greater insight into the perspectives which inform management decisions it would be preferable to have some measure of the workforce coverage of the FWA options.

As noted the provision of FWAs may be linked to a high performance perspective, as part of an integrated approach to HRM practices across the organization. Despite the importance and prominence of HPWPs in academic debates, and it being identified as a perspective which may lead to the provision of FWAs, few studies have developed specific tests of the link between HPWPs and FWA provision. For example in the work of Osterman (1995), FWAs are not kept analytically distinct from the wider suite of family friendly practices. This study, based on US private sector firms, finds strong support for the link between the use of work/ family programmes and HPWPs though only one FWA option is included in the 'work family program' scale, and tests for the links between HPWPS and specific FWA options were not performed. Wood et al. (2003) using WERS 1998 data examine links between family-oriented flexible management (again not keeping FWAs analytically separate) and high commitment perspectives and find no association.

What precisely constitutes HPWP remains the subject of some debate in the academic literature and therefore how it can be operationalized empirically may vary across studies. Broadly speaking, two approaches can be discerned in the literature: HPWPs are measured by taking a count of the number of practices identified as belonging to the concept, or HPWPs bundles are identified and counts of the number of practices are taken by bundle.

There is some consensus that there are a number of HPWPs which are common to the concept (Huselid, 1995; Hoque, 2000; Combs et al., 2006), though there is some debate on how the concepts might be combined into HPWP bundles (Beltrán-Martín et al 2008). The AMO framework developed by Applelbaum et al (2000) stressed that HPWPs have three aims: to address employee ability, motivation and opportunity to perform, and that different HRM practices are designed to address either ability, motivation or opportunity to perform. In other words, the practices align to specific areas of employee outcomes which the employer wants to achieve and thus employers may choose to develop certain bundles of policies and practices more fully, depending on what the HPWP framework is designed to achieve. Guest and Conway (2007) and Wu (2011) have expanded this framework to add a fourth bundle – the commitment bundle to the framework. This bundle

explicitly includes flexible working practices as one of the elements required to improve employee commitment.

While the high performance perspective implies that employers might be more likely to provide FWA options to employees, it also suggests that these employers could choose to be selective in the type of flexibility which they provide and they may also choose to limit the availability of policies to achieve the most optimal organizational outcomes; performance being the key consideration. This suggests that schedule flexibility might be more likely to be provided than location flexibility, which in turn is more likely than hours flexibility. There are tensions between location flexibility and some elements of HPWPs such as teamworking, which would suggest that location flexibility is less likely than schedule flexibility. These apparent tensions between some elements of the HPWP approach and different elements of flexibility may affect the likelihood of employers to provide certain forms of flexibility, and also their likely use by employees and the outcomes which derive from use in such contexts. These questions are returned to in greater detail below. Hours flexibility is less likely on the basis that it might run entirely contrary to expectations of high commitment implied by HPWPs (see White et al, 2003).The question of whether employees who use hours flexibility demonstrate lower levels of affective commitment is a separate matter which is considered in greater detail below.

Given the above discussion, it would therefore be expected that HPWPs are positively associated with formal FW provision, that there is a significant positive association with the overall number of FWAs which the workplace offers. It would be expected that HPWPs are more positively associated with the types of FWA option which provide least challenge to the ideal worker model. HPWPs are more likely to be positively associated therefore with flexi-time and compressed hours, and less likely to be positively associated with working from home. HPWPs perspectives suggest that provision of FWA options might be selective, but this selectivity will be based on the importance of the employee to the workplace, rather than aligned to those eligible to request FW under the

legislation. These relationships between HPWPs and FWA provision have not been subject to empirical testing, despite the theoretical and practical interest.

The organizational adaptive perspective on provision of FWAs to employees implies that management is aware of the needs of employees and responds to requests from the workforce accordingly. Therefore the opportunity for the workforce to share views with management may be crucial in advancing employee requests and turning them into concrete outcomes. HR specialists might act as a conduit to pass employee requests on to management (Milliken et al., 1998). In some respects the argument about HR interpreting the needs of the workforce is similar to arguments about trade unions interpreting the interests of members to create their bargaining agenda.

Presence of the HR specialist may in itself suggest that the workplace is predisposed towards formalisation of policy, and therefore it would be expected that the presence of HR specialists would be associated with greater levels of provision of policy. Research has found that the presence of an HR specialist is significantly positively associated with the development of a range of HRM policies and practices compared with workplaces where the HR function is handled by a personnel manager or a general manager (Hoque and Noon, 2001). It has been argued that there may be a certification effect meaning that HR professionals inspire greater confidence and trust from their co-workers and enjoy enhanced reputation within the organization, compared with non-accredited HR managers, which in turn leads to greater ability to enact new policies and practices(Ferris et al, 2007; Lengnick-Hall and Aguinis, 2012).

Despite the theorized link suggesting greater FWA provision where there is an HR specialist, empirical studies which have sought to test this, have not established that relationship. Indeed running contrary to expectation, using WERS 1998 data, Dex and Smith (2002) found that the presence of a workplace level HR specialist is significantly negatively associated with provision of the working from home option. Tests for relationships between workplace HR specialist and the other forms of FW (flexitime and reducing working hours) were not found to be significant (ibid).

It may be that HR specialists are not associated with specific HR policies but with a general increase in provision, though the specific policies which are adopted are a response to the needs of the workforce. Therefore it would be expected that workplaces which have HR specialists have greater overall provision of FWAs as measured by the number of options available.

It could be the case that the presence of the HR specialist is only likely to result in increased levels of provision when the demand for provision exists at the workplace in the form of potential users of policies. The two models of HR specialist treat the role as involved in more strategic planning, on the one hand, or a means of interpreting the needs of the workforce on the other. If the first interpretation holds, then it would be expected that workplaces with HR specialists are more likely to offer FW options to their workers, holding constant other factors such as the gender composition of the workforce. Alternatively, if HR specialists are interpreting and responding to the needs of the workforce it might be that the HR specialist effect is only observable when there are larger proportions of female workers or female managers at the workplace. In either scenario, whether there is a direct effect of the HR manager on provision, or one which emerges dependent on the composition of the workforce, the explanatory mechanism assumes that HR specialists have greater organizational legitimacy and ability to enact changes than their personnel or general manager equivalents (Lanahan et al, 2017; Graffin and Ward, 2010).

Managerial attitudes to FW might be thought to have an effect on the provision of such policies in a workplace (and may also be linked to the likely usage of such policies – this is elaborated further below). Following the logic of the organizational adaptive perspective, Wood et al., (2003) suggest that one of the factors which will affect the organization's response to normative institutional pressures will be the values and beliefs of its senior management. Employers will be more likely to provide FWA options if they value employees having a healthy balance between their work and home lives, and believe that it is the duty of the employer to proactively support employees in achieving this balance. Although we would be uncertain about the direction of causality managers

who are supportive of individuals' in regard to WLB might be found to be more likely to be located in workplaces which have more generous levels of provision of FWAs.

2.4. Workforce characteristics associated with FW provision

This section considers some of the workforce characteristics which may influence the decision of employers as to whether they provide FWAs to their employees. These variables are largely used to test both situational and organizational adaptive perspectives around the provision of FWAs. Under such models the decision to provide FWAs to employees is see as a practical adaptation to the needs of the workforce and suggest that FWAs are more likely to be provided where there are larger proportions of potential users of the policies in the workplace.

The tests of the different perspectives relate to the degree to which there are structures which allow for management to interpret issues raised by the workforce. Institutional theories tend to attract criticism for suggesting that organizations have limited strategic choice in how to respond to the institutional pressures which they face. Ingram and Simons (1995) use Oliver's (1991) framework, which integrates resource dependence and institutional theories, to test explanations of provision of FWAs. The resources which organizations have within and outside the organization shape the strategic choice which employers take when faced with pressures to implement policies; in this specific case family friendly policies. Ingram and Simons conclude that responsiveness is shaped by institutional environment and 'demands for work-family programs from important exchange partners' (1995:1466). By this they mean important people in the organisation who may want to push for FWAs (though it is not clear if the authors mean from a self-interest perspective or on behalf of others). There may be interactions between workforce and workplace level characteristics, some of which have been described above. Thus predictors of provision may rely on structures within the workplace to bring to the attention of management the needs of workers. The situational perspective might imply that access to FWAs is restricted to certain groups; evidence of limiting

policies would therefore be consistent with employees taking a situational perspective on the provision of FWAs.

The most obvious and important workforce characteristic is the gender composition. Research on flexible working contains numerous examples where the study proceeds from the basis that larger numbers of women in the workforce have necessitated or prompted attempts by employers to accommodate female employees into their organizations (e.g. Arthur, 2003; Shockley and Allen, 2007). In policy circles FW is often seen as a way of improving outcomes for female employees (Silim and Stirling , 2014). Such work tends to assume dual earner heterosexual couples, where the female partner takes responsibility for childcare. If the female partner has this responsibility, then this is incompatible with working a 'standard' Monday to Friday 9 to 5 job. Hence firms who have large numbers of female employees face the need to provide arrangements which support and sustain their labour market participation.

Research which has examined the links between female employment and provision of FWAs has often been unable to establish the causal direction between that provision and the levels of female employment. High levels of female employment may lead to greater provision of FWAs or, alternatively greater levels of provision may encourage larger numbers of women to apply to the organization. Studies based on cross-sectional data such as these, are able to show association between two variables, though causality must be inferred. This is a general methodological point, which affects association between two variables which are subject to changes; the causality could be argued in either direction.

Research looking at the relationship between FWA provision and female employment levels has suffered from a lack of precision in measurement and a tendency to consider different types of flexibility as equivalent. In addition to this, the institutional context is often ignored, so that the average effects across all workplaces are reported without considering whether the gender effects vary by institutional factors. There are some exceptions to this. For example Woodland et al., (2003) using the second wave of the WLBS find incidence of flexible working time arrangements

increases with proportion of female employees – for the private sector. The relationship was not evident for the public sector, but this finding was partly attributable to the fact that few public sector workplaces had low proportions of female employees in order to test the association. WLB4 find that in establishments with no women employees 30 per cent provided no FWAs, but in establishments with a majority of female employees the corresponding figure was one per cent (BIS, 2014). The effect may appear large, but further investigation of the other factors associated with provision would provide more nuance to this picture. These analyses do not consider the type of flexibility which is available, and whether that flexibility is the sort of flexibility which may be thought to fit with female employees, such as job share, term-time only working and reducing hours from full-time to part-time. The accounts which expand on the gendered nature of the employment relationship are relevant here as they reveal the gendered nature of the types of flexibility, in so far as they promote challenge or are aligned with forms of male-centric work organization (see for example Acker, 1990).

A significant positive relationship between the provision of FWAs and the proportion of female employees may be taken to indicate that flexible working provision is associated with female employment. This might indicate that provision of FWAs is associated in employers' minds with providing family friendly support for mothers, and that flexible working is concerned with providing options for those employees with caring responsibilities. While providing more options for female employees might have provided employers with the initial impetus to provide FWAs, as FWAs become more embedded and a more general feature of employer practice, it would be expected that the link with female employment would weaken. This would also mirror attempts to move the agenda away from one which emphasises the policy is directed at specific groups, to one where any employee might make a request for flexible working.

Dex and Smith (2002) use WERS 1998 to assess the association between the levels of female employees and a number of FWA options. They find significant positive relationships between females employment and flexi-time, job share, home working, reduced working hours and term-time

working. Though the study also found that the proportion of the female workforce working part-time was negatively associated with job share, flexitime and home working, perhaps suggesting a substitution effect between part-time work and job share (Dex and Smith, 2002). The reason for the negative relationship between proportion of female workers who are part-time and the other forms of FW are not obvious.

The way in which the legislation introduced the right to request as for parents and carers, may mean that FWA provision was initially more closely associated with the eligibility of the employees to request. It might be expected that as the right to request has now been extended to all employees, regardless of whether they have caring responsibilities or not, that the association between female employees and provision of flexibility will break down over time.

Taking the starting point for the development of FWAs as related to increased female participation in the labour market, Goodstein's (1994) study seeks to test whether firms with greater proportions of female employment will have greater provision of FWAs. Findings indicate a significant positive association between percentage of female employment and the strategic responses which promote provision of FWAs. These findings support the argument that firms which have a greater reliance on female employment face greater institutional pressures to provide FWAs. Ingram and Simons (1995) extend and refine Goodstein's (1994) work by looking at the issue of the importance of female managers, rather than just the proportion of female employees in the firm. Another difference is an attempt to differentiate the responses strategies of firms into those which demonstrate only a 'symbolic compliance' and those which require greater managerial effort to effect. This attempts to make some qualification of management's intent. It is worth commenting that these sorts of accounts typically conflate family with female. Indeed Goodstein's accounts of work-family policies (1994) and of eldercare (1995) both see these policies in terms of being applicable to female workers.

The linking of FWAs with female employment would seem to suggest that firms' views of work-family are shaped by normative assumptions which equate family with mothers and child care, and

thus assumptions are made about domestic division of labour and the intended users of FWAs. However, a weaker association between female employment, or female managerial employment and provision of FWAs might suggest that the firm has a different view about the work-family agenda, and does not necessarily see it in terms of mothers. These tests of organizational adaption could be refined further by considering the care-giving responsibilities of the workforce in greater detail. In addition, analyses have thus far, failed to identify whether the proportion of female managers is positively associated with different forms of flexibility, compared with the types of flexibility which are associated with the proportion of female employees. If female managers are more likely to demand FWA options which offer the lowest level of challenge to the ideal worker model, then it would be expected that provision would be for such options where the proportion of management employees who are female is high.

A lack of association between female employees and provision of FWAs might not necessarily indicate that organizational adaptive effects are absent, but rather it might suggest that the discourse around FW has moved on from conflating WLB policies with policies for female employees. What is clear from this discussion is that the provision of the policy under law embodies certain assumptions about the types of employee who will be the most likely users of such policies. Leaving aside the question of the nature of the causal direction between legislation and practice, assumptions are being made in the way the legislation has been framed about what might be legitimate reasons for requesting a flexible working arrangement – and hence also what might not be a legitimate reason for a request.

It is also clear from the above that when the provision of flexible working is discussed through the lens of its ability or otherwise to allow family friendly working practices or to allow employees to achieve a better work-life balance, then this too makes assumptions about the types of employees who might be most likely to take up such practices.

Although the debates about female workers and carers match on to the debates which were evident at the time of the right to request legislation being enacted, links between provision and other groups of employees have been theorized. For example Wood et al., (2003) argue skill level of employees may be important in shaping the organizational response. Employees in a strong position due to higher levels of human capital may be more likely to articulate their views to management and have greater chance of influencing management decisions than less powerful counterparts. The institutional context may be important if those employees observe FWA provision in competitors. The idea of higher skilled workers pushing for flexible working might also suggest that different options are provided. For example, it is likely that such workers might desire the working from home option, which would be compatible with roles which require little direct supervision and are based more on trust. Such an option would be likely to be desirable to high-skilled workers as it allows them to continue in full-time employment and offers lower levels of challenge to the notion of the ideal worker. Wood et al., (2003) do test whether skill levels are associated with family friendly practices and find no effect. They do not test specifically for associations between skill levels and FWA options. The study is using WERS 1998 data, which specifically asks if provision of the options is made at the workplace for any non-managerial employees, and as theorized above higher skilled workers may be likely to push for different FWA options compared with their lower skilled colleagues.

The skill level of the workforce is thus surprisingly under-researched as a predictor of FWA provision. As noted, such workers might be in a better position to advance their interests because of their higher levels of human capital, and therefore greater ability to move between employers. Various authors have expressed concern that the WLB balance debate is dominated by the voices of those in relatively secure labour market positions. For example, Warren (2015) is critical of the alignment of the debate about flexible working with careers, as opposed to jobs. Lewis et al (2007) argue that the debates in the WLB discourse are dominated by those white-collar workers who are relatively financially secure, but have difficulty in finding time for their personal lives because of the nature of

such work under contemporary capitalism. Fleetwood (2007b) argues that because focus of the debate on is professionals, discussions of poor WLB are dominated with the notion of the problems being too much work, as opposed to other factors such as when or where the work is done. While the idea of status of the worker is implicit in many accounts of WLB, it is under-researched as a predictor of the provision of FWAs in workplaces.

2.5 Recessionary effects on FW provision

As noted at the start of the chapter, the general trend since the turn of the century has been that provision of FW by British employers to employees has increased, as measured by the proportion of workplaces offering the different FWA options. This has been observed in the UK context using WERS data (van Wanrooy et al., 2013) and in the Government sponsored WLBS(Hayward et al., 2007; BIS 2014). This is perhaps unsurprising, given the aforementioned push to promote FWAs as part of the government's WLB campaign of the early 2000s. It could also be viewed as unsurprising given the debates about increases in levels of work intensification in the 21st century (Felstead et al., 2013) that there is increased provision and take-up of FWA options, in line with the arguments of authors who view WLB policies more critically (Fleetwood, 2007b).

The general increases in provision which were observed at the beginning of the century now appear to have slowed, or by some measures have gone into reverse (BIS, 2014), and of course the figures show large differences in overall levels of provision across the different FWA options. As noted above, WERS research confirms that between 2004 and 2011 there were significant reductions in the proportions of workplaces providing the option of reducing working hours and job-sharing (van Wanrooy et al., 2013).

A slow-down in the rate of increase in provision may be explained by saturation type arguments (BIS, 2014) in that workplaces which had the impetus and ability to provide FWAs would by the later part of the first decade of the twenty-first century be likely to have already put those arrangements in

place. This type of explanation might account for a slow-down in the rate of increase, but does not address why levels of provision might be observed to be falling.

The reduction in provision of certain FWA options raises interesting questions. Provision may have decreased because workplaces have withdrawn provision of some types of flexibility. Alternatively, the decrease in the proportion of workplaces which provide flexibility might be a function of new workplaces not adopting the provisions, and / or existing workplaces with provision closing down. Either way, the question of why provision might be reducing remains important. The relationship between provision of FWAs and external labour market factors has hitherto not received the level of attention afforded to other predictors of provision; the factors associated with provision have tended to be theorised as internal – relating to the workplace and / or its workforce. This is perhaps surprising given the accounts which are critical of the business case approach to equality matters, and arguments about the WLB agenda being distorted to serve the interests of employers rather than those of employees (Lewis, et al., 2017a; Fleetwood, 2007b). As mentioned above the worldwide economic crisis the "GFC" has led to policies of austerity in the UK and internationally. This has prompted some researchers to engage with the implications of austerity on how organizations may have adjusted provision of FW, to test and theorise relationships between recessionary effects and provision of FWAs. Sweet et al., (2014) test the availability of FWAs before and after the GFC. Using surveys conducted in US private sector firms either side of the recession, evidence is found which suggests that FWA provision and promotion by employers of FWA use reduces during times of economic downturn, hence providing support for the adaption perspective, rather than the institutional perspective. The analyses did not specifically test whether changes in provision were linked to the extent to which the recession had affected the organization, and thus attributed the changes to general economic uncertainty. It is unclear as to why organizations would respond in this way, given the fact that FWAs are generally taken to be low cost policies in absolute terms for organizations (Bloom and van Reenen, 2006), and certainly low cost in relative terms compared with family-friendly options such as on-site nurseries or vouchers for childcare. Therefore

the explanation as to why FWA provision is observed to have reduced over the recessionary period may relate to the greater perceived importance of control and supervision at a time of economic uncertainty. In any case, the question of whether it is workplaces or organizations which have been most affected by recession that have reduced their options for flexibility remains unanswered.

The authors acknowledge that there are some differences in sample characteristics, that the findings assume change in provision is linked to recession, rather than any other unobserved factors, and that further studies might address the nature of potentially uneven change within organizations (Sweet et al., 2014). While these points are valid, there would also be benefit in further studies using more robust techniques to assess the causal relationship between recession and FWA provision. The major methodological problem of Sweet et al.'s (2014) work is that the effects were observed by comparing before and after data from two different samples, and hence revealing nothing about the changes over time in individual workplaces. Using panel data is one obvious technique to overcome the challenge that these results are based on two different samples, and hence results derived may be a function of unobserved differences between the two samples, rather than the effect of recession. The results may also be affected by the composition of the sample populations which they used, and there are sound theoretical reasons for taking this view. The samples considered only private sector workplaces, and it is entirely conceivable that public sector workplaces would respond to recessionary pressures in a different manner.

The work of Lewis et al., (2017a, 2017b) may aid understanding of the changes in provision of FWAs which have been observed in the private sector in the UK. Van Wanrooy et al., (2013) find that for UK private sector workplaces between 2004 and 2011 there were significant reductions in provision of the options to reduce working hours and job share, whereas working from home and compressed hours increased significantly. Lewis et al., (2017a, 2017b) have argued that in public sector workplaces, three discourses have emerged in relation to how public sector workplaces have responded to the recession in respect of FW. Three main WLB discourses are identified., none of

which suggest that provision will be withdrawn during recession. The discourses of WLB as 1) embedded 2) as a managerial tool for reducing costs and 3) WLB as an individual responsibility rather suggest that, if anything, provision will be increased or that provision of FWA options which allow the employer to reduce costs will increase, whereas options which result in costs to the employer will be withdrawn, depending on the relative weight of the first two discourses. This suggests that attention ought to focus on, not only the overall levels of provision, but also the types of provision which are made available. The third discourse of WLB is interesting in terms of its implications for outcomes which are discussed below. However, in terms of provision the "organization's role is then reconstructed as encouraging and offering support for employees to take greater responsibility for their own work and health" (Lewis et al., 2017a).

Sweet et al., (2014) considered both the provision of FWA options by employers as well as the promotion of the use of the policies. Given the data used in this study it is not possible to assess whether the use at organization level has changed over time, as this would require panel data at the individual level as well as the workplace level. WERS does not facilitate such an analysis on two counts. First, the changes to the SEQ questions about employee use of FWAs mean that it is not possible to track use of the policies across the two waves, and secondly that although there are panel workplaces included in the 2004 and 2011 waves, the employees sampled are subject to random sampling procedures each time.

By its very design, Lewis et al.'s (2017a) work reveals nothing of discourses which may be apparent in private sector organizations, and given various evidence suggests the links between sector and FWA provision (Dex, 2002; Cully et al., 1999; Kersley et al., 2006; Van Wanrooy et al, 2013) the patterns revealed may not be apparent in the private sector. Moreover, the difference between the public and private sectors may not only be in terms of the discourses which are in train, but also relate to the ability of the workplaces to instigate changes. Even if managers in the public sector wanted to reduce FW provision, the public sector equality duty (PSED) might mean that any such

attempts to do so would be subject to legal challenge. Whereas public sector and other workplaces who are under greater institutional pressure might be unable or unwilling to formally rescind provision of FWAs in the way in which some private sector workplaces may be able to do, it might be the case that use of policies in public sector workplaces becomes concentrated in policies which are zero cost to the organisation or even could be used as a means of cost reduction.

Summary of section on FWA provision

The above section has considered different explanations as to why employers may choose to provide FWA options for their workforce. Broadly explanations for employer behaviour fall into either being motivated by concerns about workplace performance (the business case) or wellbeing and equality for their employees (the social justice case), which itself may be informed by the question of the need to be seen as a "socially legitimate" employer (see Paauwe, 2004).

The extent to which employers respond to some of these pressures for legitimacy may vary according to whether there are business-related reasons for acquiescence (Oliver, 1991). Most commonly this points to characteristics of the workforce which may make response to these "legitimacy pressures" more likely.

More recently debates have focused on whether implementing FWA policies can be seen as a strategic response by employers to reduce business costs at times of economic uncertainty (Sweet et al., 2014; Lewis et al, 2017a).

The above discussion leads to the following research questions:

- To what extent is FWA provision associated with equal opportunities policies or business case perspectives?
- Do the predictors of flexible working differ according to workplace and workforce characteristics?
- How have workplaces reconfigured their approach to flexibility in the wake of the recession?

2.6 Flexible working "perceived accessibility" and use

The literature reviewed above looked at the factors which might be associated with the provision of flexible working by employers; that is whether there is a policy in existence at the workplace for the various FWA options. Theoretical perspectives on provision by employers which are informed by business case rationales, especially the situational and HPWPs perspectives have suggested that where options are provided they may be selectively applied across the workforce. The studies which have been cited above, have been concerned with identifying whether or not a policy is in existence at a workplace, or the overall level of provision of FWA options at the workplace. The question of how that policy then translates into employee access is a separate question, and one which is considered below. Therefore although employer perspectives are important, there is also the need to consider the ways in which the provision is experienced by employees.

Budd and Mumford (2006) identify a gap between availability as given by employers and perceived accessibility as experienced by employees. Further work has reached similar conclusions (Sanchez-Vidal et al, 2011). Budd and Mumford (2006) acknowledge that their research captures 'two of the three key levels'[8] – availability and perceived accessibility. The data used do not allow Budd and Mumford to make an assessment of the third level – take-up of FWAs. .

From this work a number of questions emerge. First there is the unanswered question of the relationship between availability, perceived accessibility and take-up which could not be answered with earlier WERS data. Second, there is the question of whether perceived availability has changed in light of the UK legislation. Following the right to request flexible working in 2003, it is now possible to assess whether employees who are eligible to request FW actually believe the options to be accessible. It is known that in the early years of the right to request legislation operating in the UK that certain groups (male worker and workers without dependent children) were less likely to

[8] The relevant question in WERS 2004 does not allow use of policies to be identified, only if the employee believes them to be available

make requests (Holt and Grainger, 2005), though it is not known whether this is because they lack knowledge about eligibility or because they perceive that flexible working is not available to them. Lack of knowledge of eligibility would suggest a different policy response from findings which suggested a lack of interest from certain groups.

The experience of employees is what Eaton (2003) terms "perceived accessibility" and comprises the different elements of: firstly how widely available employers make the policies across the workforce i.e. whether employers formally extend provision of FWA options to all their employees; and secondly or whether there are barriers which impinge on employees' ability to make use of the policies (Eaton, 2003).

The issue of perceived accessibility is of crucial importance to the experience of employees. If employers have policies in place to allow flexibility, but access is restricted, either by line managers refusing to grant requests or by the sense that using the options will result in negative consequences such as being less likely to achieve a promotion, then use of policies will remain low. By raising expectations through having a policy in place, but then restricting use, it may be that this results in worse outcomes for the employee than not having the policy in the first instance. The relationship between accessibility, use and outcome is reviewed in the section which follows. Perceived accessibility is also important from the point of view of workplace fairness. If policies are restricted on the grounds of employee characteristics, then this may affect outcomes for those who do have access as well as those who do not. The debate is important in both theoretical and practical terms. Practically if employees are unable to use policies then they amount as little more than window dressing. If policies are in place, but expectations are not met, then this may result in negative outcomes for employees, as the expectations which have been raised are then not met. This might lead to worse outcomes compared with not having the policy in the workplace in the first instance.

Of course the argument around expectations might suggest that employees have knowledge of the policies which their workplaces do and do not offer; this is an assumption which may not be

supported by empirical enquiry. Knowledge of availability may be linked to perceived need. If employees feel that they have no need for using FWAs then it is less likely that they will investigate whether the options are available to them, though they might infer availability from observing colleagues' use of the policies. This may suggest that the knowledge of accessibility is lower for policies which are less commonly used.

The workplace is of course not the only place where expectations around the workplace's operation are constructed. Normative views about what might be possible in terms of work organization are likely to come from multiple sources, and therefore are difficult to disentangle through empirical study – especially through a quantitative analytical approach. The significance of normative assumptions around who FWA policies are intended for, and therefore who might seek them, is a theme which is discussed in greater detail below in relation to gendered organizations and social role theory.

Factors affecting employee perceptions of accessibility and use

This section considers in turn some of the factors which may structure the perceived availability and the use of policies. These can be considered as three broad groups. First features of the workplace are reviewed. Workforce characteristics are then discussed, before the chapter concludes with a review of the impact of relational elements at work.

Workplace features

Hogarth et al., (2001:78) examine the difference between having a formal written policy and whether the practice exists. They note that there are plausible explanations for the causal link between take-up of practices and the existence of a formal policy running in either direction – a written policy might be instigated to increase visibility and therefore take-up, or it could follow increased take up as a means of codifying existing practice. Hogarth et al., (2001) do find that take up of arrangements where there is a written policy at the establishment is higher than when no

written policy exists. Though they do not seek to link this to the sorts of employee who may be able to access arrangements when the policy exists compared with when it does not.

As outlined above, although there is legislation which covers aspects of access to FWA, at the time when the data for this study were collected, the legislation permitted certain groups of employees the right to request FWAs, though the employer had no obligation to grant that request. There is no obligation on the part of the employer to have a policy on flexible working, although having such a policy might be seen as an indicator of good practice. Employees are of course able to make requests in the absence of policy, and under the legislation, the request would need to be considered.

The section on provision articulated some reasons why previous research has found that provision of FWAs is higher in larger workplaces. Explanations might suggest that the effect is due to greater reliance on formal process in larger workplaces (Forth et al 2006), or that larger workplaces are more able to afford such policies, or that there is an institutional effect whereby larger workplaces are more subject to greater institutional pressures to adopt best practice. However, research has suggested that even though managers say that provision is lower in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), employees in those workplaces believe that they have greater access to FWAs compared with employees in large workplaces. This apparently contradictory finding might be explained by the fact that surveys tend to pick up on whether there is formal provision (i.e. a written policy) at a workplace, whereas employees might be able to access informal FWA options and have responded on that basis. Larger firms are thought to rely more on formal policy compared with smaller workplaces which favour informal arrangements (Forth et al, 2006; Lewis 2015). Although the research mentioned above finds an apparent contradiction between provision of FWAs and employees' perceived ability to access the arrangements, WERS 2004 questions were not able to identify if the apparently higher levels of perceived access were translated into higher levels of use.

Whether the presence of unions is found to increase the provision of FWAs by employers or not, there may still be union effects in terms of perceived availability and use of policy as a result of union facilitation effects. It is unlikely that in a workplace that there will be equal knowledge of eligibility and accessibility to policies. Tomlinson and Durbin (2010) provide evidence of very limited knowledge of rights to request flexible working in their small-scale study of women part-time managers[9].

As noted above, knowledge of the employer's policies may partly relate to the employee's perceived need. Those with caring responsibilities may have greater need for adjustments to their work organization to balance their commitments, and hence may be more likely to investigate the options which are available to them at their workplace. Another factor which might influence the degree of knowledge of the policy is the effects which result from the presence of, or day to day work of trade unions. Unions can provide members with information on the availability of company policies through their various types of communication channels (websites, emails etc) and / or can assist employees in preparing and presenting their case for FW to management (Budd, 2004). Evidence suggests that union presence at the workplace can result in a facilitation effect; there is greater awareness of some family-friendly working practices among employees at unionized workplaces. In this model unions make employees more aware of policies which are available (Budd and Mumford, 2004), though the extent to which this effect. There has yet to be any analysis of whether the greater perceived availability translates into greater use of FWAs in unionized workplaces.

As well as the policy context within the workplace and unionization, another workplace characteristic which may be thought to affect perceived accessibility and use of FWAs is the extent to which the workplace has adopted HPWPs. It has been noted that organizations may have policies and practices which contradict one another. In the case of WLB, the relationship between provision

[9] It might be expected that as a group managers would have more awareness of the flexible working arrangements, and it might be expected that female, part-time workers would also have greater awareness. The study found that only those managers whose work was in the HR function had good knowledge of the access to FW options.

of FWAs and other forms of work organisation might work against one another to reduce the effectiveness of the FWAs. For example, alongside policies outwardly designed to help employees achieve better WLB, organizations might have other policies which make achieving that balance more difficult. Moreover different elements of workplace culture might also work against employees achieving better WLB. It has been observed that high commitment management programmes result in the expectations of total commitment to the job at the expense of family life (Fleming and Spicer, 2004). This suggests that where workplaces have adopted HPWPs to a large extent, employees will be less likely to use the policies.

Workforce factors

The provision of FWA options by employers in the workplace has been theorized to be a response to the (putative) needs of the workforce (Goodstein 1994, Allen et al., 2001; Arthur 2003), and as discussed above, one of the indicators which has been used in research to show that need is the gender balance of the workforce. This has been used as an indicator that businesses may be taking an organizational adaptive approach or a situational approach to provision. Discussions of flexible working are heavily gendered and may become discussions of female employment practices – again reinforcing rather than breaking down assumptions about roles in the paid economy. The conflation of flexible employment and female employment is one clear example where the policies do little to challenge normative assumptions of roles which different types of employee might fulfil (Gardiner and Tomlinson, 2009). Cockburn's (1989) study found that the men interviewed for the research equated family policies with policies for women, and believed that women's careers were interruptible, whereas their own careers were not. The idea that women are often told that they must make choices between the worlds of work and family life, men are not told that they have such a decision to make (See for example Hakim, 1996;2000). These normative assumptions around the type of employee for whom flexibility policies were designed can be seen through the highly

gendered right to request legislation which equated the need for flexible working with caring responsibility for children and elders, and although apparently gender neutral in its design resulted in a highly gendered use of flexibility options (Holt and Grainger, 2005). These normative assumptions about suitability for FW bases around gender roles, persist and inform both the perspectives of managers (see Wilkinson et al, 2017) and potential users of policies themselves (Chung, 2017). These points are discussed in more detail below.

Given the above discussion around the links between gender and flexibility, it is unsurprising therefore that Budd and Mumford (2006) find that gender is a significant predictor of perceived availability for both the FWAs in their study (Job sharing and working from home). The coefficient for female employment was significantly positively related to perceived availability of job sharing, but the association with working from home was significantly negative, suggesting that different options for flexibility exist for by gender. Using the WERS 1998 data as this study did, it was not possible to disentangle whether the responses given by employees reflected actual constraint at the workplace level, or actually incorporated some element of employees responding that the policy was unavailable due self-deselection. The employee data also did not allow identification of those employees who were actually using the policies. Levels of knowledge of actual availability might be related to use, which is likely to be highly gendered. The second point to note about this study is that because WERS 1998 MQ asked if the FWA options were available to non-managerial employees, the study was based on those workplaces where a policy was said to be provided, and only non-managerial employees were included in the analyses. Lambert et al.'s (2008) study used a measure of flexible working incorporating flexitime and compressed hours found no significant relationship between gender and FWA use. The above analyses suggest that although gender might be associated with perceived availability and use of FWAs, the gender effect will vary according to the type of flexibility and also the role which the employee has in the organization.

The way in which the right to request defined eligibility in the early years has led to association of the practices with the characteristics of the eligible (Wilkinson et al., 2017). These authors note that

the focus of research within WLB has been on 'work family' and the challenges faced by employees who do not have dependent children has been neglected. In their qualitative study of managers and professionals living alone, they found many instances of the 'legitimacy problem' of employees' non-work time and private lives. Family or caring time was seen as more legitimate than other non-work activities such as going to the gym or even just going home to watch television. Despite this research identifying the 'legitimacy problem' the authors note that it was difficult to assess the extent to which this problem "reflected the respondent's perceptions of the attitudes of their employers and work colleagues, or their own beliefs about managers and work colleagues' perceptions." (ibid: 11). These findings mirror the research of Chung (2017) who notes a stigma which affects both how employees consider themselves in relation to flexibility, as well as how they view others.

As noted, a large part of the debate about FW concerns the issue of the degree to which flexible working accessibility and use is spread across the workforce. This leads to questions of the extent to which FW is available to different groups of workers, the types of FW which might be available for the different groups of workers and the extent to which observed patterns of use reflect constraints around use which different groups feel. The fact that formal flexibility is offered through workplace policies may have little effect on both use and outcomes if workers feel that they are unable to use them because the use is discouraged or it is perceived that use will have negative effects (Eaton, 2003).

A particular focus in this debate is whether managerial / professional employees will feel that policies are available to them, even though there is policy at the workplace which allows these employees to make these requests. Access to WLB policies may be especially important for such groups with studies suggesting that many professionals and managers are experiencing difficulties balancing work and family life (Blair-Loy, 2009). Even though access may be made available, there could be consequences for managers (and especially female managers) choosing to take up the option. For female professional and managerial workers there is the danger that taking flexible

working will result in career penalties and them being put on the so-called “mommy track” Jurzyck (1998). Kossek et al., (2010) makes similar points that for managers especially use of flexibility may be constrained by concerns about the impact this would have on their careers. This is especially the case of different options such as reduced hours, which it is argued are often seen as incompatible with managerial responsibilities (Kossek et al., 2016).

Moore’s (2007) qualitative study of managers in an Anglo-German MNC raises interesting questions on the relationship between managers access to and actual use FWAs. Moore’s research indicates that WLB policies, including FWAs are likely to be available to managers, and although this is a small-scale qualitative survey , large-scale quantitative studies have confirmed that managers and senior professionals are more likely to have access to FWA options (Hoque and Noon 2004). The question of how this translates into use is one which requires further exploration.

Despite studies identifying that managerial access to FWAs may be higher than that for other employees, though there may be questions about whether managers use them or whether they are effective for this group. One of the impediments to use of FWA options is the long-hours culture which is perceived to exist the workplace. Although managerial workers may have greater access to FWA options, it could also be argued that such workers tend to be able to exercise greater discretion in their working lives and hence would not have the same need to access such policies as workers who were unable to exercise such levels of discretion.

Swanberg et al., (2005) find that access to flexibility is generally reported as higher among workers who display greater markers of what they term “privilege” in the workplace – and gender, ethnicity, whether paid hourly or salaried, and pay levels are all significant predictors of access to flexibility. This is based on four flexibility options (ability to modify start and end times, daily flex times (i.e. flexitime), taking time off for personal and family life, and control over work hours). Thus the work has only flexitime in common with the options which are considered here, and it is noticeable that none of the options which were examined in this study were those such reducing working hours,

which would result in a direct financial detriment to the worker. Blake-Beard et al., (2010) make similar points about access to flexibility being structured along traditional dimensions of advantage. Relationships between flexibility, privilege and WLB have also been addressed in Warren's (2015) work which looks at the nature of the debate about WLB and how it is constructed along class[10] lines. Making similar points to Swanberg et al (2005) above who argued that the WLB agenda is constructed around professional workers. The result of this is that the debate about work-life organization is typically couched in terms of the problem of too much work, and this ignores the problems of precarity and low working hours which is common in working class occupations.

Relational aspects and responses to requests

The question about how employers respond to requests for flexibility has also drawn on concepts related to the relative advantaged position of the employee. Work which has looked at the process of negotiation of FWA access through the gatekeeper of the line manager has revealed that some workers are more likely to have access to FWAs than others, though this is not necessarily discussed in terms of privilege, rather it is more likely theorized in terms of power relations within the workplace (Greenberg and Landry, 2011). Making a slightly different point about availability of FWAs, Fagan et al. (2006) notes that in most organizations, even though there might be a policy which is available to all employees, in practice access may be rationed. Sometimes this will be because of practical considerations and the requirement to align individual working patterns to the overall needs of the organization. The point is that in practice organizations may be selective in their granting of access to FW, and the processes which lie behind that are important for debates about equality. It is the case that the way in which managers respond to requests will reflect their own normative assumptions about whose access to flexibility is legitimate (Daverth et al., 2016).

[10] As social class is not measured in WERS, the subsequent analyses in chapters 5 and 6 discuss access to and outcomes relating to FWAs in terms of the markers of privilege used by Swanberg et al (2005)

Although privilege might be one factor which affects access to FWAs, overall and by specific types of flexibility, there may be other factors which frame how individual employees themselves and their line managers might consider the issue of flexibility. Given the way in which flexibility has typically been considered as "women's issue" and the gendered nature of the legislation around flexible working which, although gender neutral in wording, was enacted in the societal context where carer and parent were often synonyms for woman, it would have been expected that women were higher users of FWA options. Now given the fact that the right to request has been extended to all workers, the question of whether FW remains a policy which is associated with caring and parental responsibility is one which demands attention. Emerging qualitative studies, such as the work of Wilkinson et al. (2017, 2018) has found that for professionals who do not have such responsibilities that their requests for flexibility are seen as less legitimate and therefore less likely to be granted, suggesting that in the minds of managers that employee-requested flexibility is inextricably linked with childcare and eldercare responsibilities. And as work such as Beauregard (2014) has shown, the perception of fairness in regards to access to FWAs can have implications for individual level outcomes.

Alongside gender, ethnicity and pay, which were considered by Swanberg et al. (2005) there are other individual level factors which may affect perceived accessibility and use, which are linked to the idea of status. The relationship between disabled workers and flexibility can be explored through this lens of status. Those groups in the labour market which have traditionally been marginalized and suffered higher levels of discrimination, may feel that they have less access to FWAs as using them may take them further away from those notions of the ideal worker, and may therefore be reluctant to use the policies even if they are available. In the case of disabled workers, it may be that employers are reluctant to allow home working if the employee requires complex accommodations which are either impossible or excessively costly to provide in the home environment. The relationship between flexibility and disabled employees remains under-

researched, despite opinion pieces arguing that granting greater flexibility to disabled employees might be one policy approach to address the disability employment gap (see e.g. Johnson, 2020). The discussion of privilege, or of the idea of a sorting effect in FWA use, needs closer attention. It could be the case that those less privileged workers have lower overall access to flexibility than their more privileged counterparts, or it could be the case that their access is lower to some types of flexibility. For example, building on the work of Dex and Smith (2002) which suggested substitution effects between part-time work and other forms of flexibility, it could be the case that workers who are less privileged are able to access flexibility options which reduce their total hours of work, (hours flexibility) but not ones which allow for schedule or location flexibility. This is consistent with the notion that lower status work is typically subject to greater levels of personal supervision and lower levels of autonomy. On the other hand privileged workers may have greater access to the sorts of flexibility which allow them to maintain full-time status and avoid part-time working penalties. In short, twin tracks may be evident.

The workplace context under which flexibility access is achieved is also important and has implications for discussions of equality. It may be the case that access is differently arranged in workplaces which are unionized compared to those which are not, and / or it could be the case that access is affected by whether or not a formal policy exists at the workplace. The degree to which individual level effects, which are thought to affect access and use are moderated by the workplace context has not received sufficient attention.

Firms may provide FWAs as part of their benefits package in order to recruit and retain particular employees, though this may not translate into actual use. Alternatively the business case might not relate to the need to retain and recruit, but to meet operational need. Scholarios and Taylor's (2011) study of call centre employment highlights the provision of flexible employment mainly for women, but sounds notes of caution around the flat employment structure and the lack of opportunities for progression; importantly those who are in more senior roles are less likely to be working in a non-standard way.

The relationship between provision of policies for certain groups of the workforce and their take-up needs further elaboration, with particular attention required to the position of managerial or supervisory staff, as both users and gatekeepers to the policies. There is a danger that although managerial staff may be the intended beneficiaries of such policies, that there are constraints which mean that they feel unable to take up the policies (Hakim, 1996; Den Dulk et al., 2011; Simpson, 1998; Tomlinson 2004) or that when they do they are ineffective for this group of employees (Kossek et al., 2010). The type of flexibility might be especially important when looking at the managerial / professional group. Kossek et al., (2016) suggest that professional workers will be less likely to embrace reduced load working (RLW) as it may be more likely to incur career penalties due to challenging normative assumptions about workloads. For professional workers support from their own manager for RLW is therefore especially relevant for professional workers given the central importance of the perception of managers in shaping career outcomes (Leslie et al.,2012).

In the case of line managers, use of FWAs is seen as incompatible with the responsibility of line management (with notions around commitment and normative assumptions about the ideal worker). Despite quite a lot of debate about the likely relationship between managers and professional workers and use of FWAs, there is little research which actually sets out to establish the nature of that association[11]. Lambert et al.'s (2008) study is one study which does test whether managerial workers are more likely to be users of FWAs, and perhaps contrary to expectations it found a positive association between managerial responsibilities and FWA use. Though as noted this research took a composite measure of flexi-time and compressed hours (both options which are less challenging to normative assumptions around ideal worker models). The literature above appears to be suggesting that different patterns and processes are at work. On the one hand, there is one strand of literature which discusses FWAs in negative terms for the penalties that employees will

[11] Prior to 2011 WERS did not ask about use of FWA options, which may partially account for the gaps in knowledge around FWA use

experience, yet on the other hand, another thread discusses FWAs as perks for privileged employees.

The workplace is undoubtedly important as the arena in which the formal policies of government and / or the organization are translated into the real-life business of entitlements, claims and negotiation (Den Dulk et al., 2011). Requests and conversations around flexible working involve individual relationships between employees and line managers / owner managers (Gardiner and Tomlinson, 2009) and it would be expected that these negotiations and discussions would be subject to the usual types of biases and misunderstandings which can affect these relationships. As Gardiner and Tomlinson note, this may mean that certain groups find it more difficult to access FWAs[12]. Similarly Bond et al., (2002) find that line managers are more likely to grant flexibility to some employees compared with others.

The issue of who makes the decisions around flexible working has also received some attention in the literature. Arguably the role of the line manager has become increasingly important given the trend towards the greater decentralisation towards line manager level, which itself raises questions about the extent to which line managers have the required expertise or indeed appetite for these additional responsibilities (Whittaker & Marchington, 2003; Renwick, 2002; Cunningham & Hyman, 1999). Den Dulk et al (2011) argue that managers are, as a group, less likely to make use of these policies. And thus line managers are the gatekeepers to policies of which they may have little direct experience. Moreover, research has suggested that the type of flexibility sought may affect the managerial response. Den Dulk and de Ruitjer (2008) suggest that managers tend to view requests for flexibility as disruptive and may be predisposed against granting access, though may be more likely to approve when the disruption is short-term and is linked to personal and family needs. Again this is suggestive of a gendered element to managerial decision making.

[12] Using WERS – the choice cannot be determined – but use of FWAs by employee type can be observed and controls can be introduced for 'need'.

FWAs are often conceived of as an option for employees to manage their work and family lives more effectively. Often the perceived need for the policy has been theorized in terms of the commitments which employees face outside of the workplace, and is linked to the roles which employees may play outside of work such as parents or carers. However, use of FWAs may be related to in-work demands, as a way of maintaining some level of control (Hill et al, 2008). As Gajendran and Harrison (2007) note, one of the implied assumptions of the literature around telecommuting[13], is that location flexibility offers the employee greater control over tasks. The relationship between forms of control or discretion over work tasks has, as far as is known, not been studied in relation to patterns of employee use of FWAs. There is no reason to suppose that lower levels of work discretion would have an impact on the perceived availability of policies, though if "employee" need prompts employees to investigate the range of FWA options which are available to them, then those with lower task discretion might be more likely to have more accurate knowledge of whether FWA options are actually available to them. Similarly those facing issues of long hours culture and or work / intensification might have greater need for accessing flexible options. Expectations in the workplace may exist around what constitutes an ideal worker where 'face time' is seen as a proxy for performance (Elsbach et al., 2010). The existence of long hours culture has been noted in many research studies and may act as an impediment to achieving WLB, whatever policies the organization might formally make available to employees. A culture of long hours may dissuade workers from taking flexible working options, when they are most needed.

Summary of section on flexible working perceived accessibility and use

The above section has reviewed evidence to consider which employees might be most likely to use and / or perceive FWA options to be accessible. The review has indicated that gender and normative assumptions about gender from both employers and employees are likely to be significant predictors

[13] Gajendran and Harrison (2007) acknowledge that the most common form of telecommuting is working from home, but other locations are possible.

of use / accessibility. It has also suggested that the nature of the role of the employee might influence their perceptions of accessibility and their use of FWAs with more senior employees and that options for flexibility are likely to be used / perceived accessible according to the location of the employee within the workplace hierarchy. Lower status employees are more likely to use FWAs which present the greatest challenge to notions of the ideal worker, and are the sorts of options which incur direct financial penalties for use. Following on from this review of accessibility and use, these key areas merit attention, through the following research questions.

- To what extent is perceived accessibility and use of FWAs related to workforce characteristics associated with work-based privilege?
- What is the relationship between managerial / professional employees and a) perceived availability and b) use of different FWA options
- To what extent does workplace provision of flexibility influence employees' perceptions of accessibility and use of policies?

2.7 Flexible working outcomes

The thesis has thus far discussed the factors which are associated with the provision of FWAs by employers, and has then considered the factors associated with both the perceived accessibility of FWA options and their use. Workplace, individual level, relational, and job factors have been examined as to their potential links to FWA perceived accessibility and use. Now the thesis examines the individual level outcomes which are associated with FWAs.

This section examines outcomes which are associated with the provision and use of FWAs. As noted above, the reasons for firms providing flexible working and family friendly working practices, especially where there is no legal requirement for them to do so, may be influenced by business concerns – to address a specific issue within the workplace such as productivity, absence or recruitment. Therefore it is unsurprising that there is a body of theoretical and empirical research

which aims to link FWAs to various direct and indirect outcomes at both the individual and the organizational level. FWAs can be seen as a part of the WLB agenda and may be useful in aiding employees achieving better WLB (aligning with arguments about social justice and equality), increasing job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reducing negative experiences associated with work; these outcomes are explored in greater detail below. Alternative explanations suggest that employers are motivated by the business case and consequently one would expect to observe better outcomes at the organizational or workplace level, for those businesses which provide their employees with FWAs. Research which has sought to explore the links between flexible working and organizational outcomes includes work on links between share prices and FWAs (Arthur, 2003), productivity (Bloom et al., 2011), perceived organizational performance (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000; Whyman and Petrescu, 2014), use of agency work (Heywood, et al, 2011). Such studies which examine organizational level outcomes are not the focus of this study, which is concerned with individual level outcomes.

Research into individual level outcomes from flexible working can be divided into two broad categories - informed by the business case and looking at outcomes, which may be of benefit to the organization because of the implied link with productivity (such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and those which are informed by a work-life balance perspective, which look at outcomes which benefit the individual (such as reduced conflict between work and family life).

Such work has addressed themes as to whether FWAs reduce conflict between family and work (Allen et al, 2013; Anderson et al, 2002; Galea et al, 2013, Shockley and Allen, 2007), improve employee commitment (Dex and Smith, 2002; Haar and Spell, 2004), aid the health and well-being of employees (Zheng et al, 2015), improve job satisfaction and influence individual intention to stay (Butts et al, 2013). Other research has set out to examine whether outcomes vary by type of

employee – for example Carlson et al. (2010) find WLB policies to be of greater benefit to female employees when considering satisfaction as an outcome.

This study seeks to engage with the debates around the employee outcomes from FWAs. While some employee outcomes may have an effect on the organizational level, such as the often quoted link between organizational commitment and performance, organizational outcomes are not the direct focus of the work here. The outcomes which are considered below are WLB, organizational commitment, job satisfaction and work related anxiety.

Although there has been a great deal of work on outcomes which may derive from FW, better attention needs to be paid to the type of flexibility which is being utilised, the workplace context under which that flexibility is offered and as well as the individual characteristics of the employees using the flexible arrangements. The other area which has been under-researched is the relationship between the different outcomes. It could be the case that FWAs in different context result in improved outcomes on one measure, at the expense of lower outcomes on another measure.

The debates which are outlined below are overly focused on individual characteristics of employees as predictors of differential outcomes. While these are important, they cannot be removed from the workplace context under which they are being delivered. Therefore the different FWA options may not be unequivocally successful, and there may be more variation associated with particular policies than for others.

While the UK legislation allows for employees to reduce their hours of work, it does not also allow for employees to subsequently increase those hours. This is unlike examples of policies in Europe where legislation does include provision for requests to increase working hours; the presence of such a clause is seen as a concern among the policy community of employees becoming trapped in part-time work with lower chances of progression Hegewisch (2009). Part-time work could therefore be found to be successful in reducing family-work conflict, but could result in lower levels

of satisfaction if that better work-life balance was achieved as a result of trading in prospects for promotion or prospects of achieving future full time work. The fear of career consequences for employees using flexibility may be a concern for employees; Chung (2017) finds that one third of UK workers have "flexibility stigma", a bias against those working flexibly. Such views would undoubtedly influence employees' views of whether or not to work flexibly themselves, as well as the view that they would take on others working flexibly.

Wheatley (2017) uses panel data to investigate the effects of FWA use on a range of satisfaction outcomes (job satisfaction, life satisfaction and leisure time satisfaction) and finds that use of FWAs tends to be more likely to be positively associated with higher levels of job satisfaction for men than for women, consistent with the idea that men can exercise greater choice when using FWAs and are more likely to use the sorts of policies which allow continued working at full-time hours (Sullivan and Smithson, 2007), whereas women's use of FWAs is more likely to reflect limited and constrained choice (Atkinson and Hall, 2009). The use of part-time working by female employees is particularly associated with lower levels of job satisfaction, and that effect appears to emerge over time (Wheatley, 2017). These findings would appear to be consistent with the dissatisfaction increasing as female employees becoming trapped in low paid work and being on the mummy track. These findings are important as they suggest that there are differences in outcomes by gender, which in turn suggests that the narrative around flexibility being beneficial to employees cannot be considered as universal.

As noted above the impetus for the Labour government's interest came from a stated desire to help workers achieve a better balance between their working lives and their home lives. Therefore one of the key debates around FW is the extent to which FW results in better WLB for employees. There are various facets to these debates including how WLB might be conceptualized and measured, whether FW is universally good for employee WLB or whether positive WLB outcomes are context dependent, and whether different types of flexibility result in better WLB outcomes.

The survey approach is the most commonly used method to assess employee levels of WLB, and there are various approaches which are common in the literature. WLB can either be measured positively, by a simple question which asks employees about their WLB Alternatively the concept of WLB can be measured from the other perspective as an absence of conflict between work and family life, and this conflict can be characterised in different directions[14]. Studies tend to take the approach of using either a conflict measure or a more positively framed measure. It might be expected that if the same individuals were measured using the two different approaches that this would produce results indicating that different dimensions are being measured. In this study, the indicators are not available to test this proposition.

Examples of the positively framed concept of WLB include indicators which measure the individual's self-reported satisfaction with their ability to balance work and family life (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001). Other measures look at the degree to which one role has an effect on the other role, giving rise to the concepts of work-family enrichment and family-work enrichment (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007).

The approach which measures conflict between work and family life itself comprises of two methods. Conflict can be measured in terms of the extent to which work impinges on family life, or the extent to which family life impinges on work, these two concepts being known as work to family conflict (WFC) and family to work conflict (FWC)[15]. Following numerous recent studies (see e.g Allen et al., 2013), the direction of the conflict is defined: WFC is the degree to which work impinges on responsibilities outside of work[16]; FWC is the degree to which responsibilities outside of work affect the work environment.

[15] Some studies, such as Allen et al., (2013) use the terms family interference with work (FIW), and work interference with family (WIF) to describe the same concepts.

[16] Kossek and Lee (2017) note that the terms work-family conflict and work-life conflict may be used to reflect the fact that employees responsibilities and commitments outside of the workplace may not necessarily relate to family, though often the terms are used interchangeably. In this study the indicator used refers to all commitments outside of work.

Given the impetus around the expansion of FWAs, there is a substantial stream of work devoted to examining the impacts FWAs have on the WLB of employees. As FWAs may be motivated by the desire to help employees achieve a better WLB, there is a range of research which examines whether FWAs do actually reduce conflict between work life and home life (Allen et al, 2013; Anderson et al, 2002; Galea et al, 2013, Shockley and Allen, 2007).

Allen et al (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to establish the effect of flexible location, flexible scheduling and overall flexibility (a combination of location and scheduling flexibility) on both WFC and FWC. Despite the popularity of meta-analytic techniques, they should be treated with extreme caution as the approach cannot resolve the issues of different populations and measurement techniques (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). Despite the obvious reservations over the meta technique, it was found that FWAs were negatively associated with WFC. In other words there appears to be an association between use of FWAs and lower levels of WFC. Though the relationship is taken to be that FWAs cause lower levels of WFC, because these are cross-sectional studies, the causality cannot be established by the method chosen.

Some FWAs may have unintended consequences. For example, working remotely using ICT (telecommuting) might well reduce the amount of time an individual spends travelling, but can also result in the blurring of boundaries between work and home life – or a rise in WFC. Recent Research from the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) has highlighted both the advantages and disadvantages of technology supported flexible working. The 2016 Employee Outlook Survey finds that while around one-third of workers responded that they were unable to switch off (their connection) in their personal time, 18 per cent said that they felt under surveillance and 17 per cent said the constant availability made them feel anxious. Similarly, Duxbury et al., (2014) find that there are mixed WLB outcomes associated with the use of mobile technology by professional knowledge workers. Nevertheless 53 per cent of respondents to the CIPD employee outlook survey said that such arrangements helped them work more flexibly and 37 per cent

believed that this enabled them to be more productive (CIPD, 2016). Allen et al's (2013) meta-analysis did not find a significant relationship between flexible location and WFC. The research cited above raises questions about the degree to which WFC will be reduced by flexible location policies.

It may be the case, however, that flexible working policies actually do little to alleviate work-life balance issues and may result in poorer work-life balance. Familiar themes in research literature suggest focus on the grades of staff for whom flexible working is made available (Stock et al, 2014), work intensification and long hours (Kelliher and Anderson, 2010), blurring of work and family life (especially in cases of remote working and teleworking) (Duxbury et al. 2014). This may suggest that there is scope to assess the use of different types of policy on employee in terms of employee outcomes.

Research which has examined conflict between work and family life and boundary permeability has often not specifically addressed the topic through the lens of (formal) flexible working. Research has focused on use of (usually smartphone) technology and has sought to attribute outcomes to individual strategies which employees adopt to manage the demands of both work and family life (Duxbury et al., 2014; Derks et al., 2016). This suggests that research should seek to examine WLB outcomes by the type of FWA and also by the type of employee.

The links between job satisfaction and flexible working have formed the basis for a number of studies (Allen et al., 2013; Chen and Fulmer, 2018; Perry Smith and Blum 2000; Wheatley, 2017). Therefore a considerable body of knowledge already exists, though can be extended in different ways. Closer attention can be paid to the type of flexibility which is being used by the employee. Chen and Fulmer (2018) advance knowledge in this regard, by categorising flexibility according to the dimensions of location, schedule and hours. Another way in which studies of satisfaction can be advanced is by paying greater consideration to the types of employee using the flexibility. Putting these two ideas together extends the knowledge base which currently exists. A final possibility for

extending research is by giving greater context to the outcomes which are associated with FWAs, and to examine the workplace characteristics where the different outcomes are found.

Research on outcomes resulting from the provision or use of FWAs, has tended to be focus on outcome variables which are positive in direction, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The extent to which FWAs may result in desirable effects for employees by reducing negative affect has largely been neglected. Macky and Boxall's (2008) work is an exception; they investigate the links between workplace stress, high performance working and flexible working options. They find a positive relationship between high performance working and workplace stress, which is not reduced when FWAs are considered. Arguably from the employee's perspective mitigating negative outcomes associated with work is equally as important as promoting positive ones.

Dex and Smith (2002) use WERS 1998 data to examine employee commitment (their concept being closest to affective or normative commitment, commonly found in the literature – see for example Johnson and Chang (2006) who define affective commitment as "an identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization"[17]). Dex and Smith (2002) used measures of both employer provision and employee perceived ability as measures of FWA provision and found that where employees perceive family friendly policies to be available, employee commitment is lower. That effect was observed for job share and flexitime, as well as for the total number of FWA options perceived to be available. Though, with these data, it is not possible to assess whether employees have made any use of the policies. The finding, which the authors note as surprising, and contrary to their expectations prompts them to speculate on reasons for these results. Causality in this relationship might run in the opposite direction; rather than FWAs resulting in lower commitment, FWAs might have been established as a consequence of lower commitment. Though this line of

[17] Affective commitment is often contrasted with continuance commitment, with the difference being that in the former case retention is a positive choice by the employee rather than a lack of opportunity to move elsewhere Allen and Meyer (1996)

argument would presuppose that employers would be aware of the staff mood; something which may be questionable. The second reason which Dex and Smith (2002) suggest may be more convincing – namely that policies are 'window dressing' and that failure to implement these policies as intended / implied results in a degree of cynicism among employees, thus lowering organizational commitment. This would suggest that closer attention would need to be paid to the degree to which outcomes are associated with the actual use of the options, rather than their perceived accessibility. A final possible explanation offered is that employee commitment is lowered due to increased disruptions caused by family friendly policies. This might be in line with the idea of "flexibility stigma" (Chung 2017) which suggests that employees have a negative view of others who are working flexibly. This line of argument might suggest that there are different levels of commitment between those who have taken up the policies and those who have not, though without information on which policies have been used and the extent to which this has occurred, such explanations remain necessarily speculative. A study which found that commitment varied between users and non-users might suggest different conclusions. This study does have some limitations – mainly as a consequence of the data used. The most serious limitation is that Dex and Smith are unable to assess policy use and hence are not able to comment on whether there is any relationship between the degree to which policies are used and levels of commitment. Given that the study was based on WERS 1998 data the analyses are not weighted at the individual level and workplace level, and the regression model is based on ordinary least squares rather than a multilevel modelling approach. The study raises interesting questions about the potential impact of flexible working policies, not only on those who may use them, but also on those who do not.

Factors affecting employee outcomes

It might be expected that FWAs would only have an impact on WLB where policies were actually used, though the possibility of whether employees have the (cap)ability to use the policies where they are provided has been questioned. However the work of Butts et al., (2013) would appear to

question the assumption that use of the policy is what drives the outcome; their findings from a meta-analysis suggest that availability of policies rather than use was linked to their outcomes of interest (organizational commitment and intention to stay) than was actual use. i.e. the signal of intent by the employer was more important than whether the employee used the policy.

The above discussion on FWAs and the links with WLB may presuppose a certain type of employer and employee, which in turn affects the way in which WLB itself is conceptualised. Warren (2015) has urged WLB researchers to pay more attention to issues of class within the WLB debates. Warren's argument rests on the idea of power differentials and notions of who has the ability to control the dominant debates about flexible working. Hence the sorts of accounts which have been produced around the topic of WLB firstly assume that too much work is the problem in issues of WLB – too much work and the long hours culture is often seen as the problem in WLB where work prevents employees from having adequate leisure time.

As discussed in the previous section there may be barriers to use, especially for senior employees, for whom flexible working is not thought to be suitable. There is a danger that although managerial staff may be the intended beneficiaries of such policies, that there are constraints which mean that they feel unable to take up the policies (Hakim, 1996; Simpson, 1998; Tomlinson 2004) or that when they do they are ineffective for this group of employees (Kossek et al., 2010). For some, mainly professional jobs, boundaries have traditionally been seen as more permeable. This notion has been expressed in studies which have focused on professional workers, managers and intellectual workers (Beigi et al, 2016). Gerstel and Clawson (2014) provide evidence of class and gender divides in the ability to make flexibility work. What is not known is the extent to which outcomes of flexible working differ by different dimensions of disadvantage.

If boundary permeability is the principal reason for flexible working being ineffective for professional workers, this suggests at least two points of interest. First, in relation to outcomes, it suggests that professional workers might experience particularly high levels of work to family conflict, where work

interferes with their family life, rather than high levels of family to work conflict where family life interferes with their work lives. Second it suggests that flexible working options which fail to address boundary permeability will be less effective compared with those which maintain boundaries between work and home life.

The context under which FWAs are provided and how employees are expected to use the policies could influence reported outcomes. The extent to which individual and managerial expectations coincide could affect individual outcomes. Research which has identified managerial expectations that employees be 'flexible with flexibility' points to how this might influence managerial perceptions of success (Clarke and Holdsworth, 2017), however managerial expectations might also influence the employee experience. Kossek et al., (2016) provide evidence that even when organizations allow flexibility, the terms on which it is offered clearly indicate that the flexibility is intended to serve the company, rather than the individual. Examples include employers expecting to be able to contact employees when they are officially not at work, thus undermining the supposed flexibility given to the employee. In such instances where employees use flexible working options, yet management transgress the agreed arrangements employees are firstly unlikely to experience the benefits of flexible working, for example in terms of achieving better WLB, and secondly the managerial transgression[18] may result in lower scores on other outcomes such as job satisfaction and / or commitment.

HPWPs context

Above it was argued that HPWPs might be associated with levels of adoption of the different FWA options. It might also be the case that the impact of FWAs on individual outcomes varies according to the extent of HPWP adoption. This section explores this matter.

[18] It is not possible using WERS to measure if employee consider that managers have or have not honoured the FWA; instead a measure of perceived management support is used to test theories about the effect of managerial factors on the impact FWA options have on employee outcomes.

The question of whether employers provide FWAs as part of a strategic package or whether arrangements are more ad hoc, was discussed above. The question is relevant in so far as to how different elements of HR practice might work in combination – either working in the same direction or in opposite directions - to influence individual level outcomes.

Given the importance of HPWPs in academic debate, it is not surprising that Berg et al (2003) find that HPWPs have a positive influence on employers believing they can balance their work and family lives more effectively. Osterman (1995) had argued that firms use HPWPs (including family friendly schemes) to improve levels of commitment among employees. The analysis of a nationally representative sample of US private sector firms with over 50 employees found support for this argument, with a strong association between HPWPs and provision of family friendly practices. Using firm level data only, Osterman was unable to test employee level outcomes. Building on arguments from Osterman (1995), Berg et al (2003) use a survey of three manufacturing industries in the US to examine the effects of workplace practices on employee level outcomes. The positive association between HPWPs and provision of family friendly practices which was observed by Osterman's work has been confirmed elsewhere (Wood et al., 2003). Berg et al (2003) also found that working long hours was significantly negatively associated with employee's ability to balance work and family lives. It might also be the case that it is not just the fact that employees do actually work long hours which prevents them from balancing their work and family lives, but their feeling that they organization expects long hours. Linked to this, studies of face time have suggested that the way in which managers perceive employee time spent at work has implications for performance rankings and has implications for how employees might use FWAs and therefore their likely effectiveness (Elsbach et al, 2010). Taking these issues in turn, it has been observed that high commitment management programmes result in the expectations of total commitment to the job at the expense of family life

The relationship between HPWPs and outcomes is theoretically interesting. Although the research above assumes that the relationship between HPWPs and WLB policies will result in better WLB outcomes for employees, other work has argued from a different standpoint (Fleming and Spicer, 2004). Fleming and Spicer (2004) use a case study approach in a single organization to build theory about boundary permeability. They argue that practices in high commitment organizations blur the distinctions between work and family life in ways which may make it harder for employees to achieve better WLB, and that these processes extend beyond the mangers to the 'post-industrial wage labourers' (Fleming and Spicer, 2004:90). Fleming and Spicer's work did not focus on FWAs, though it does raise questions about how FWAs might operate in such a culture, assuming employees felt able to make use of the policies (Eaton, 2003).

The above discussion has focused outcomes which have been investigated as resulting from FWAs. As yet, explanatory mechanisms for why adoption of FWAs might affect outcomes has been largely implicit and these mechanisms require some further elaboration.

Explaining outcomes from FWAs

For outcomes associated with positive affect, such as job satisfaction or organizational commitment, the main explanatory theories which are found in the literature are social exchange theory and signalling theory. The social exchange theory suggests that when employees make use of FWAs there will be a positive effect because use of policies facilitates greater attachment to the organization (Casper and Harris, 2008). The employer has invested in the employee and therefore the employee reciprocates in terms of their behaviour and attitudes. This model of social exchange theory suggests that the link is direct and the employee must make use of the policy in order to achieve the benefit. Signalling theory as applied to FWAs suggests that the link between the option and the outcome is indirect (Chen and Fulmer, 2018) and that employees need not make use of the policy in order for the effect to be observed. Hence In such a model the presence of the policies is a signal to employees that they have invested in their workforce and the positive affect results from

employees interpreting that message from employers (Guest et al., 2020). These theoretical positions for what might cause affect are discussed more fully in the final concluding chapter.

Summary of the section on flexible working outcomes

The section above has considered key themes of the literature relating to individual level outcomes associated with FWAs. The review considered the most commonly researched outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, WLB) as well as work-related anxiety which is less commonly investigated. Contextual factors which might lead to differential outcomes were explored such as employee role, gender and workplace practices.

The above discussion leads to the following research questions

- What is the relationship between the use of FWAs and organizational commitment and the other individual outcome variables?
- Is the relationship between use of FWAs and organizational commitment (and the other individual outcome variables) affected by the type of flexibility used?
- Is the relationship between use of FWAs and organizational commitment (and the other individual outcome variables) different for different categories of employee?
- - What is the nature of outcomes from FW in workplaces where HPWPs adoption is higher?
- Are outcomes associated with the use of FWA options or their perceived accessibility?

Research questions

The literature review has identified the following research questions which will be addressed in chapters four to six. These are related to the three main themes of the work.

Provision of FWAs

- To what extent is FWA provision associated with equal opportunities policies or business case perspectives?
- Do the predictors of flexible working differ according to workplace and workforce characteristics?
- How have workplaces reconfigured their approach to flexibility in the wake of the recession?

Perceived accessibility / use of FWAs

- To what extent is perceived accessibility and use of FWAs related to workforce characteristics associated with work-based privilege?
- What is the relationship between managerial / professional employees and a) perceived availability and b) use of different FWA options?
- To what extent does workplace provision of flexibility influence employees' perceptions of accessibility and use of policies?

Flexible working outcomes

- What is the relationship between the use of FWAs and organizational commitment and the other individual outcome variables?
- Is the relationship between use of FWAs and organizational commitment (and the other individual outcome variables) affected by the type of flexibility used?
- Is the relationship between use of FWAs and organizational commitment (and the other individual outcome variables) different for different categories of employee?
- - What is the nature of outcomes from FW in workplaces where HPWPs adoption is higher?
- Are outcomes associated with the use of FWA options or their perceived accessibility?

Chapter 3 Data

3.1WERS data

This research is empirically driven and uses an existing UK dataset to investigate the incidence and patterning of flexible working practices and the associated outcomes. The principal dataset which the study uses is the Workplace Employment Relations Study (WERS), which allows examination of topics by employees, employee representatives and managers from the same workplace. Its periodic nature also allows examination of changes in legislative frameworks over time – this can be done within the same workplaces using the panel, or by comparing the cross-sectional waves, as necessary.

WERS is designed to be nationally representative of British workplaces with five or more employees (a workplace being defined as a single branch within a larger company, such as a supermarket for example) in all industry sectors (with the exception of agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, and mining and quarrying) (van Wanrooy et al., 2013). The 2011 survey is jointly sponsored by the (then) Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). Fieldwork was undertaken by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen).

WERS 2011 was the sixth study in the series which dates back to 1980. The main objectives of WERS are: to map the current picture of workplace employment relations in Britain and to chart changes over time; to assist the development of policy and to promote debate on employment matters; and To provide a publicly available and easily accessible data set which is comprehensive and statistically robust (van Wanrooy, et al. 2013: 199).

WERS 2011 comprised three main components. First, the Employee Profile Questionnaire (EPQ) provides basic information about the characteristics of the workforce at the workplace. Second, the Management Questionnaire (MQ) is the largest element of WERS and provides information on the

practices at the workplaces on a range of employment matters. The questionnaire is themed and includes sections, among others, on representation at work, fair treatment at work and management of personnel and employment relations. The third questionnaire is the Survey of Employees (SEQ).

The MQ was answered by the most senior manager at the workplace with responsibility for employment relations. Managers were asked to fill in the self-completion EPQ in advance of MQ interview. The MQ was then delivered face to face; the interviews averaged 90 minutes in length. Following the interview managers were asked to fill in the self-completion FPQ.

Where a MQ was completed, permission was also sought to conduct interviews with the most senior union representative and non-union representative, if present at the workplace. Worker representative interviews lasted 30 minutes on average.

The SEQ was delivered as a self-completion questionnaire distributed to 25 employees at the workplace selected at random. If the workplace size was 25 or fewer, the questionnaire was distributed to the entire workforce.

Managers and employee representatives were asked to report on the workplace, with the majority of the data collected from these two sources relating to the characteristics of the workplace, rather than to the individuals themselves or their personal opinions about the workplace. Employees were asked to report on their own characteristics, as well as their experiences and attitudes about their work.

Due to the nature of the design, WERS thus offers a unique perspective in that it combines responses from three different perspectives: Management; Worker Representatives (either union representatives, non-union representatives or both, depending on the voice channels present at the workplace); and employees.

Appropriate multivariate statistical techniques will be used to answer the research questions and will be modelled using STATA software, which can handle surveys with complex samples. For incidence and availability of flexible working arrangements, models will be specified with flexible employment practices as dependent variables, and a range of organisational variables will be used as independent variables. Similarly, models will be specified with the types of barriers to flexible working as dependent variables with organisational independent variables. Employee knowledge and take up of flexible working will be matched to managerial data on availability to identify gaps and investigate organisational reasons for differential take-up rates. Organisational and employee outcome data will be used as dependent variables to investigate links between forms of flexible working arrangement and the outcomes identified. Control variables relating to employees and organisations will be included in the models as appropriate.

Importantly when employee and employer data are linked, the analytical techniques used will need to account for the nested nature of the data; the fact that there may be multiple employee responses from the same employer. Of course, the linked employer-employee data is one of the key strengths of WERS, allowing for the identification of workplace effects through assessing both within and across workplace variation. The variance which is shown in how employees experience work is often thought to be linked to the types of work which people do, and the individual characteristics of the worker. However, with increasing attention being given to the workplaces in which people perform their jobs, some of these assumptions about job and individual effects are now being questioned (See Amosse et al, 2016 for a summary of research which identifies workplace effects). The fact that employee data are nested in the employer data violates the traditional assumptions of independence of observation, on which most standard statistical techniques are based means it is necessary to use multi-level models when linking the employee and employer data. When employer data only are used, such models are not necessary and more commonly used regression techniques can be employed.

There are a variety of data sources which could be used to investigate elements of flexible working arrangements and their take up, such as the Work-Life Balance Survey (WLBS) (Employee and Employer Surveys) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Although these datasets may be drawn upon for some contextual analysis, a key aim of this research is to examine the links between the workplace context and the individual outcomes. LFS has good sample size and includes questions about flexible working practices and their take-up, but there is limited information about the workplace context. The WLBS employee survey has detailed questions about WLB, but has smaller sample size than WERS employee questionnaire. WLBS employer survey also contains detailed questions about workplace characteristics. It is not possible however to link WLB employee survey responses to employer responses; a feature which is necessary to answer questions about outcomes associated with flexible working practices. Given the above arguments about the centrality of the workplace as the location where requests become practice, WERS offers the best option for assessing the workplace effect.

The most comprehensive data source which allows linkages between employer and employee data is WERS. This contains a wider range of measures with regard to workplace characteristics and practices than are found within typical labour market surveys, thereby allowing a wide range of potential antecedents of employee-selected flexible working practice to be assessed. Its sample size allows for research into particular sectors or sizes of workplace which may be appropriate as the research progresses. As well as numerous examples of WERS being used to link employee data and management data in respect of various employment relations practices, previous waves of WERS have been used to link employer and employee data to answer questions about flexible working policies, e.g. Felstead et al, (2002), Budd and Mumford (2006) and Dex and Smith (2002) all using WERS 1998 data.

As argued above, previous research which used WERS was unable to answer certain questions, due to the way in which certain questions were asked, or that the subject of interest was simply not covered. WERS 2011 contains new questions, particularly in the employee questionnaire which

allows for greater scope for investigation of WLB issues. Most importantly the questions around FWAs have been reworked in such a way so that use of the policies can be identified. New questions allow investigation of family and work conflict and also the employee perception of their being a 'long hours culture' in the workplace. On the management questionnaire, there is a new question about the barriers to flexible working, which has as yet received little attention.

The 2011 WERS collected data from a representative sample of 2,680 British workplaces. Relevant for this research, within these workplaces, data were collected from: 2,680 managers responsible for HR and personnel matters and 21,981 employees (Van Wanrooy et al., 2013). Sample sizes in WERS are therefore good and offer the possibility of focusing the research onto particular subgroups of employers and employees.

Successive WERS waves repeat questions so change can be monitored. The cross-sectional elements of the management questionnaire allow investigation of the general trends in changes to practices. In addition the panel element allows identification of changes in continuing workplaces between the two waves of the survey. Change at the aggregate level can inform general perceptions of shifts in practice, though change among workplaces can illuminate better understanding of processes. For example the panel can be used to investigate effects of recession on availability and take-up of flexible working practices by assessing change in panel workplaces between the 2004 and 2011 waves. The idea of using the panel to compare changes in the same workplaces rests on questions remaining the same between successive waves of WERS. While one of WERS's strengths is that it retains a key set of core questions, (in common with similar large scale social survey instruments) there are some changes between waves. Using the panel may offer better insights into causal relationships, though interpretation is more difficult when the time points between the panel observations are long. Another potential drawback is that the panel's sample is much smaller than for the cross-sectional data.

Thus far, little has been said about the actual methods used in the work identified above. As noted in chapter two, many of the studies have used small scale surveys which may not be generalizable to

the wider population. Some of the studies have used only female workers and others have focused on specific sectors. While such quantitatively based studies have tended to use surveys designed specifically for the purpose of investigating FWAs and work-life balance issues with the advantage that questions can be tailored by the researcher to the research topic, the populations sampled raise questions about whether the results can have wider applicability. The alternative is to use a larger scale social science survey, which has been designed to serve a range of purposes and research interests. Such surveys, when they are well planned, offer the opportunity to investigate research questions while also being representative of a wider population. It is also the case that when the surveys run over a period of time that questions are refined and modified over time to reflect policy changes or emerging issues, offering opportunities to investigate new areas or to modify existing research to account for emerging theory development. The trade-off, naturally, is that the researcher has no hand in the survey design and therefore has to work with the questions and response categories[19].

3.2 Methodological issues

There are often unresolved questions about the direction of causality in much of the research which addresses outcomes (Beauregard and Henry, 2009). Principally this is due to methodological issues, where both outcomes and work organization are measured at the same time – i.e. cross-sectional data are used. De Menezes and Kelliher (2011) make similar points about research methodology, arguing that researchers need to develop common measurement techniques as well as using longitudinal data to answer the questions of direction of causality.

WERS is designed to be nationally representative of British workplaces with five or more employees in all industry sectors (with the exception of agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, and mining

[19] For example some of the questions on equality bargaining were removed between the 2004 and 2011 waves, so researchers would have been unable to replicate analyses which used these questions from the 2004 wave

and quarrying) when probability weighted to account for the complex nature of the survey design. WERS does not employ a simple randomized sampling technique. Larger workplace were purposely over-sampled compared with smaller workplaces, because although they are less common than smaller workplaces, they employee a large proportion of employees and are therefore of a particular interest (see WERS (2014) for a full account of the implications of the sampling approach). In addition to method of selecting workplaces, the way in which the employee questionnaire was distributed among employees at a workplace meant that employees in smaller workplaces had a higher probability of being selected compared with employees at larger workplaces. Consequently it is recommended that all analyses using WERS are weighted to account for the survey design. The various weights developed by the WERS research team adjust for the different probabilities of selection due to the survey design, and additionally correct for non-response biases on known population parameters. (WERS, 2014; van Wanrooy et al., 2013). The analysis presented in this thesis is weighted throughout in accordance with standard WERS team weighting advice (WERS 2014) in order to ensure both accurate population estimates and for standard errors on the regression coefficients; the principle of weighting WERS analysis being well-established for both univariate and multivariate analysis.

Weighting of Multi-level models

The principle of weighting WERS analysis when analysing MQ data or SEQ data is well established, applying the establishment weight or the employee weight, as appropriate. More recent advancements in technique have allowed the development of weighting techniques to account for the different probabilities of selection at the different levels of the survey. Therefore, in the multi-level models which are reported in this thesis, weights are specified at the different levels. Level 1 weights take account of the employee's probability of selection, conditional upon their workplace having taken part in the SEQ, and level 2 weights account for the workplace's probability of participating in the SEQ (See WERS 2014; Forth 2017; STATA 2019) for further details. The ability to

weight at different levels is a recent innovation and earlier studies which combined WERS SEQ and MQ data were unable to account for the probability of selection at the two levels. This is an important methodological advancement which gives greater confidence in the findings compared to studies which were weighted only at the employee level.

Unobserved confounders in panel analysis

As noted above WERS allows the investigation of change over time by facilitating comparisons between workplaces in the 2004 MQ and workplaces also included in the 2011 MQ (i.e. the panel workplaces). Using panel data results specific challenges above and beyond the usual concerns relating to omitted variables (see discussion below). When panel data are concerned, the problem of the unobserved confounder limits the extent to which one can make confident conclusions from the data.

Unobserved confounders are typically thought to be a problem when estimating the causal effect of exposure to a stimulus, or an exposure on an outcome (Liu et al, 2020). Much of the discussion about the problem comes from the medical world, rather than the social science world which accounts for the terminology used here. Bias may be introduced to the model if there are unobserved time invariant factors which are associated with both the degree to which the workplace was affected by recession (the "exposure") and the change in provision of the type of FWA (the "outcome") (Gunasekara, et al. 2014).

The analysis presented in chapter four use the panel data to estimate the extent to which recession has affected employers' provision of FWAs. The panel data are used to calculate the change in provision for the different types of FWA and these outcomes are then regressed, using a standard multinomial logit model, on to variables which measure the extent to which the workplace was affected by the recession caused by the GFC. Controls are also included for size and sector. This is therefore not a true panel analysis which would account for changes to all variables which might potentially change over time (i.e. time variant variables).

The long time gap between observations is a further potential issue with this analysis, given the potential for other unobserved factors to influence the outcome variable. In sum, there may be both time-variant and time-invariant variables which could affect the outcomes of these estimates. These are limitations with the analysis and ones which cannot be remedied, suggesting that there is a need to be much more cautious about any conclusions which are taken from these models.

Goodness of fit

When fitting regression models to data it is important to assess the extent to which the model fits the data, or the "goodness of fit". In simple linear regressions the well known R-square measure captures the amount of variance explained by the model. This measure cannot be easily applied to linear mixed or hierarchical models, as the assumption of independence of observations is violated (Recchia, 2010). Indeed linear mixed models are designed specifically for their ability to handle and model clustered data (Tang et al, 2014). As discussed, WERS data follows the simple structure of employee data (known as level one) nested within workplaces (known as level two).

The common goodness of fit measure which are associated with mixed linear models, and the default output in Stata is the Wald score, which assesses the overall significance of the model, but does not provide any information about the proportion of variance explained. Pseudo R square measures have been developed for many non-linear models (see e.g. Hemmert et al, 2018).

Whereas the use of pseudo R square measures for linear mixed models is not so widely practised, there are measures of fit which can be used. R squared measures have been proposed by Snijders and Bosker (1994, 1999) and Bryk and Raudenbush (1992). These are available using the post-estimation command "mltrsq" in Stata and are reported here for the main models for use / accessibility and for outcomes. Both these measures of R square provide estimates for the fit of the model at level one (employee level) and level two (workplace level).

Although the measures are not widely used, they are nevertheless instructive and provide a basis for further consideration of the adequacy of the models. The implications of the fit of the models, based on these measures are discussed more fully in the conclusions.

3.3 Importance of control variables

In addition to the analysis being weighted, it is necessary to properly specify the regression models to avoid the possibility of identifying spurious relationships in the data. Variables which may account for an association between the dependent variable and the variables which are being tested must be controlled for in order to generate reliable results. Using control variables is the most common approach taken in reducing the well-known social science research problem of omitted variable bias (OVB), though as discussed below this may not be a robust solution. OVB occurs when the specified model omits a variable which is a determinant of the dependent variable, but is correlated with one or more of the included independent variables (Greene, 1993; Wooldridge, 2009).

It is more important to do this when the regression is cross-sectional, as per the majority of the analyses presented in this thesis. Cross sectional research approaches are unable to control for time invariant unobserved heterogeneity, so may suffer larger OVB effects than panel data. Panel data, by contrast, will control for time invariant unobserved heterogeneity, which is why panel data may be thought to be more effective at establishing causal relationships. Although panel data are able to control for this one type of unobserved heterogeneity, the possibility remains that the model is affected by time variant unobserved heterogeneity. Overall though the OVB problem is considered to be smaller for panel data than it is for cross-sectional data (Wooldridge, 2009).

This therefore raises the question about the extent to which OVB might be a problem for this research which uses cross sectional measures. The employee level outcomes which are considered in this chapter are based on cross-sectional data. This approach may mean that there are problems establishing causality and / or the problem of omitted variable bias may be present.

Inclusion of control variables is often taken to be the solution to the problem of omitted variable bias, though as Clarke (2005) argues, there is nothing to support this definitive conclusion. It is acknowledged though that inclusion of a greater number of controls may reduce the problem of omitted variable bias, though in some cases further controls can actually increase the problem.

Highly cited econometrics textbooks suggest different methods to address omitted variable bias according to whether the omission is likely to be time variant or time invariant (e.g. Wooldridge, 2009). Use of instrumental variables is proposed for time variant unobserved heterogeneity and fixed effects panel data is proposed for time invariant unobserved heterogeneity.

Panel models use the panel as a before and after comparison and thus remove the problem of time invariant omitted variable bias, though of course there may still be effects from time varying omissions. The problem of omitted variable bias is though judged to be less of an issue for panel data as compared with cross-sectional data (Wooldridge, 2009). As above, using employee level panel data to answer questions about outcomes, was rejected as an approach because the major surveys which would allow this, do not also allow for inclusion ofworkplace level controls.

Therefore, to give some indication of the extent to which omitted variable bias is likely to be an issue for the findings related to employee attitudes, presented in tables 6.1 – 6.6, the results for job satisfaction are compared with the work of Wheatley (2017). This will not provide a definitive answer on the potential problem of OVB but should give some reassurance that the problem is small if the results of the regressions confirm Wheatley's (2017) findings.

3.4 Variables used in the analyses

This section outlines the measures which are used in the thesis.

Measuring FWA provision

Measuring the provision of FWAs at the workplace level has been done in a number of different ways, according to whether FWA options are considered as single items, are arranged into groups along theoretical lines according to the type of flexibility that they offer, or as the total number of options which are available. Whichever way the variables are aggregated or otherwise, it is important to remember that provision is measured from the point of view of the employer, rather than the employee.

Many studies have selected a number of FWA options to study, though have kept the options distinct from an analytical point of view (Budd and Mumford, 2004; 2006; Dex and Smith, 2002)[20]. This type of approach is more common when provision of FWAs has been researched in the quantitative tradition where individual FWA options are regressed onto a range of predictors in order to test associations and thereby test theories of why organizations are making FWA options available to their employees. Other studies, particularly those based on US data, seeking to test theory of provision have used a count measure of FWAs. The count measure of FWA options has tended to be used by studies which have sought to analyse the factors which are associated with FWA provision by employers (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995). The count measure may be used to give an indication of the extent to which a workplace exhibits good WLB practice (Lewis et al., 2017a), though it may not be a suitable measure if it is to be used as a dependent variable to test theories of provision, as it has the effect of treating all policies as equivalents; the explanatory variables may not affect the likelihood of provision of the different options in the same way (Budd and Mumford, 2006). Depending on what measures of FW are included in the count, and according to what employers are trying to achieve, the non-uniform nature of the effects of predictor variables may be more or less likely. For example, the sorts of workplaces which are making one form of flexibility available may be different from the sorts of workplaces which are making another form of flexibility available, and hence using a count measure which would treat the different flexible

[20] Again these choices are largely determined by the availability of data on the various practices.

working forms as equivalent would obscure the different patterns among the predictor variables. Different FWA / family supportive options offered by employers may be offering employees different types of flexibility or support, and may in turn pose different challenges for, or costs on, employers. For this reason it is helpful to consider more carefully exactly the type of flexibility / support which is being offered.

As outlined below, some studies have not sought to keep FWA options analytically distinct and have considered FWAs alongside other measures of family-supportive policies, which are not designed around varying work organization but provide other types of support. The distinction is important as the different types of family-supportive policies address different concerns. Bailyn et al. (2001) categorize family supportive policies in two groups. The first is the type of policy such as subsidized workplace nursery schemes, other care services, childcare vouchers, which are designed to help employees conform to the model of the ideal worker. The second category, into which Bailyn et al (2001) would place all FWA options, allows workers flexibility to deviate from the ideal worker model so that they are better able to balance their work and family lives.

These two approaches of studying either individual FWA options or the total number of FWA options are more common in older work. It is only more recently that studies have taken to categorizing FWAs as offering conceptually different types of flexibility (Carlson et al., 2013, Kossek et al., 2016; Chen and Fulmer, 2018). Whereas Bailyn et al's (2001) categorization suggests an equivalence of FWA options, other studies have started to consider the degree to which the FWA option allows for deviation from the ideal worker model. The three different types of flexibility which have been considered in more recent studies are schedule flexibility (where employees are able to work different schedules whilst still continuing to work "full time" hours), hours flexibility (where employees adopt patterns which result in them working fewer hours compared with a "full-time" employee), and location flexibility (where the place of work may vary). These different forms of

flexible working are held to present different challenges for managers in terms of the extent to which they challenge the model of the full-time worker.

The brief summary above of the different approaches to measuring FWAs provides a justification for considering FW in different ways. While the different approaches to analysing flexibility are well established, studies have not tended to conduct analysis from multiple perspectives. This work answers calls for research to be more considered and precise in terms of conceptualizing the nature of flexibility which is provided to employees by their employers (Allen et al., 2013; Perry-Smith and Blum, 2000).

As noted above, more recent research has attempted to conceptualize the different FWA options in terms of the different types of flexibility which they afford the employee, and by implication, the different challenges they pose to management around the notions of the ideal worker norm. As a result, of the different measurement possibilities, this study uses three different measures of flexible working provision in the analyses which follow: 1) analyses using individual FWA options; 2) analyses using the count of the total number of practices which are provided; and 3) analyses using FWA options categorized according to whether they allow flexibility in hours, scheduling or location[21].

Dummy variables are used for each of the six FWA options (flexitime, job sharing, term time only working, working from home and compressed hours) and are coded 0 if the option is not provided at the workplace and 1 if the option is provided. The count measure counts the total number of options which are available at the workplace and therefore takes a value between zero and six. Dummy variables are constructed for each of the three categories of flexibility and are coded 0 if that flexibility is not provided at the workplace and 1 if any of the options for that flexibility is provided. Hours flexibility is constructed from job sharing, term time only working and reducing

[21] In each of these measures outlined, the perspective can be either the managerial perspective or the employee perspective

working hours. Schedule flexibility includes the options of compressed hours and flexitime. Location flexibility is denoted by working from home.

The relevant question in WERS asks "Do you have any of the following working time arrangements for **any** employees at this workplace?" (original emphasis) and then lists the six FWA options.

Positive responses to the items are taken to indicate that a formal policy exists at the workplace for that option. This approach is consistent with previous research which has used WERS data. (See for example, Chen and Fulmer (2018) using WERS 2011, Hoque and Bacon (2014), using WERS 2004; Budd and Mumford (2004, 2006) using WERS 1998). Although the question has been interpreted as providing evidence of formal policy existence, it should be recognized that the wording does allow for the possibility that the manager 's response reflects arrangements made by employees in the absence of a formal policy.

Whereas provision of FWA options is taken from the perspective of the workplace, and hence uses the question from the MQ, the perceived accessibility and use of options are taken from the perspective of the employee and hence derived from the SEQ.

The relevant question in the SEQ asks "In the last 12 months, have you made use of any of the following arrangements, and if not are they available to you if you needed them?[22]" The six options flexible working options are listed[23], and employees are given the following response categories

[22] Note that the 2011 SEQ question is both differently worded from the 2004 SEQ question, and has different FWA options. WERS 2004 SEQ asked "If you personally needed any of the following arrangements, would they be available to you", with the response options of "Yes", "No" and "Don't Know". The option of term-time working was not included in 2004, and nor was the option of paid leave to care for dependents in an emergency. The options of "The chance to increase your working hours (e.g. part-time to full-time) and "changing work patterns including shifts" were included in the 2004 SEQ but not the 2011 SEQ.

[23] The SEQ also asked employees about the option of "Paid leave to care for dependents in an emergency." This option is not considered to be an example of a FWA, so is not included in the analysis, either as a discrete dependent variable, or as part of the count of FWA options.

1"I have used this arrangement", 2 = Available to me but I do not use, 3 = Not available to me, 4= Don't know.

From the SEQ data a number of variables were derived:

Perceived availability of each of the six FWA options was constructed as a series of dummy variables coded as 1 if the employee answered that they had used the arrangement or considered it to be available to them, and coded 0 if they responded that the arrangement was not available. Don't know responses were excluded.

Perceived availability of each of the three different types of flexibility **- Flexible hours, Flexible location, flexible schedule.** Dummy variables were created for the three different types of FWA option. Flexible hours dummy was coded as 1 if any of the three dummy variables for perceived availability for the individual options of job sharing, reducing working hours or term-time only working was coded as 1. Flexible schedule dummy was coded as 1 if either of the dummy variables for perceived availability for flexi-time or compressed hours was coded as 1. Flexible location is given by the dummy variable for working from home.

Total number of FWAs perceived by the employee to be available was created by summing the dummy variables derived above to provide a count of the total number of practices the employee considered available. Thus the scores could range from zero to six.

Extent of coverage of FWA options

Using WERS 2011 MQ, it is possible to measure to some extent the degree to which policies are available across the workplace, but for two of the listed FWA options only. For the options of flexi-time and reduced hours managers were asked "In general, is the option to work flexi-time only available to employees with the statutory right[24] to request flexible working, other groups of

[24] If the Manager is unsure about the eligibility to request flexible working under the legislation, the Interviewer has a show card which defines the statutory right.

employees or all employees?" with the response categories 1 employees with the statutory right, 2 groups of employees beyond those with the statutory right and 3 all employees.

Employee level outcome variables

Job satisfaction

WERS 2011 SEQ asked employees to rate their levels of job satisfaction on a scale running from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied) for the following eight items: The sense of achievement you get from your work; the scope for using your own initiative; the amount of influence you have over the job; the training you receive; the opportunity to develop your skills in your job; the amount of pay you receive; your job security; and the work itself.

The eight elements cover aspects of work which relate to different forms of motivation (see Rose, 2005). Many studies using WERS 2011 data for job satisfaction use the eight items to form a scale (Chen and Fulmer, 2018; Shevchuk et al., 2019; Saridakis et al., 2020). Internal consistency of the satisfaction measure was checked using Cronbach's alpha scale of internal reliability. The eight items gave a strong alpha score of 0.86. However, the test indicated that marginally stronger associations would be achieved by removing variables from the scale. Removing pay from the scale gave an alpha score of 0.86 and removing both pay and job security gave an alpha score of 0.87. Given that the survey was carried out in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis which resulted in large numbers of job losses, as well as policies of wage restraint, it is perhaps unsurprising that the items of pay and job security do not align so closely with the other items.

Those with the statutory right to request flexible working are:
Parents of children 16 years and under or a disabled child under 18; or
A carer of someone living at the same address or a family member.

The three measures of job satisfaction were used in the analyses, though for reporting purposes the 8 item measure is used for consistency with other research. Where coefficients differ when using the different measures of job satisfaction, this is noted.

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment was measured using a three item scale. Employees were asked on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: "I share many of the values of my organization"; "I feel loyal to my organization"; and "I am proud to tell people who I work for". Cronbach's alpha indicated high levels of internal consistency across the three items (alpha = 0.85).

Note that on these items, the way the scale is constructed higher scores indicate lower levels of organizational commitment. For the analyses the scale is flipped so that higher scores indicate higher levels of commitment, in order to aid interpretation of findings. Similar concerns apply to other outcome variables. It is reported in the results sections which way round the dependent variables are ordered.

Work Related Anxiety

The work-related anxiety measures which were included in WERS 2011 were measured by asking employees to think about how often the job had made them feel each of the following emotions over the past few weeks. "Tense", "Depressed", "Worried", "Gloomy" "Uneasy" "Miserable". Responses were scored on a scale of 1 "All of the time", 2 "Most of the time", 3 "Some of the time", 4 "Occasionally" and 5 "Never".

Tense, uneasy and worried form a subset of the multi-affect indicator developed by Warr et al., (2013). "Depressed", "gloomy" and "miserable" are part of that same indicator's depression-enthusiasm scale. The six items have been used by Bryson et al (2017) as part of an additive index to measure overall job satisfaction. In this study the six items were used to form a separate indicator

of negative affect, to investigate separately the association of FWA options with positive and negative affect measures. This is justified given research which has found independence between positive and negative affect measures (see for example Diener and Emmons, 1984). The six items demonstrated high levels of internal consistency (alpha = 0.91).

Work Life Balance measures

Work to family conflict

Employees were asked on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) the extent to which they agreed with the following statement "I often find it difficult to fulfil my commitments outside of work because of the amount of time I spend on my job"

Family to work conflict

Employees were asked on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) the extent to which they agreed with the following statement "I often find it difficult to do my job properly because of my commitments outside of work".

The following individual level variables, taken or derived from the from the SEQ, are coded as described below.

Independent variables SEQ

Gender is dummy coded with male taking the value 0 and female taking the value 1. Marital status is given by a dummy variable "no partner" takes the value of 0 and "living with a partner" takes the value 1. Dependent children is dummy coded as 0 "no dependent children" and 1 "any dependent children". Whether the employee is a carer is scored as 0 if they have no caring responsibility and 1 if they have any caring responsibilities. Ethnic group is given by the dummy coded as 0 for non-white

employees and 1 for white employees [25]. Age is collapsed to fewer categories than given in the SEQ to give the following categories: 16-21, 22-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+. Disability is given by a dummy variable taking the value of 1 if the employee has a disability, and 0 if they do not. This is constructed from the SEQ questionnaire which asks the employee to say whether they have a long-term health condition or disability which limits their day-to-day activities. If the employee answers that their activities are limited either a little or a lot, then the variable is coded as 1 [26]. Employee trade union membership is given by a dummy variable coded as 0 if the employee is not currently a union member and 1 if they are a current union member. Two measures of education are used in the analysis. For the first measure, to aid interpretation and to avoid problems of low cell numbers, highest level of academic qualification is collapsed into fewer categories than given in the SEQ to give the following categories None, CSE or equivalent, O-level or equivalent, 1 A-level or equivalent, 2+ A-level or equivalent, Degree or equivalent, postgraduate degree or equivalent. The second measure of highest level of academic qualification is a dummy variable with 0 denoting academic qualifications below degree level, including no qualifications and 1 indicating a degree level qualification or higher. Occupational classification has been coded by the WERS team from the open box response to job title in the SEQ into the standard occupational classification with the following categories: Managers, directors and senior officials; professional occupations; associate professional and technical occupations; administrative and secretarial occupations; skilled trades; caring, leisure and other service occupations; sales and customer service occupations; process plant and machine operatives; and elementary occupations. This nine category variable is one of the indicators used to denote occupation. In addition to this a dummy variable has been derived which is coded as 1 for managers and professional occupations and 0 for the seven other occupational classes. The employee's contractual status is dummy coded taking the value of 0 if permanent / open-ended and

[25] Although WERS allows identification of multiple different ethnic groups, cell sizes preclude using all response categories

[26] The definition of disability under the Equality Act (2010) notes that the condition must be both long-term and have a substantial effect on the individual's ability to carry out day to day tasks. Thus the measure constructed here probably overestimates the proportion of employees with a disability.

1 for temporary. Tenure is collapsed into fewer categories than given in the SEQ as follows: less than one year; one year to less than five years; five years or more. Following the approach taken by Chen and Fulmer (2018) employee pay is collapsed into fewer categories than given in the SEQ giving three levels of pay as follows: : low - £370 or less per week; medium - £371 to £650 per week; and high - £651 or more per week. Employee perceptions of a long hours culture is derived from the following question in the SEQ. Employees were asked on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "Think about how people in your kind of job progress – for example get a promotion. Do you agree or disagree that people in this workplace who want to progress usually have to put in long hours?" The variable has been recoded as dummy variable taking the value of 0 if the response is neutral or disagree, and 1 if the response is agree.

Employee perception of perceived managerial support for WLB issues is taken from the question where employees were asked on the scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "Managers understand about employees having to meet responsibilities outside of work". The variable was recoded as a dummy as follows : 0 = Neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree 1= agree, strongly agree.

Various dummy variables were constructed for workplace level characteristics and coded 1 if the feature was present at the workplace and 0 if it was absent. HR sophistication is given by the presence of an HR specialist, either by their job title, or by the amount of time that they spend on the job. Union presence is given by whether there is a recognized trade union at the workplace. Equal opportunities is denoted by the existence of a formal written policy on equal opportunities or managing diversity.

Union strength is measured by the derived variable from the MQ[27] giving the proportion of employees who are union members (i.e. the workplace trade union density), whether that union is recognized at the workplace or not.

HPWPs are typically defined by counting the number of specified HR practices which are available at a workplace. This is the approach which is taken in this study. Thus the variable captures the extent to which HPWPs are adopted at the workplace

Following Wu et al (2014) High performance working practices are coded as a count of 17 workplace practices or features (selection tests, induction, off-the-job training, Internal labour market, performance-related pay, developmental appraisal, teamworking, team briefing, consultation committee, employee attitude survey, quality circles, functional flexibility, employee benefits, grievance procedure, systematic communication, information provision, equal opportunities practices and job security).

Family friendly working practices (of which FWAs form part) are sometimes included in analyses of HPWPs as part of the count, or part of the commitment bundle (Wu 2011). In this study two measures of HPWPs were developed. The first is a count of 17 measures of HPWPs which are commonly found to feature in studies of the issue. This measure does not include any indicator for family friendly working practices. The second measure is a count of 18 measures of HWPs, which are the previous 17 measures to which a measure of family supportive practice has been added. FWAs are not included in the measure of family supportive practices. Where estimates differ due to the different construction of the HPWPs variable, this is noted.

[27] As the estimate of union density is based on the management estimate of union members at the workplace, it is unlikely to be a reliable estimate of the true value. Management have no means of knowing the number of union members, particularly so with the decline in use of the "check off" system of collecting union subscriptions. Hence for most analyses, the union recognition variable is preferred.

The following workplace characteristics are calculated from the EPQ responses given by the managerial respondent: Proportion of employees in managerial roles; proportion of employees in technical roles; proportion of managerial roles filled by female employees.

Further workplace level variables were constructed using SEQ data. This is done by taking the SEQ responses at the workplace for the variable, and then using this to create an average score, which is then matched back on to the MQ data. For example a workplace in WERS may have collected responses from 20 employees in the SEQ. If ten of these respondents have a university degree, then the proportion of employees with a degree would be 50 per cent. This figure is then matched into the MQ data. This technique relies on sampling and could be prone to sampling bias. The management estimate of variables is based on information held on the workforce, which may be inaccurate, but not affected by bias. The following variables were created based on estimates from the SEQ responses: Proportion of employees with dependent children; proportion of employees who have other caring responsibilities; and proportion of employees with a university degree.

Links between the inclusion of variables and theory

This short section summarises how the variables described above link to the theories and perspectives outlined in chapter two, and provides justification for the inclusion of control variables.

For regressions in chapter four, provision of FWA options is tested against a range of predictor variables relating to institutional, organizational adaptive, situational, equal opportunities and HPWP perspectives. Predictor variables which are taken to be proxies of institutional perspectives are size of workplace and public / private sector. Organizational adaptive perspectives are given by managerial concern with employees WLB, presence of an HR specialist, trade union recognition (all to map the concept of issue interpreters), proportions of a) employees in managerial roles, b) employees in technical roles, c) managerial roles filled by female employees, d) proportion of female employees, and e) proportion of employees with a university degree. Equal opportunities perspectives are given by the single item of whether a formal policy exists at the workplace for

managing diversity. Situational perspectives are given by the proportions of a) employees with dependent children and b) employees who are carers. The HPWP perspective is given by the count of HPWPs variable, defined above. Controls for these regressions are given as organizational size, industrial sector, whether the workplace is part of a larger organization or not and the proportion of part-time employees. Selection of the variables to operationalize the theoretical perspectives and the of the control variables follows other research which has sought to test these perspectives (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995; Wood and de Menezes, 2010).

For regressions in chapter five, use and perceived accessibility of FWA options are tested against the following predictor variables. Individual level characteristics are included to operationalize concepts of advantage / privilege within the workplace and these are gender, ethnicity, degree educated, managerial / professional employees, pay, and disability. Whether or not the employee is a union member is included to identify any possible union facilitation effects. Long hours culture and perceived managerial support are included to indicate workplace context. Care and dependent children are included to capture employees' out of work commitments. Existence of policy, HPWPs and total FWAs available were included to provide workplace context. Workplace controls were also included for size, sector, and trade union recognition.

The regressions in chapter six test associations between the employee level outcome variables mentioned above. The main predictor variables of interest are the use / accessibility variables relating to the different FWA types. Dummy variables for use are included to test social exchange explanations, and the three way classification of "not available", "use", "available but do not use" for the FWA types are used to test signalling theories. The control variables which are included are the same variables as are included for the regressions in chapter five. As Wheatley (2017) argues these variables are a standard set of controls which are used when investigating employee level outcomes.

3.5 Research methods used in the thesis

The thesis uses the various regression techniques to estimate the relationships between the variables. Probit regressions are specified for binary dependent variables using only MQ data. Multinomial logistic regressions are used for non-ordered categorical dependent variables using only MQ data. Poisson regressions are estimated when the dependent variable is a count measure of the MQ data. Multilevel linear models are used when the dependent variable is a continuous measure taken from the SEQ, and the model includes predictor variables using both the SEQ and MQ data. Hierarchical Linear Models when the dependent variable is binary[28] and the model includes predictor variables using both the SEQ and MQ data.

For multi-level models with a binary dependent variable, a multi-level probit would ideally be the preferred model type. Research began by attempting to fit multi-level probit models using STATA to the data, but these attempts were ultimately not successful because the models failed to find a solution. Remedial efforts to rerun the analyses with more parsimonious models either failed completely, or reached solution only when nearly all independent variables were removed, meaning that the research questions could not be addressed satisfactorily. As a consequence, hierarchical linear models were fitted to the data, mirroring the technique used in the single-level linear probability model. The main concern with the linear probability model is well-known; namely that the estimated beta coefficients may suggest probabilities which fall outside of the (0/1) response categories (Wooldridge, 2009), though this is less of an issue if one is primarily concerned with associations, rather than predicted probabilities.

As discussed above multi-level linear model is used to model the binary outcomes shown in chapter five as an alternative to the multi-level probit model which would have been the preferred choice if it were workable in Stata. As an additional check on the robustness of the results produced using the multi-level linear model, sensitivity analysis was undertaken by re-estimating the multilevel

linear probability models as probit models with robust standard errors, to account for the clustering of individuals in workplaces. The results of these probit models are discussed alongside the results in chapter five.

When the dependent variable is the total number of flexible working arrangements, the regressions are estimated using poisson analysis. Poisson analysis is generally held to be a better technique for estimating count dependent variables compared with ordinary least squares or ordered probit (see Cameron and Trivedi, 1998; Walters, 2007) for elaboration on the differences between Poisson analysis and other methods of estimation), though OLS is the technique which has more commonly been used in studies which have regressed counts of FWAs onto predictor variables (e.g. Goodstein 1994, 1995), though other research has used the ordered probit estimation technique (e.g. Dex and Smith, 2002).

Chapter 4 Antecedents of Flexible working provision: Which workplaces provide flexible working to employees?

To recap, the literature reviewed in chapter 2 developed the following research questions which this research seeks to answer

- To what extent is FWA provision associated with equal opportunities policies or business case perspectives?
- Do the predictors of flexible working differ according to workplace and workforce characteristics?
- How have workplaces reconfigured their approach to flexibility in the wake of the recession?

Table 4.1 shows the results of regressing individual FWA options on to the predictor variables associated with the different perspectives on provision, which were identified above.

Table 4.1 Predictors of provision of single item FWAs

	Flexi-time	Job share	reduce working hours	compressed hours	term-time working
Institutional perspective					
Size of workplace					
5-9 employees (ref.cat)					
10-19 employees	0.487 (0.171)	0.244 (0.199)	0.030	0.238 (0.183)	-0.050 (0.203)
20-49 employees	-0.160 (0.181)	0.789 (0.198)***	0.371 (0.187)**	0.280 (0.182)	0.229 (0.218)
50-99 employees	0.190 (0.207)	0.772 (0.224)***	0.734 (0.223)***	0.555 (0.211)***	0.551 (0.254)**
100-499 employees	0.551 (0.224)**	1.468 (0.244)***	1.245 (0.259)***	0.824 (0.218)***	1.001 (0.263)***
500+ employees	0.530 (0.281)*	2.102 (0.294)***	1.323 (0.318)***	1.239 (0.274)***	1.230 (0.338)***
Private sector (yes)	-0.108 (0.220)	-0.493 (0.208)**	-0.071 (0.260)	-0.027 (0.224)	-0.697 (0.222)***
Organizational adaption perspective					
Concern for work-family balance (no)	0.793 (0.140)	0.290 (0.121)**	0.128 (0.137)	0.071 (0.135)	0.186 (0.660)
HR specialist (yes)	0.196 (0.139)	-0.096 (0.109)	0.445 (0.008)	0.224 (0.147)	0.066 (0.150)
Union recognition (yes)	0.026 (0.164)	0.502 (0.151)***	-0.492 (0.813)	0.065 (0.160)	0.182 (0.177)
Proportion of employees in managerial roles	0.222 (0.622)	0.336 (0.592)	-0.375 (0.625)	-0.485 (0.697)	0.139 (0.800)
Proportion of employees in technical roles	0.005 (0.003)	0.008 (0.003)**	0.003 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.008 (0.004)**
Proportion of managerial roles filled by female employees	0.222 (0.217)	0.063 (0.224)	-0.279 (0.238)	0.217 (0.215)	0.011 (0.237)

Proportion of female employees	-0.506 (0.319)	0.493 (0.339)	0.884 (0.359)**	-0.116 (0.330)	0.529 (0.375)
Proportion of employees with university degree	1.08 (0.257)***	-0.145 (0.251)	0.605 (0.252)**	0.014 (0.273)	-0.652 (0.274)**
Equal opportunity perspective					
Formal written policy on equal opportunities or managing diversity (no)	0.140 (0.189)	-0.040 (0.215)	0.102 (0.190)	-0.131 (0.202)	-0.340 (0.217)
Situational perspective					
Proportion of employees with dependent children	0.311 (0.241)	-0.280 (0.292)	-0.112 (0.237)	-0.141 (0.283)	-0.060 (0.254)
Proportion of employees who are carers	0.445 (0.161)	0.673 (0.328)	0.473 (0.303)	0.677 (0.330)**	0.367 (0.336)
HPWPs	-0.004 (0.024)	0.038 (0.024)	0.057 (0.024)**	0.044 (0.022)	0.047 (0.027)*
N	1,707	1,707	1, 707	1,707	1,707

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for organizational size, industrial sector, single workplace and proportion of part-time employees

Survey probit analysis, WERS 2011 MQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Individual FWA options are coded as 1 if a formal policy exists at the workplace and coded 0 if there is no policy.

Table 4.1 shows that as expected, workplace size is significantly positively related to levels of provision of each FWA option; larger workplaces are significantly more likely to provide FWA options. Private sector workplaces are significantly less likely to provide the options of working during term-time and job sharing. The public private sector variable is not significantly associated with the other measures of flexibility.

The proportion of employees with university degrees also emerges as a significant predictor of flexi-time, the option to reduce hours and term-time working. For the former two FWA options, the effect is positive i.e. higher proportions of employees with university degrees are associated with higher likelihood of provision of the FWA option. In the case of term-time working the association with proportion of employees with university degrees is negative, indicating that larger proportions of employees with university degrees the lower the likelihood of job sharing being provided at the workplace. The proportion of female employees at the workplace is positively associated with provision of the policy to reduce hours, but is not significantly associated with any other options.

Perhaps surprisingly the union recognition coefficient is found to be significant, for only the job share option, which may be suggestive of the fact that job-share is a feature of particular work where there is a greater likelihood of unionisation, for example in sectors such as education or in formerly nationalised industries. The regressions were rerun to test for union density effects by replacing the variable for union recognition with a management estimate of density and it was found that the coefficient for union density was non-significant for all of the FWA options including job share, perhaps suggesting that recognition rights are more important than the union density in securing this arrangement. No significant effects were found for either the HR specialist variable or the presence of an equal opportunities policy when looking at the regressions for the single item FWA options.

Table 4.2 Predictors of provision of FWAs by type and of total number of FWAs

	Flexible hours	Flexible scheduling	flexible location	total number of FWAs
Institutional perspective				
Size of workplace				
5-9 employees (ref.cat)				
10-19 employees	-0.005 (0.169)	-0.068 (0.177)	0.272 (0.184)	0.059 (0.085)
20-49 employees	0.414 (0.195)**	0.013 (0.197)	0.221 (0.197)	0.204 (0.085)**
50-99 employees	0.767 (0.243)***	0.305 (0.235)	0.493 (0.218)**	0.339 (0.094)***
100-499 employees	1.440 (0.311)***	0.703 (0.258)***	0.803 (0.227)***	0.557 (0.098)***
500+ employees	1.372 (0.364)***	0.921 (0.366)**	0.922 (0.277)***	0.595 (0.108)***
Private sector (yes)	0.266 (0.377)	0.611 (0.255)**	-0.333 (0.226)	-0.062 (0.106)
Organizational adaption perspective				
Concern for work-family balance (no)	0.104 (0.147)	0.031 (0.147)	-0.158 (0.143)	0.029 (0.105)
HR specialist (yes)	0.423 (0.179)**	-0.002 (0.155)	0.488 (0.143)***	0.135 (0.058)**
Union recognition (yes)	-0.010 (0.223)	-0.149 (0.214)	0.075 (0.180)	0.040 (0.068)
Proportion of employees in managerial roles	-0.534 (0.641)	-0.945 (0.662)	1.678 (0.663)**	0.174 (0.281)
Proportion of employees in technical roles	0.007 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.004 (0.001)**8
Proportion of managerial roles filled by female employees	-0.404 (0.256)	-0.045(0.239)	0.148 (0.232)	-0.013 (0.098)
Proportion of female employees	1.122 (0.372)***	0.227 (0.370)	-0.564 (0.325)**	0.185 (0.159)
Proportion of employees with university degree	0.548 (0.265)**	0.742 (0.281)	1.163 (0.259)***	0.369 (0.099)***
Equal opportunity perspective				

Formal written policy on equal opportunities or managing diversity (no)	0.091 (0.194)	0.139 (0.206)	-0.023 (0.194)	0.103 (0.324)
Situational perspective				
Proportion of employees with dependent children	0.148 (0.251)	0.013 (0.254)	-0.139 (0.286)	0.014 (0.137)
Proportion of employees who are carers	0.431 (0.311)	0.102 (0.322)	0.617 (0.324)*	0.302 (0.169)*
HPWPs	0.039 (0.026)	0.047 (0.027)*	0.067 (0.024)***	0.040 (0.001)***
N	1,707	1,707	1, 707	1,707

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for organizational size, industrial sector, single workplace and proportion of part-time employees

Survey probit analysis (FWA type), survey poisson analysis WERS 2011 MQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

FWA types are coded as 1 if a formal policy exists at the workplace for any of the individual options within that category and coded 0 if there is no policy. Total FWA options is a count variable of the six individual FWA options.

Table 4.2 shows the results of regressing the FWAs by type and also the total number of FWAs provided on to the predictor variables. The results show some interesting differences when compared with the single item FWA option regression in table 4.1. Again, workplace size emerges as strongly positively associated with all forms of flexibility, including the total number of FWA options available. Private sector workplaces are found to be significantly positively associated with the provision of flexible scheduling, an effect which was not seen when the individual items making up the category were regressed separately.

The proportion of employees in managerial roles was found to be significantly positively related to provision of flexible location, as was the proportion of employees with a university degree. The proportion of female employees was found to be significantly negatively associated with provision of flexible location, yet significantly positively associated with the provision of flexible hours. The extent to which a workplace has adopted HPWPs emerged as significantly positive predictors of flexible scheduling, flexible location and the total number of FWAs[29].

A number of variables showed no significant associations for the four regressions in table 4.2 Perhaps surprisingly no union effects were detected; the management view of responsibility for WLB matters emerged as non-significant for the four regressions, as did the presence of a policy on equal opportunities. Replacing the union recognition in the regressions for management's estimate of union density, gave a significant negative coefficient when the dependent variable was flexible location. The union density coefficient was non-significant for flexible schedule, flexible hours and total number of FWAs provided.

The variables which have been included in the regressions were selected on the basis of their theoretical association with the dependent variable, as outlined in chapters two and three. It was suggested above that as well as main effects within the models, there may be some instances where

[29] Running the regressions with the 18 count measure for HPWPs does not alter the findings.

the effect of one variable is dependent on another variable. Interaction terms were then specified to test whether effects of predictors vary in combination with other predictors.

It was suggested above that the union effects on provision of FWAs could vary by sector – unions might have more effect in public sector workplaces than in private ones. Thus the regressions were re-specified with an interaction term for union recognition x private sector. This showed no significant relationship, indicating that the effects of unions are not significantly different in the public and private sectors. It was also suggested that the effects of different issue interpreters (unions and HR specialists) might vary according to the level of demand for flexible working at the workplace, as denoted by the proportions of workers assumed to be the main beneficiaries of FWAs. Thus a series of interactions were tested to assess the differential effects of unions and HR specialists in combination with the variables thought to suggest greater demand for flexibility.

When the regressions included an interaction term HR specialist x proportion of female employees, interaction terms were found to be significantly negative for three of the regressions (on hours, location and total FWAs) indicating that there is no additive affect for the relationship between HR specialist and proportion of female employees. This finding suggests that, counter to expectations, where there is an HR specialist at the workplace, the main effect which is observed is weaker as the proportion of female employees increases.

As noted above the rational for HPWPs may vary according to the affective component which the employer believes will result in the highest levels of performance. Using the AMO framework (Applebaum et al, 2000), the regression for the types of flexibility was rerun with the different components for Ability, Motivation, Opportunity and Commitment. The findings shown in table 4.3 suggest that the opportunity bundle, which captures the degree to which employees can participate and communicate with colleagues and management, is a significant predictor of all the different types of flexibility.

Table 4.3 Regression of combined FWA types on to HPWPs predictors

	Flexible hours	Flexible scheduling	flexible location	total number of FWAs
Ability	-0.147 (0.087)*	-0.108 (0.084)	-0.028 (0.80)	-0.056 (0.034)
Motivation	0.102 (0.085)	0.156 (0.075)**	0.115 (0.076)	0.074 (0.032)**
Opportunity	0.111 (0.046)**	0.089 (0.046)*	0.097 (0.048)**	0.071 (0.019)***
Commitment	0.015 (0.084)	0.002 (0.081)	0.048 (0.080)	0.024 (0.031)
N	1,707	1,707	1, 707	1,707

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

This regression contains all the variables which were included in the regressions in table 4.2; the count of HPWPs is replaced by the count of each of the separate components of HPWPs.

Survey probit analysis (FWA type), survey poisson analysis WERS 2011 MQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

FWA types are coded as 1 if a formal policy exists at the workplace for any of the individual options within that category and coded 0 if there is no policy. Total FWA options is a count variable of the six individual FWA options.

4.1 Assessing the extent to which flexible provision is available across the workforce

Table 4.4 examines the degree to which policies are available across the workforce according to the indicators which were used to predict provision. As set out in chapter two, it is argued that perspectives on provision which are related to the business case would be associated with greater restrictions in their use. If flexibility is offered by the employer primarily as a means to secure higher performance in (particular) employees, then it might be anticipated that the provision of the options is restricted to those employees who are most important to the business. If business case explanations are to the fore, then it would be expected that the coefficients relating to organizational adaption, situational and HPWPs would be found to be significant.

Data limitations mean that it is possible to explore only the options of flexitime and reducing working hours. It would have been helpful to have been able to examine the full range of policies in order to contrast findings. It would have been particularly interesting to observe the extent to which location flexibility (working from home) is made available across the workforce, given the patterns of use among the more privileged workers which are indicated in chapter five.

The flexitime regression indicates that the proportion of managers who are female is positively associated with the option of extending flexitime beyond those with the statutory right. As the base category for the regression is the provision is given to all employees, this does mean that proportion of managers who are female is related to more restricted practice. Such positive coefficients on variables indicate a greater degree of restriction of the policy, which may provide some support for strategic use of the policies informed by business case arguments.

The proportion of employees with a university degree is significantly associated with both restricting provision to statutory employees (as the proportion of employees with a degree increases there is less likelihood of the workplace restricting to the statutory groups, compared with making provision available to all employees. Yet at the same time the proportion of employees with a degree is

positively associated to providing to groups beyond the statutory. There is some evidence of an equal opportunities policy effect, though it is in the opposite direction to what would be expected. Those workplaces with equal opportunities policies are more likely to offer beyond the statutory compared with making the option available to all employees. Taking the option of reducing hours, it is found that in the private sector the option is more likely to be offered beyond the statutory groups.

Table 4.4 Extent of flexitime provision

Flexitime			
Institutional perspective	Employees with statutory link	Beyond employees with statutory link	No provision
Size of workplace			
5-9 employees (ref.cat)			
10-19 employees	0.233 (0.752)	-2.025 (1.029)**	-0.268 (0.295)
20-49 employees	0.239 (0.824)	-0.444 (0.827)	0.125 (0.315)
50-99 employees	0.507 (0.964)	-0.036 (0.778)	-0.383 (0.366)
100-499 employees	0.135 (1.172)	0.258 (0.671)	-1.041 (0.391)***
500+ employees	-0.361 (1.239	1.136 (0.805)	-1.008 (0.494)**
Private sector (yes)	0.290 (0.595)	0.212 (0.763)	-0.019 (0.356)
Organizational adaption perspective			
Concern for work-family balance (no)	0.302 (0.454)	0.422 (0.585)	-0.042 (0.251)
HR specialist (yes)	0.094 (0.848)	-0.711 (0.447)	-0.396 (0.250)
Union recognition (yes)	0.293 (0.512)	1.062 (0.581)*	0.081 (0.298)
Proportion of employees in managerial roles	-1.724 (2.418)	-2.488 (2.367)	-0.854 (1.106)
Proportion of employees in technical roles	0.001 (0.001)	0.014 (0.013)	-0.009 (0.006)
Proportion of managerial roles filled by female employees	1.354 (1.059)	2.816 (1.001)**	-0.056 (0.373)
Proportion of female employees	-1.442 (1.41)	-3.242 (1.546)**	0.494 (0.547)
Proportion of employees with university degree	-1.898 (0.807)**	2.355 (1.018)**	-1.879 (0.450)***
Equal opportunity perspective			
Formal written policy on equal opportunities or managing diversity (no)	0.086 (0.713)	-2.266 (1.152)**	0.083 (0.319)
Situational perspective			
Proportion of employees with dependent children	0.125 (0.915)	-1.071 (0.777)	-0.704 (0.410)*
Proportion of employees who are carers	-0.720 (1.008)	2.545 (1.028)**	-0.666 (0.593)
HPWPs	-0.026 (0.079)	-0.163 (0.103)	-0.009 (0.044)
N	835		

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for organizational size, single workplace and proportion of part-time employees

Survey multinomial logistic regression analysis (FWA type), WERS 2011 MQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Reference category is all employees

4.2 Assessing changes in the provision of flexible working arrangements using WERS panel data

The second aim of this section was to test whether any recessionary effects are associated with changes in levels of provision of FWA options. It was argued above that there may be different responses in the private and public sectors in their approaches to flexibility around the period of recession, and that the degree to which workplaces were affected by recession might influence their approach to flexibility.

As set out in chapter three his was tested by multinominal regressions which compared the likelihood of provision being implemented, withdrawn or there being no change to provision between the two WERS surveys.

The first series of multinomial logistic regressions include the main effects models and indicate that workplaces which experienced the most severe recessionary effects were more likely to discontinue provision of working from home, and compressed hours than those workplaces which were less severely affected, or experienced no negative effect. There was no evidence to support a public / private sector effect, except for the private sector being more likely to establish flexible hours provision.

Again looking at the likelihood of policy being discontinued, but this time in the second set of regressions which include the main effects and the interaction terms, significant interaction effects suggest that where there has been an adverse recessionary effect there are greater effects in the private sector compared to the public sector on predicting the likelihood of discontinuing working from home and the option of reducing hours. A significant negative interaction effect points to a smaller effect in the private sector compared to the public sector.

Overall the results suggest a greater likelihood of provision being withdrawn in the private sector compared with the public sector in light of recession. There is no evidence to support the idea that

public sector workplaces have increased their provision where they have been adversely affected by the recession. Given the issues of unobserved confounders in a panel analysis, which are discussed in chapter three, the findings of these multinomial regressions must be treated with some caution.

4.3 Discussion and conclusions

The aims of this chapter were to address three main areas. The first was to test various predictors of FW provision, thereby providing insight into theories around the sorts of workplaces make FW's available to (at least some of) their employees. Three measures of FWA availability were considered: individual FWA options; FWA practices bundled according to the type of flexibility they offer; and the total count of FWA options available.

The second aim was to test to see if the predictors associated with provision of practices were also related to coverage of the FWA practices. Due to constraints with the data available two of the FWA options (flexitime and reducing working hours) were tested. The third aim was to test to see if a recessionary effect could be observed in the provision of FWAs.

The testing of the predictors illustrated that considering FWA provision using only one measure may obscure the fact that predictor variables may be related in different ways to different FWA options. For example if only the count measure was observed, then the different effects of the proportion of female employees would not have been observed for the flexible hours option and the flexible location option, and the conclusion would have been reached that proportion of female employees is not a significant predictor of FW provision.

Taking the first set of regressions on provision, what does emerge is that different patterns of significance are evident among the predictors. This may suggest that different employers are responding to the question of flexibility in different ways, and seeking to achieve different outcomes. Size of workplace is a predictor which is shown to be significantly associated with FWA provision for all the individual FWA options, the FWAs by type and also for the overall count of flexible working provision within the workplace. As suggested this could be a result of institutional pressures being experienced more keenly in larger workplaces, or it could be that such workplaces are more easily able to accommodate such requests, expect to receive them and see a workplace

policy as a means of managing the demands. Alternatively, the greater incidence of FWA policies in larger workplaces might not suggest greater accessibility for employees, but that larger workplaces are more likely to formalize the process.

The lack of significant association between HR specialists and individual options, but a significant positive association with the total provision of FWAs within the workplace, may suggest that HR specialists are responding to needs of the workforce, but they are interpreting those needs in a much more nuanced way. It cannot simply be read off that a larger proportion of female employees will prompt HR specialists to respond with a standard set of FWAs.

The predictors of flexible location (working from home) demand particular attention. Proportion of managerial employees is found to be significantly positively associated with provision, whereas the proportion of female employees is found to be significantly negatively associated. These findings suggest that employers may be taking an adaptive approach to offer flexible working practices to employees who are more important in the organization, at least in the case of flexible location.

There is no evidence to support the idea that either unions or HR specialists are acting as issue interpreters, as the regressions which included interaction terms did not find significant positive effects. As noted in chapter two, the organizational adaption perspective tends to assume that in order for employers to respond to institutional pressures that they have some means of interpreting the wishes of the workforce. These findings suggest either that different or more diffuse methods of interpreting the workforce's wishes are in place, or that employers in sectors with greater proportions of workers who might demand flexibility are facing greater institutional pressures to provide, as flexibility becomes more commonplace in these workplaces.

Chapter 5 Assessing employee perspectives on flexible working; perceived accessibility and use

The literature reviewed in chapter two developed the following research questions which are addressed in this chapter. The key aim of this chapter is to make an assessment of the effect of policy on both perceived accessibility and use of the different types of flexibility. The research also seeks to address whether there are systemic differences in the types of flexibility which different groups of employees use. It also seeks to explore the relationships between accessibility and use for the different flexible categories. The following research questions are addressed:

- To what extent is perceived accessibility and use of FWAs related to workforce characteristics associated with work-based privilege?
- What is the relationship between managerial / professional employees and a) perceived availability and b) use of different FWA options?
- To what extent does workplace provision of flexibility influence employees' perceptions of accessibility and use of policies?

As discussed in chapter three, the models used in tables 5.1 to 5.6, are multilevel linear probability models. Additional sensitivity analysis was performed using probit models with robust standard errors to verify the findings. The results of these probit models are not reported in detail here, though the results were substantially the same as for the multilevel linear models; there were some minor differences in regards to significance, with more of the coefficients on the probit models achieving statistical significance. This suggests that the results which are reported based on the multilevel linear probability models are a more conservative estimate of the effects of the predictor variables on the outcomes considered.

Privileged workers?

The results in table 5.1 indicate that there are systematic differences in perceived patterns of both accessibility and use of flexibility across different groups of employees. Moreover these patterns vary across the different types of flexibility.

Some variables emerge as significant predictors of use for all types of flexibility. Female employees are more likely to use all different types of flexibility compared with male employees. Similarly, degree educated employees are also more likely to use all the different types of flexibility. And having dependent children emerges as a significant positive predictor of use of all types of flexibility. Managerial support emerges as positively associated with the use of all flexibility types. The relationship between the two variables could be endogenous; employees perceived their managers to be supportive because they are able to work in a flexible way, whether this is formally agreed or otherwise.

Having a formal workplace policy is not a significant predictor of flexible schedule use, though it is significantly positively related to both flexible hours and flexible location. Patterns of use and availability do not vary substantially between where there is a workplace policy and where there is not. It was suggested above the role of workplace policy may have been to allow disadvantaged groups of employees greater access to policies; informal methods it was suggested would result in differential access along familiar lines of disadvantage. Themes of disadvantage along some lines are not apparent in the data. Disabled employees are no less likely to use or believe policies are accessible. On the option for working from home, disabled employees are slightly more likely to use the option compared with other employees, but only in workplaces where there is a written policy relating to working from home.

Use of the option to work from home is associated with some markers of higher status employees. Use of flexible location is significantly positively associated with white employees, those who are degree educated, managerial employees, and is also significantly associated with higher levels of pay.

Use of flexible hours is significantly negatively associated with white employees and negatively associated with pay, though this is most likely a result of the way in which pay has been measured as a weekly rate, rather than hourly. Turning to the perceived accessibility of the options, the results show that policy is related to greater perceived accessibility for both hours and for location, but not for schedule.

Table 5.1 Use of flexible hours

	Flexible hours use (All)	Flexible hours use (no policy)	Flexible hours use (policy)
female	0.110 (0.015)***	0.087 (0.032)***	0.118 (0.015)***
White	-0.073 (0.038)*	-0.176 (0.097)*	-0.045 (0.036)
Living with a partner	-0.009 (0.016)	0.036 (0.030)	-0.003 (0.019)
Union member	0.012 (0.124)	0.026 (0.038)	0.012 (0.021)
Degree educated	0.028 (0.017)*	0.010 (0.031)	0.039 (0.020)**
Managerial / professional	-0.002 (0.016)	0.005 (0.028)	-0.001 (0.020)
Care responsibility	0.025 (0.019)	0.012 (0.031)	0.031 (0.024)
Dependent children	0.094 (0.016)***	0.054 (0.032)	0.109 (0.016)
Disability	-0.002 (0.926)	-0.033 (0.050)	0.011 (0.026)
Long hours culture	0.014 (0.015)	0.032 (0.032)	0.011 (0.015)
Managerial support	0.049 (0.013)***	0.053 (0.022)**	0.048 (0.014)***
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.154 (0.016)***	-0.110 (0.067)*	-0.172 (0.018)***
high	-0.182 (0.023)***	-0.078 (0.053)	-0.226 (0.022)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.053 (0.022)**		
HPWPs	-0.003 (0.063)	-0.010 (0.004)**	0.001 (0.003)
Total FWAs provided	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.013 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.006)
N	12,090	1,140	10,650
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.240	0.136	0.270
Level 2	0.473	0.245	0.525
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.062	0.041	0.080
Level 2	0.808	0.691	0.833

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible hours use is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy and 0 if the policy is not available or is available and not used.

Table 5.2 Use of flexible schedule

	Flexible schedule use (All)	Flexible schedule use (no policy)	Flexible schedule use (policy)

female	0.056 (0.016)***	0.044 (0.030)	0.060 (0.017)***
White	-0.045 (0.029)	-0.016 (0.060)	-0.049 (0.031)
Living with a partner	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.026)	-0.011 (0.018)
Union member	-0.024 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.034)	-0.031 (0.020)
Degree educated	0.058 (0.180)***	0.063 (0.029)**	0.055 (0.021)***
Managerial / professional	-0.023 (0.021)	-0.039 (0.036)	-0.010 (0.025)
Care responsibility	0.031 (0.018)*	0.023 (0.031)	0.037 (0.022)*
Dependent children	0.096 (0.018)***	0.163 (0.036)***	0.072 (0.021)***
Disability	-0.036 (0.025)	-0.026 (0.045)	-0.033 (0.029)
Long hours culture	0.008 (0.014)	0.003 (0.025)	0.012 (0.017)
Managerial support	0.105 (0.013)***	0.115 (0.025)***	0.103 (0.016)***
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.005 (0.018)	-0.059 (0.029)**	0.014 (0.022)
high	0.009 (0.027)	0.013 (0.052)	-0.023 (0.041)
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.040 (0.030)		
HPWPs	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.005)
Total FWAs provided	0.024 (0.009)***	-0.012 (0.013)	0.026 (0.010)**
N	15,361	2,818	12,543
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.095	0.111	0.090
Level 2	0.195	0.200	0.189
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.033	0.069	0.028
Level 2	0.325	0.750	0.290

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible schedule use is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy and 0 if the policy is not available or is available and not used.

Table 5.3 Use of flexible location

	Flexible location use (All)	Flexible location use (no policy)	Flexible location use (policy)
female	0.037 (0.012)***	0.021 (0.013)	0.067 (0.020)***
White	0.039 (0.019)**	0.001 (0.017)	0.089 (0.036)**
Living with a partner	0.010 (0.012)	0.017 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.022)
Union member	-0.020 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.012)	-0.030 (0.027)
Degree educated	0.031 (0.014)**	0.005 (0.015)	0.056 (0.022)**

Managerial / professional	0.074 (0.019)***	0.082 (0.028)***	0.088 (0.025)***
Care responsibility	0.020 (0.126)	-0.020 (0.011)*	-0.021 (0.257)
Dependent children	0.038 (0.013)***	0.009 (0.014)	0.078 (0.025)***
Disability	0.006 (0.016)	-0.017 (0.012)	0.057 (0.033)*
Long hours culture	-0.001 (0.011)	-0.014 (0.010)	0.017 (0.021)
Managerial support	0.045 (0.009)	0.042 (0.008)***	0.048 (0.017)***
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	0.033 (0.016)**	-0.009 (0.018)	0.092 (0.026)***
high	0.283 (0.028)***	0.158 (0.043)	0.379 (0.035)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.167 (0.019)***		
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.005)
Total FWAs provided	0.002 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.016 (0.008)**
N	15,235	6,917	8,318
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.249	0.127	0.242
Level 2	0.441	0.213	0.424
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.117	0.083	0.144
Level 2	0.658	0.506	0.591

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible location use is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy and 0 if the policy is not available or is available and not used.

Table 5.4 Availability of flexible hours

	Flexible hours available (All)	Flexible hours available (no policy)	Flexible hours available (policy)
female	0.148 (0.019)***	0.112 (0.039)	0.161 (0.020)***
White	-0.080 (0.036)**	-0.208 (0.095)**	0.053 (0.033)
Living with a partner	-0.010 (0.019)	-0.007 (0.038)	-0.014 (0.021)
Union member	0.042 (0.021)**	-0.104 (0.046)**	0.068*** (0.025)
Degree educated	0.066 (0.018)***	0.021 (0.043)	0.081*** (0.020)
Managerial / professional	0.010 (0.021)	-0.053 (0.043)	0.034 (0.024)
Care responsibility	-0.001 (0.021)	-0.022 (0.042)	-0.009 (0.023)
Dependent children	0.083 (0.019)***	0.040 (0.043)	0.104 (0.019)***
Disability	-0.053 (0.028)*	-0.191 (0.054)***	0.006 (0.030)
Pay (low ref)			

Medium	-0.014 (0.020)***	-0.071 (0.040)*	-0.159 (0.022)***
high	-0.091 (0.029)***	0.011 (0.067)	-0.128 (0.030)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.089 (0.028)***		
HPWPs	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.009 (0.007)	-0.000 (0.005)
Total FWAs provided	0.014 (0.007)**	0.007 (0.016)	0.178 (0.007)**
N	13,450	1,552	11,898
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.201	0.171	0.190
Level 2	0.413	0.313	0.397
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.040	0.048	0.047
Level 2	0.665	0.744	0.620

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible hours availability is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy, or believes it to be available but does not use it, and 0 if the policy is not available.

Table 5.5 Availability of flexible schedule

	Flexible schedule available (All)	Flexible schedule available (no policy)	Flexible schedule available (policy)
female	0.079 (0.019)***	0.058 (0.034)*	0.088 (0.022)***
White	-0.108 (0.038)***	-0.103 (0.092)	-0.100 (0.038)***
Living with a partner	0.009 (0.177)	0.040 (0.033)	-0.000 (0.021)
Union member	-0.023 (0.019)	0.027 (0.044)	-0.034 (0.035)
Degree educated	0.033 (0.019)*	0.013 (0.037)	0.045 (0.023)*
Managerial / professional	0.034 (0.023)	0.049 (0.043)	0.046 (0.028)
Care responsibility	-0.006 (0.020)	-0.014 (0.034)	-0.007 (0.023)
Dependent children	0.089 (0.019)***	0.122 (0.038)***	0.075 (0.021)***
Disability	-0.009 (0.026)	-0.060 (0.054)	0.014 (0.030)
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.039 (0.023)	-0.105 (0.041)***	-0.007 (0.027)
high	0.049 (0.034)	-0.001 (0.067)	0.070 (0.039)*
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.051 (0.040)		
HPWPs	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.012 (0.006)*	-0.001 (0.007)
Total FWAs provided	0.038 (0.011)***	0.016 (0.022)	0.038*** (0.012)

N	13,111	2,445	10,666
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.091	0.117	0.074
Level 2	0.178	0.207	0.147
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.023	0.061	0.017
Level 2	0.287	0.572	0.224

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible schedule availability is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy, or believes it to be available but does not use it, and 0 if the policy is not available.

Table 5.6 Availability of flexible location

	Flexible location available (All)	Flexible location available (no policy)	Flexible location available (policy)
female	0.026 (0.014)*	-0.004 (0.015)	0.072 (0.033)***
White	0.032 (0.019)**	-0.007 (0.262)	0.084 (0.042)**
Living with a partner	0.000 (0.012)	0.012 (0.012)	-0.021 (0.024)
Union member	-0.023 (0.017)	-0.003 (0.019)	-0.061 (0.025)**
Degree educated	0.051 (0.016)***	0.001 (0.018)	0.094 (0.023)***
Managerial / professional	0.101 (0.021)***	0.101 (0.030)***	0.121 (0.029)***
Care responsibility	-0.017 (0.016)	-0.010 (0.017)	-0.030 (0.029)
Dependent children	0.052 (0.014)***	0.011 (0.016)	0.108 (0.024)***
Disability	0.002 (0.019)	-0.024 (0.016)	0.053 (0.038)
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	0.065	0.017 (0.019)	0.134 (0.026)***
high	0.313	0.218 (0.048)***	0.397 (0.037)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.201 (0.022)***		
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.005)
Total FWAs provided	0.005 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)	0.025 (0.009)***
N	15,590	7,096	8,494
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.279	0.133	0.268
Level 2	0.480	0.234	0.437

Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.121	0.080	0.165
Level 2	0.667	0.520	0.565

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible hours availability is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy, or believes it to be available but does not use it, and 0 if the policy is not available.

Splitting the sample by gender

Given the importance of gender on the debates around flexibility, the regressions in tables 5.1 to 5.6 were rerun with the sample disaggregated by gender in order to identify any moderating relationships. For reasons of space, these tables are reported in Appendix A. The results suggest some differential effects by gender in relation to both use, and perceived accessibility of FWA options, particularly for the variables which examine the effect of policy and for those which capture the roles which employees have outside the workplace.

Policy for the type of flexibility option is a more important predictor of whether that option is used or perceived to be accessible for female employees compared with male employees. For female employees flexible hours and for flexible schedule policy is a significant predictor of whether the option is used or perceived to be accessible.

There are also some moderating relationships observed in some of the variables relating to employees' roles outside of the workplace. For the full sample, whether the employee has dependent children is found to be a significant predictor of use of all types of flexibility. When splitting by gender, it is a significant predictor of use of all types of flexibility for female employees, but is only a significant predictor of use of schedule flexibility for male employees. Looking at perceived accessibility, whether or not the employee has dependent children is a significant predictor of perceived accessibility of all types of flexibility. The variable is a significant predictor of

perceived accessibility on all of the options for female employees, but is not a significant predictor (at the five per cent level) of perceived accessibility for any of the options for male employees. The coefficients though are significant at the ten per cent level for the schedule and location flexibility. In the full sample, care responsibility is not a significant predictor of use of any of the types of flexibility, though it does emerge as a significant predictor of use for male employees.

5.1 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to assess the extent to which different workplace and individual factors affect how workers a) believe that FWA options are available to them, and b) the extent to which different groups of workers actually make use of the arrangements.

To take the workplace characteristics first, the findings indicate that a written policy is positively associated with the use of flexible hours and flexible location, but not for flexible schedule. The explanation for this might be that while hours and location are more likely to require formal managerial sign-off, schedule can be more easily negotiated informally between employee and their line manager. It is not possible with WERS data to examine definitively whether use of an option has been formally or informally agreed. Even in workplaces which do not have policies, it could be the case that the arrangement has been agreed formally under the right to request legislation. The findings also indicate that the presence of a written policy is also positively associated with employee perceived accessibility for hours and location flexibility.

The long-hours culture variable did not emerge as a significant predictor for use of any of the FW types. This was perhaps somewhat surprising. It was expected that employees' awareness of a long hours culture within the workplace might have served to dissuade employees from adapting their working arrangements for fear of career consequences. Furthermore, it was suggested that the options which provided the greatest challenge to the ideal worker model would be more likely to be avoided in workplaces with long hours cultures. The findings may suggest that career considerations are not always to the forefront when employees make choices about flexibility, or that if flexibility is

needed, then the potential career consequences are a second-order consideration. It could also be taken that some employees make strategic choices about whether to prioritize career or family, along the lines suggested by Hakim (1996, 2000), although such an explanation prioritises the role of individual agency at the expense of the wider social context. More plausibly though the findings presented in this chapter indicate strategic choices which have been made in the context of various constraints which are faced by women in employment (Crompton, 2002; Crompton and Harris, 1998). The implications of the findings and the discussion of the role of gender and flexibility are explored in chapter seven.

Turning to the individual level characteristics, the findings demonstrate the added analytical insight derived from considering the different types of flexibility separately. On the one hand, there is strong support for the notion that the arrangements which allow the employee to continue with full time pay are more likely to be used by those with more privileged positions within the labour force. Location flexibility is shown to be strongly associated with higher levels of pay and with managerial / professional roles. Management and professional roles are not found to be significantly associated with schedule or hours flexibility. On the other hand, the sorts of working arrangement which may incur some penalty for the user are more likely to be used by those in less advantaged positions within the labour force.

As well as there being evidence of effects relating to labour market "privilege" (as broadly defined by Swanberg et al, 2005), there is also evidence that supports ideas outlined in chapter two relating to normative gender / social role theory and / or previous discourses around FW being a policy designed for parents, and reflecting that historical development. It is not possible to uncover from the analyses the extent to which the patterns which emerge are a result of "free" choices by employees or gatekeeping effects by employers (i.e. the situation that for example, the probability of male employees and female employees seeking FWAs is approximately equal, but the probability of line managers granting requests for female workers is much higher). The findings do show though

that for all types of flexibility use is strongly positively associated with both female employees and with employees who have dependent children. When the sample was split by gender and male and female employees use and perceived accessibility was considered separately, the findings confirmed the moderating effect of gender on the significance of the dependent children variable. In short, although having dependent children is a significant predictor across the whole sample of use of all types of flexibility, it is not a significant predictor of hours flexibility for male employees. This suggests that The importance of this is of course that hours flexibility incurs a direct financial penalty for the employee.

The variables which examined the context under which flexibility was used or perceived accessible indicated that employee level concerns are more important in both cases. There is no evidence of a trade union effect; in unionised workplaces employees are no more likely to make use of the options compared with employees in non-unionised workplaces. Moreover the findings show that union members are no more likely to use FWAs compared with those who are not union members. Allied to the findings in chapter 4, these findings indicate limited union effect on FWA provision or use.

In addition to this, the lack of association with HPWPs suggested that the predictions about HPWPs' compatibility with the different types of flexibility are not supported. This might be because individual employee circumstances are better predictors of use of policies, or that there is a self-sorting effect whereby employees who are likely to make use of policy tend to seek employment in workplaces which they believe more likely to allow flexibility. On the evidence presented, the former argument is more convincing, given that the second argument would suggest lower levels of use (rather than no significant difference) in HPWPs. A further alternative explanation is that associations between HPWPs and individual use and perceived accessibility are obscured due to the nature of the coverage of HPWPs within workplaces. If only a section of the workforce within a

workplace are covered by HPWPs then any associations between flexibility and HPWPs are unlikely to be identified[30].

The finding that policy is an important predictor for use of flexibility by female employees for all types of flexibility raises questions about whether this can be explained by the role of formalisation of practice (Cockburn, 1989), or by arguments around policy adaption to codify existing practice (e.g. Hogarth et al, 2001). It is noteworthy that for male employees the existence of policy is only found to be significant for use of flexible location.

[30] Literature on HPWPs does not appear to address questions of whether the practices apply across the whole workforce or are targeted to particular sections.

Chapter 6 Assessing Employee Outcomes from flexible working

The purpose of this chapter is to review the outcomes associated with different form of flexible working and through doing so, address the following research questions.

- What is the relationship between the use of FWAs and organizational commitment and the other individual outcome variables?
- Is the relationship between use of FWAs and organizational commitment (and the other individual outcome variables) affected by the type of flexibility used?
- Is the relationship between use of FWAs and organizational commitment (and the other individual outcome variables) different for different categories of employee?
- - What is the nature of outcomes from FW in workplaces where HPWPs adoption is higher?
- Are outcomes associated with the use of FWA options or their perceived availability?

Method

The five outcome measures considered in this chapter are job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work-related anxiety, and two measures of WLB - family to work conflict and work to family conflict. The main aim of the chapter is to examine if the outcomes differ when flexible working options are used or if they are perceived to be accessible. Regressions were specified in order to examine the effect flexible working on the outcomes. As noted in chapter three, the regressions included a set of standard controls which are commonly used when employee outcomes are studied. However, as a first step, regression models were specified without the inclusion of controls. The reason for this is to examine whether any effects are observed before the controls are introduced. If relationships are present without controls, but are then not present when the controls are introduced then this suggests that flexibility affects outcomes in different ways for different employees and / or in different contexts. The models without controls were run for each method of measuring flexibility (see below) and are reported in Appendix B.

The main regressions (tables 6.1 to 6.5) follow the same form. Model one includes the control variables at both employee and workplace level (as outlined in Chapter three). Model two also includes dummy variables for each type of FWA option to test whether use of policies associated with differences in any of the outcome variables. Significant relationships for any of these coefficients indicate that use of the type of flexibility is a significant predictor of the outcome variable. Model three includes the controls plus dummy variables for the perceived accessibility or use of each of the three FWA types. These regressions are similar to the regressions of Budd and Mumford (2004) who, due to how the question was asked in WERS 1998, were unable to disentangle use and perceived accessibility. In model four, rather than using a dummy variable for flexibility, the regression uses a three way variable comparing "not available", "used" and "available but not used" in the form in which the question was asked in WERS 2011 SEQ (see chapter three for a fuller discussion).

As per chapter five, regressions were also specified when the sample is split by gender, in order to give further insight into potential gender effects in how flexibility operates. The regressions for the split sample are discussed below and included as Appendix C. In order to give some understanding into the context under which outcomes are observed, further disaggregation of the data was performed and outcomes were examined in the contexts of perceived long hours culture, perceived lack of managerial support, employees with care responsibilities, employees with dependent children, and employees in managerial / professional occupations. Key findings from these regressions are noted below. These regressions are documented in Appendix D.

As discussed in chapter three, there may be an issue with omitted variable bias in cross-sectional models, which estimate attitudinal outcomes of employees. To give some insight into whether this may be an issue in this study, results for the satisfaction regressions are compared with estimates taken from panel data (Wheatley, 2017), where the issue problem of omitted variable bias will be smaller (Wooldridge, 2009).

Findings

Models without controls

For employee satisfaction the models without the controls follow the same pattern (discussed below) as the regressions when the controls are included. For commitment the use of flexible hours is significant in the models without controls, but is not significant when the control variables are introduced. The same pattern is observed for work-related anxiety. Taking these two outcomes together, this suggests that the impact of the use of flexible hours is dependent on either the context in which it is used, and / or the characteristics of the employee using the option.

Whereas the models for satisfaction, organizational commitment and work-related anxiety are broadly similar to the models below when the control variables are introduced, there are more interesting effects seen when considering the WLB outcomes; F2W and W2F.

For F2W the models without controls show no significant relationships with any of the flexibility variables. This is the same pattern as for the main models (see below). However for W2F the models without controls there are significant associations for all but one of the flexibility coefficients (flexible hours perceived accessible). These relationships are not present when controls are introduced which suggests that the impact of flexibility on F2W is highly dependent on the context and / or the characteristics of the employee. Perhaps the most interesting point about the W2F models without the controls is that for the different measures of flexible location (working from home) the coefficients are significantly positive, indicating that this type of flexibility is associated with higher levels of conflict. This apparently unexpected finding is discussed in more detail in the chapter's conclusion.

Main models

Satisfaction

The regressions in table 6.1 show the effect of the different types of flexibility on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction model 2 shows that use of flexible schedule and flexible location are both significantly positively associated with the outcome. Use of flexible working is not, however found to be significantly associated. Model 3 though shows that positive associations with satisfaction for the variable which measures the combined categories of perceived availability and use for all the different types of flexibility. Whereas model 4 shows there are distinct separate positive effects on employee satisfaction associated with perceived availability for each of the three types of flexibility.

Interaction effects were calculated to assess the effect of the different types of flexibility for different groups of employees. A significant interaction effect for gender and hours flexibility suggests that the positive effect of using flexible hours on satisfaction is greater for men than it is for women. Indeed the split sample regressions confirm that flexible hours is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction for male employees, whereas for female employees the relationship is non-significant. There is no significant interaction effect between gender and schedule or location use, indicating similar effects of these options on men and women's job satisfaction. The regressions in Appendix C indicate that the use of flexible hours not associated with higher satisfaction for female employees. Use of flexible schedule not associated with higher satisfaction for male employees.

Interaction effects were also calculated between managers and professionals and the use of the three different types of flexibility. Only one of these interactions was found to be significant, with the relationship between manager and flex location use significantly negative. Thus the effect on satisfaction is lower for managers using this option, than it is for non-managers.

As noted above, the work of Wheatley (2017) provides some opportunity to assess the extent to which omitted variable bias might be an issue for the findings presented here. It should be noted

that while the analyses above use FWA types, Wheatley (ibid) uses individual measures of flexibility and considers only when the policies are used. In both sets of analyses reduced working hours is found to be positively associated with job satisfaction for male employees and non-significant for female employees. Wheatley (ibid) finds a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and flexitime for male employees, which is not replicated here; there is no significant relationship between satisfaction and use of flexible scheduling, though this could be explained by different heterogeneity between the different individual options comprising the flexible schedule category. Indeed there are different trends evident for the options of flexitime and compressed hours (ibid). Both sets of analyses find positive associations between working from home and job satisfaction. Given that findings in the two studies are broadly similar, this would suggest that the problem of omitted variable bias for this study is relatively small.

Organizational Commitment

Patterns of association between organizational commitment and FW options are similar to those observed when the dependent variable was job satisfaction. Use of flexible schedule and flexible location are positively associated with higher levels of organizational commitment. The relationship between organizational commitment and flexible hours is not found to be significant. As per the regressions with job satisfaction, use of the policies is not a better predictor of commitment than whether the policies are perceived to be accessible by the employee.

Various interactions were tested to examine the context in which flexibility was accessed and whether effects were different for different workers. It was found that the use of flexible hours has a significant negative interaction with gender, so the effect of use of flexible hours on commitment is less strong for female employees. Indeed when looking at the sample split by gender it can be seen that for female employees there is no significant relationship between using flexible hours and organizational commitment. No significant effects for interactions between gender and use of schedule flexibility or between gender and use location flexibility.

No significant interaction was found between managers and hours use, however there was a significant positive interaction between managers and schedule use, suggesting effect of use of schedule flexibility is higher for managers than it is for non-managers. Although there was a significant positive interaction between managers and using schedule flexibility, there was a marginally significant negative interaction managers use of flexible location. Therefore the effect of use of location flexibility is lower for managers than it is for non-managers.

The effects of the extent of HPWPs adoption were also tested. A significant negative interaction was observed between the use of flexible location and the extent of HPWPs adoption. Therefore the effect of use of flexible location is lower in workplaces which have adopted greater numbers of HPWPs.

Effects were also tested in the context of whether or not the workplace provided the given flexibility option. Where there was a policy, the same significant interaction between gender and use of flexible hours was observed. There was a marginally significant interaction between the use of flex schedule and managers in workplaces which have formal flex schedule provision. Effect of use for managers is therefore stronger than for non-managers in this context. No other significant interactions were observed in the tests where there was formal provision.

In the informal setting where no policy on the flexible type exists, a significant positive effect of location flexibility on organizational commitment, was detected in the overall model. The other two types of flexibility were not found to be significantly related to organizational commitment in this context.

A significant negative interaction was observed between managers and use of flexible hours, suggesting that the effect of the use of flexible hours on organizational commitment is lower for managers than for non-managers, though overall hours use is not a significant predictor of organizational commitment in the full sample (see model two). When looking at the sample which includes managers / professional employees only, it can be seen that hours use does not emerge as

a significant predictor of commitment. In the full sample flexible location use is found to be a significant predictor of commitment, but when looking at managerial employees only the coefficient is non-significant. This suggests that working from home does not result in higher levels of organizational commitment for managers.

Work related anxiety

The regressions which show the outcome for work-related anxiety show different patterns from the regressions for job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Use of flexible location and flexible schedule are not found to be significantly associated with work-related anxiety. Hours flexibility is however associated with work-related anxiety. Again the signalling effect is found to be important. The two way variable which considers use versus not used (whether perceived accessible or not) is shown to be significant, indicating when hours flexibility is either used or perceived accessible that work-related anxiety is lower. However, the three way variable shows that employees who either use flexible hours, or perceive flexible hours to be available have lower levels of work-related anxiety compared with employees for whom the option is not available. The perceived accessibility of flexible schedule is also significantly associated with lower levels of work-related anxiety. These findings suggest that work-related anxiety may be lowered when employees perceive that there are options for reducing their workloads or changing their schedules. The option of using flexible location, but maintaining the same workload, is not associated with work-related anxiety.

WLB

Regressions were run to test the associations with the two directions of work-life conflict; F2W and W2F. The regressions in tables 6.4 and 6.5 indicated that there were no relationships between flexibility and either F2W or W2F. As noted above, the models for W2F without controls indicate significant effects for all but one of the flexibility coefficients.

Models were run to test for interaction effects between the use of FWAs, female employees and managers on W2F. A significant interaction between manager and use of flexible hours indicated that non-managers receive greater reduction in conflict than do managers. That is the policy works better for non-managers than it does for managers. In workplaces which have a flexible hours policy it was found that use of flexible hours was associated with a marginally significant reduction in work to family conflict. In workplaces which have a formal policy on flexible hours the interaction between managers and use of flexible hours indicated that the policy works less well for managers than it does for non-managers (as per the regression with the full sample).

Although there are no significant associations between W2F and flexibility when the full sample is observed, there are some significant associations when disaggregating the results by gender and by individual characteristics and workplace contexts. There are no significant associations when looking at male employees, though for female employees the use of flexible schedules is associated with lower levels of W2F. Use of flexible schedule is associated with lower W2F in the context of a long hours culture and also for managerial / professional employees. Reduced hours is associated with lower levels of W2F for employees with dependent children.

Table 6.1 Effects of Flexible working on job satisfaction

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female	0.067 (0.259)***	0.029 (0.032)	0.008 (0.031)	0.013 (0.031)
White	0.013 (0.783)	-0.022 (0.061)	-0.024 (0.058)	-0.024 (0.057)
Living with a partner	0.020 (0.024)	0.020 (0.029)	0.030 (0.287)	0.030 (0.029)
Union member	-0.044 (0.027)	-0.066 (0.032)**	-0.079 (0.032)	-0.080 (0.032)**
Degree educated	-0.102 (0.025)***	-0.088 (0.030)***	-0.105 (0.029)***	-0.101 (0.029)***
Managerial / professional	0.113 (0.028)***	0.134 (0.032)***	0.120 (0.031)***	0.114 (0.032)***
Care responsibility	-0.137 (0.029)	-0.125 (0.033)***	-0.111 (0.033)***	-0.106 (0.032)***
Dependent children	0.064 (0.022)***	0.034 (0.027)	0.025 (0.026)	0.030 (0.026)
Disability	0.114 (0.040)***	-0.121 (0.038)	-0.126 (0.039)***	-0.125 (0.040)
Long hours culture	-0.039 (0.023)*	-0.019 (0.28)	-0.015 (0.027)	-0.015 (0.027)
Managerial support	0.113 (0.028)***	0.490 (0.026)***	0.453 (0.026)***	0.451 (0.026)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.127 (0.032)***	0.118 (0.037)	0.129 (0.036)***	0.126 (0.037)***
high	0.262 (0.042)***	0.207 (0.047)***	0.200 (0.049)***	0.191 (0.050)***
flexible hours used		0.021 (0.037)		
flexible schedule used		0.108 (0.025)***		
flexible location used		0.014 (0.039)***		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.111 (0.030)***	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.216 (0.027)***	
flexible location available or used			0.139 (0.033)***	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.075 (0.043)*
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.120 (0.030)
flexible schedule not available				

flexible schedule used				0.174 (0.028)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.293 (0.038)***
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.145 (0.038)***
flexible location perceived accessible				0.148 (0.045)***
Private sector	0.068 (0.042)	0.066 (0.051)	0.079 (0.053)	0.080 (0.053)
HPWPs	-0.008 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.005)
Total FWAs provided	0.007 (0.008)	0.001 (0.009)	-0.007 (0.009)	-0.007 (0.009)
N	16,230	11,623	11,305	11,305
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.213	0.219	0.251	0.254
Level 2	0.324	0.310	0.337	0.341
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.157	0.160	0.193	0.196
Level 2	0.501	0.497	0.523	0.529

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Job satisfaction is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

Table 6.2 Effects of Flexible working on organizational commitment

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female	0.129 (0.027)***	0.113 (0.034)***	0.091 (0.034)***	0.097 (0.034)***
White	-0.100 (0.046)**	-0.111 (0.061)*	-0.102 (0.065)	-0.101 (0.065)
Living with a partner	-0.003 (0.024)	0.010 (0.030)	0.020 (0.030)	0.020 (0.030)
Union member	-0.035 (0.027)	-0.026 (0.032)	-0.035 (0.032)	-0.037 (0.032)
Degree educated	-0.068 (0.029)**	-0.074 (0.037)**	-0.082 (0.037)	-0.078 (0.036)**
Managerial / professional	0.154 (0.031)***	0.136 (0.036)***	0.118 (0.035)***	0.112 (0.035)***

Care responsibility	-0.035 (0.031)	-0.030 (0.036)	-0.033 (0.037)	-0.029 (0.036)
Dependent children	0.099 (0.026)***	0.076 (0.032)**	0.066 (0.030)**	0.072 (0.030)
Disability	-0.009 (0.039)	-0.030 (0.048)	0.017 (0.044)	0.018 (0.043)
Long hours culture	0.003 (0.025)	0.005 (0.031)	0.010 (0.030)	0.010 (0.030)
Managerial support	0.552 (0.027)***	0.549 (0.033)***	0.528 (0.034)***	0.526 (0.034)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.065 (0.032)**	0.075 (0.040)*	0.083 (0.040)**	0.079 (0.040)**
high	0.207 (0.042)***	0.181 (0.048)***	0.159 (0.050)***	0.154 (0.050)***
flexible hours used		0.011 (0.036)		
flexible schedule used		0.065 (0.031)**		
flexible location used		0.166 (0.043)***		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.057 (0.033)*	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.148 (0.035)***	
flexible location available or used			0.183 (0.040)***	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.026 (0.044)
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.062 (0.035)*
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.106 (0.036)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.224 (0.045)***
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.180 (0.044)***
flexible location perceived accessible				0.208 (0.050)***

Private sector	0.082 (0.049)	0.084 (0.053)	0.098 (0.057)*	0.100 (0.056)*
HPWPs	-0.002 (0.007)	0.001 (0.007)	-0.001 (0.007)	-0.001 (0.007)
Total FWAs provided	0.010 (0.009)	0.006 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.003 (0.010)
N	16,224	11,616	11,301	11,301
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.205	0.214	0.231	0.233
Level 2	0.336	0.331	0.348	0.347
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.131	0.134	0.145	0.149
Level 2	0.511	0.554	0.565	0.559

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Employee commitment is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of organizational commitment.

Table 6.3 Effects of Flexible working on work related anxiety

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female	0.056 (0.031)*	0.065 (0.036)*	0.017 (0.032)	0.017 (0.032)
White	0.228 (0.091)**	0.234 (0.121)*	0.105 (0.065)	0.104 (0.065)
Living with a partner	0.017 (0.025)	0.015 (0.030)	0.032 (0.032)	0.031 (0.031)
Union member	-0.098 (0.034)***	-0.141 (0.036)	-0.153 (0.037)	-0.153 (0.053)
Degree educated	-0.042 (0.028)	-0.018 (0.031)	-0.031 (0.029)	-0.282 (0.029)
Managerial / professional	-0.071 (0.034)**	-0.072 (0.035)**	-0.081 (0.034)**	-0.084 (0.034)**
Care responsibility	-0.128 (0.036)***	-0.113 (0.038)***	-0.118 (0.037)***	-0.115 (0.037)***
Dependent children	0.076 (0.030)**	0.079 (0.035)**	0.087 (0.031)***	0.089 (0.031)***
Disability	-0.311 (0.058)***	-0.267 (0.059)***	-0.251 (0.055)***	-0.251 (0.055)***
Long hours culture	-0.174 (0.031)***	-0.203 (0.035)***	-0.172 (0.030)***	-0.172 (0.030)***
Managerial support	0.454 (0.031)***	0.410 (0.033)***	0.403 (0.034)***	0.403 (0.034)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	-0.047 (0.036)	-0.018 (0.037)	-0.015 (0.037)	-0.013 (0.038)
high	-0.128 (0.047)***	-0.095 (0.048)**	-0.096 (0.048)**	-0.101 (0.049)**

flexible hours used		0.047 (0.046)		
flexible schedule used		-0.009 (0.038)		
flexible location used		0.041 (0.043)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.113 (0.031)***	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.047 (0.033)	
flexible location available or used			-0.018 (0.037)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.112 (0.039)***
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.108 (0.036)***
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.024 (0.036)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.091 (0.043)**
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.001 (0.042)
flexible location perceived accessible				-0.047 (0.059)
Private sector	-0.009 (0.051)	-0.012 (0.052)	-0.001 (0.052)	-0.001 (0.052)
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)
Total FWAs provided	0.011 (0.010)	0.011 (0.011)	0.003 (0.010)	0.003 (0.010)
N	16,219	11,615	11,299	11,299
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.165	0.151	0.158	0.159
Level 2	0.271	0.245	0.245	0.247

Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.121	0.010	0.110	0.110
Level 2	0.521	0.554	0.552	0.557

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Work-related anxiety is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the highest level of work related anxiety and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with lower levels of work-related anxiety.

Table 6.4 Effects of Flexible working on family to work conflict

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female	-0.041 (0.027)	-0.016 (0.033)	-0.037 (0.034)	-0.040 (0.034)
White	-0.110 (0.057)*	-0.119 (0.073)	-0.140 (0.074)*	0.137 (0.073)*
Living with a partner	-0.032 (0.025)	-0.025 (0.030)	-0.043 (0.031)	-0.043 (0.032)
Union member	0.046 (0.035)	0.064 (0.040)	0.065 (0.041)	0.065 (0.041)
Degree educated	-0.042 (0.030)	-0.028 (0.035)	-0.044 (0.036)	-0.044 (0.036)
Managerial / professional	-0.009 (0.031)	-0.002 (0.034)	-0.004 (0.034)	-0.004 (0.034)
Care responsibility	0.151 (0.033)***	0.167 (0.039)***	0.156 (0.040)***	0.154 (0.040)***
Dependent children	0.131 (0.027)***	0.134 (0.035)***	0.143 (0.036)***	0.140 (0.036)***
Disability	0.088 (0.049)*	0.093 (0.059)	0.134 (0.060)**	0.132 (0.060)**
Long hours culture	0.127 (0.025)***	0.120 (0.029)***	0.145 (0.029)***	0.142 (0.030)***
Managerial support	-0.115 (0.027)***	-0.122 (0.030)***	-0.117 (0.031)***	-0.117 (0.031)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	-0.025 (0.029)	-0.016 (0.035)	-0.041 (0.034)	-0.035 (0.034)
high	0.002 (0.045)	-0.003 (0.050)	-0.022 (0.050)	-0.012 (0.050)
flexible hours used		0.061 (0.046)		
flexible schedule used		0.005 (0.035)		
flexible location used		0.021 (0.044)		

flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.011 (0.035)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.012 (0.034)	
flexible location available or used			0.035 (0.041)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.057 (0.053)
flexible hours perceived accessible				-0.016 (0.037)
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.007 (0.038)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.026 (0.052)
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.028 (0.045)
flexible location perceived accessible				0.052 (0.064)
Private sector	-0.013 (0.044)	-0.027 (0.052)	-0.028 (0.053)	-0.026 (0.054)
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.005)	0.005 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)	0.003 (0.006)
Total FWAs provided	-0.012 (0.008)	-0.016 (0.009)*	-0.017 (0.010)*	-0.016 (0.010)
N	16,163	11,589	11,272	11,272
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.040	0.046	0.049	0.050
Level 2	0.058	0.059	0.060	0.061
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.035	0.040	0.044	0.045
Level 2	0.263	0.215	0.205	0.205

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Family to work conflict is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of conflict and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of conflict.

Table 6.5 Effects of Flexible working on work to family conflict

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female	-0.109 (0.038)***	-0.035 (0.044)	-0.036 (0.046)	-0.033 (0.046)
White	-0.093 (0.064)	-0.124 (0.074)*	-0.113 (0.086)	-0.113 (0.087)
Living with a partner	-0.058 (0.036)	-0.084 (0.042)**	-0.102 (0.044)**	-0.102 (0.043)**
Union member	0.116 (0.047)**	0.149 (0.056)***	0.155 (0.059)***	0.153 (0.059)***
Degree educated	-0.007 (0.039	-0.029 (0.048)	-0.017 (0.050)	-0.015 (0.049)
Managerial / professional	0.268 (0.050)***	0.278 (0.053)***	0.280 (0.055)***	0.277 (0.054)***
Care responsibility	0.268 (0.047)***	0.241 (0.049)***	0.230 (0.049)***	0.232 (0.049)***
Dependent children	0.040 (0.038)	0.053 (0.045)	0.056 (0.047)	0.059 (0.047)
Disability	0.166 (0.055)***	0.145 (0.061)**	0.150 (0.062)**	0.150 (0.062)***
Long hours culture	0.373 (0.032)***	0.423 (0.038)***	0.445 (0.040)***	0.445 (0.040)***
Managerial support	-0.513 (0.035)***	-0.492 (0.040)***	-0.475 (0.041)***	-0.475 (0.041)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.147 (0.044)***	0.157 (0.050)***	0.150 (0.050)***	0.149 (0.051)***
high	0.370 (0.061)***	0.347 (0.072)***	0.344 (0.069)***	0.341 (0.072)***
flexible hours used		-0.058 (0.055)		
flexible schedule used		-0.081 (0.049)		
flexible location used		0.031 (0.071)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			-0.008 (0.048)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			-0.061 (0.047)	
flexible location available or used			0.013 (0.059)	

flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				-0.024 (0.063)
flexible hours perceived accessible				-0.006 (0.052)
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				-0.085 (0.054)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				-0.015 (0.065)
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.014 (0.071)
flexible location perceived accessible				0.023 (0.073)
Private sector	0.064 (0.056)	0.032 (0.061)	0.016 (0.061)	0.017 (0.061)
HPWPs	-0.003 (0.007)	-0.005 (0.008)	-0.000 (0.008)	-0.000 (0.008)
Total FWAs provided	-0.019 (0.011)*	-0.021 (0.021)*	-0.026 (0.012)**	-0.026 (0.012)**
N	16,197	11,613	11,297	11,297
Snijders Bosker R Square Level 1	0.163	0.177	0.174	0.175
Level 2	0.252	0.268	0.253	0.254
Bryk Raudenbush R Square Level 1	0.128	0.129	0.133	0.133
Level 2	0.500	0.586	0.582	0.586

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Work to family conflict is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of conflict and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of conflict.

6.1 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the relationships between the different flexible options and the individual level outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work-related anxiety and WLB.

The findings show that flexible schedule and flexible location use are both positively associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. These results are supportive of social exchange theories; employees respond to the flexibility which their employers have afforded them leading to increased levels of satisfaction. This may be of interest to employers because of the supposed links between job satisfaction and individual performance. Whereas there were positive associations found for use of schedule and location flexibility, when looking at the full sample the use of hours flexibility is not found to be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. This may be because the use of hours flexibility necessarily implies a reduction in overall pay, and because the decision to reduce hours may not be easily reversed. Thus employees who decide to make use of any of the flexible hours options may over time find themselves trapped in a job where they are working fewer hours than they would like. The different relationships between male and female job satisfaction when using flexible hours is important, especially given the extent to which use of this form of flexibility is known to be highly gendered (see for example van Wanrooy et al, 2013). The lack of significant relationship between flexible hours use and satisfaction for female employees might reflect a wide range of experience of women working part-time, compared with men. While there might be women for whom the arrangements work well, and lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, for some women this arrangement could represent the outcome of constrained choices and a narrowing of future opportunities. These important themes are revisited in the final chapter.

The regressions for job satisfaction also indicate that even where the flexible option is not used, there are observed positive effects where the option is perceived to be accessible. Where the option was either used or perceived to be accessible, for all types of flexibility there was a significant

positive association with job satisfaction. When the flexibility option was included in the regression as a three category variable, the findings indicate that perceived accessibility has a stronger effect on job satisfaction than actual use of the policies. These findings suggest support for signalling theories. The importance and contribution of both social exchange and signalling theories are discussed more fully in the final chapter.

The regressions considering the outcome of organizational commitment as the dependent variable follow the same broad patterns as the regressions for job satisfaction, even though the two outcome variables are conceptually different. As for job satisfaction some of the gender effects are interesting and require further exploration. Use of flexible hours emerges as a significant predictor of commitment for male employees whereas it does not for female employees. Again this might be reflective of heterogeneity of experience among the larger group of female employees using this option, compared to male employees, but it might also suggest that positive effects for employees may be more likely when the arrangement is atypical for employees with particular characteristics. The implications for this finding on our understanding of social exchange is considered in chapter seven.

The regressions on work-related anxiety did not show many significant effects in relation to use of or perceived accessibility of FWAs. As noted in chapter two there is a relatively small amount of literature which examines the links between work-related anxiety and flexibility and its inclusion as a dependent variable was somewhat exploratory to assess the degree to which flexibility might be associated with reducing negative affect in employees. As noted the majority of literature on the topic has been framed as positive affect (job satisfaction and organization commitment, being the two most commonly used dependent variables). The findings here suggest that work-related anxiety is not highly related to flexible working. There are parallels here with the discussion around WLB which follows, around the issue of whether differential effects would be expected.

Finally, looking at the outcome of WLB, there is no evidence in the full sample to support the idea that any of the flexible options results in lower levels of either WFC or FWC. The fact that there is no significant relationship for all types of flexibility is noteworthy. The literature above (Duxbury et al, 2014) has suggested that there may be particular issue of boundary permeability related to flexible location meaning that its use is unlikely to result in lower levels of conflict. The boundary permeability explanation does not account for why flexible schedule and flexible hours are not associated with lower levels of conflict. The explanation as to why use of policies does not result in lower levels of conflict requires further exploration. It could be that the regressions above fail to account for other factors which may affect levels of conflict, and / or it could be the case that the way in which the concepts are measured fails to capture sufficiently the degree to which commitments affect individuals' WLB. The way in which this study has measured the associations between conflict and flexibility may have led to the conclusion that flexibility does not reduce levels of conflict. Individual level time series data would provide better evidence of whether use of flexibility resulted in reduced levels of conflict. Here it is shown that those who use the policies experience similar levels of conflict to those who do not, but it cannot be substantiated as to whether the decision to utilise a flexible option has actually reduced the levels of conflict (or decreased work-related anxiety) for those individuals. Some of these points are discussed in more detail in the following chapter when further research agendas are considered.

. Chapter 7 Conclusions

As discussed in chapter three the thesis had three principal aims. The first aim was to examine the workplace-level and workforce level factors which are associated with the provision of different types of FWAs in UK firms, in order to test which perspectives inform provision of flexible working in the UK. The second aim was to assess the degree to which employee use and perceived accessibility of flexibility varies across different workplaces and by different employee characteristics. Special attention was given to the influence of workplace policy. The third aim was to address whether individual level outcomes are associated with FWA use or perceived accessibility and to provide more nuanced understanding of the relationships between flexibility and individual level outcomes. In doing so the thesis adds to understanding in each of the three areas; provision, use / accessibility and individual level outcome. Through considering provision of FWAs debates around business case arguments or equality based explanations are advanced as is the understanding of the relationship between flexibility and management strategy. By looking at use / accessibility of FWAs understanding of labour market disadvantage is advanced, particularly in relation to gender, but also according to other markers of advantage or privilege. Divergent patterns of use are noted according to flexibility types, reinforcing the need to treat forms of flexibility as both conceptually and analytically separate. Finally, when considering outcomes, the findings add to understanding of social exchange and signalling theories. Moreover, FW is shown to be positively associated with a range of beneficial outcomes for employees. These beneficial outcomes are far from universal and thus the work adds to understanding of the contingent nature of these positive outcomes and advances understanding of barriers and contexts which might attenuate any positive effects. This final chapter considers briefly some of the main findings from the thesis and elaborates on these contributions of the work, and indicates areas for future research.

Provision of FWAs

To what extent is provision of flexible working related to business case or equal opportunities perspectives?

The theories on provision as outlined by Oliver (1991), were tested by regressing the different FWA options on to the various different workplace and workforce indicators associated with the different theoretical perspectives, broadly relating to theories about social justice or the business case for flexibility (Dickens, 1999). Evidence was found to support institutional perspectives with size emerging as a significant predictor of FWA provision and supporting findings from previous studies (Dex and Smith, 2002; Forth et al., 2006; Hogarth et al., 2001). Although much research has tended to equate size with being a proxy for institutional effects (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram and Simons, 1995; Wood et al., 2003) there is little evidence to actually support the conjecture that it is concern for social legitimacy (Paauwe, 2004) which is the motivator for larger organizations to respond in such a way. The arguments of Hogarth et al. (2001) would seem to be an equally valid interpretation of why policies are more common in larger workplaces; namely that larger workplaces are more likely to have larger absolute numbers of requests for flexibility and this, rather than social legitimacy concerns prompts them to formalize their response. Indeed part of Oliver's (1991) critique is that institutional accounts are overly deterministic and underestimate the ability of organizations to exercise strategic agency in their response.

Some support was found for organizational adaptive perspectives with the presence of HR specialists being positively associated with provision of both flexible hours and flexible location provision. As noted by Wood et al. (2003) the organizational adaptive perspective relies in part on the notion that employers have information about their workforce's preferences and wants. The fact that interactions between "issue interpreters" and other variables are not found to be significant casts some doubt on whether the explanatory mechanism is operating in the way in which the theoretical perspective would imply. An alternative explanation for the association of HR specialists with

provision of flexible hours and flexible location might be that organizations either recruit to such roles after taking the decision to implement policies (and it should be noted that the presence of HR specialists is significantly associated with the two types of flexibility which are most difficult to arrange informally between line manager and employee), or that the prior presence of an HR specialist drives forward the process of formalizing FWAs.

The proportion of female employees at the workplace was found to be positively associated with flexible hours provision and negatively associated with flexible location provision. Rather than adding to understanding of perspectives on provision, this finding points to gendered organizational structures (Acker, 1990) (a point which is discussed further below in relation to use), and also perhaps a hierarchy in the desirability of different FWA options. Again this is a point which is considered more fully when looking at patterns of use. The idea though that proportion of female workers would be a predictor of the option to reduce hours would seem to accord with notions of a largely feminized workplace with lots of different part time arrangements, such as the call centres studied by Taylor and Scholarios (2011).

There was no evidence to support the idea that workplace provision of flexible working is a response to concerns about equal opportunities. The lack of effect may be due in part to issues with measuring the concept of equal opportunities. The existence of a policy is not a good predictor of the practices which will be developed (Hoque and Noon, 2004). Further research could seek to identify whether those workplaces which have adopted equality practices, or whether the extent to which such practices have been adopted is associated with the provision of FWA options. In addition to the lack of effect on the equal opportunities indicator, the evidence of some workplaces choosing to be selective of the degree to which policies are applied across the workforce provides weak support to arguments which note the potential for social justice and equality arguments around flexibility to be subordinated to the business case (Fleetwood, 2007b).

The high performance perspective finds only partial support. Using the extent to which workplaces have adopted a range of practices was not a significant predictor of provision of flexibility. Using the Ability, Motivation, Opportunity (AMO) framework of HPWP is a better predictor of provision, as no effects are observed when considering HPWPs as one entity, but significant effects are observed when the AMO framework is disaggregated. The results nevertheless run contrary to expectations; Guest and Conway (2007) and Wu (2011) would suggest that that the intention of introducing such policies would be to improve motivation and commitment, and accordingly it would suggest that those bundles would emerge as the strongest predictors of FWA provision. It is also surprising that the opportunity bundle (encompassing items which may be considered inimical to FWAs such as team working (White et al, 2003; Blair-Loy and Wharton, 2004; Fleming and Spicer (2004)) emerges as a significant predictor of all types of flexibility given the predictions that those workplaces which have adopted HPWPs are predicted to be less likely to have policies for hours flexibility and location flexibility (White et al, 2003).

Although the organizational adaptive perspective appears to offer partial means of explaining patterns of FWA provision, concerns about whether some of the indicators align to the concepts which they purport to be measuring suggest some room for alternative explanation, some of which are advanced above. The consequence of this is that it is difficult to come to definitive conclusions about the motivations for employers in providing flexible working. Moreover, as Wood et al (2003) note, the lack of clear boundaries between the theories make analytical clarity more challenging. For example, proportion of female employees could be taken to represent both the organizational adaptive and the situational perspectives. The hypothesis that employers make choices when faced with institutional pressure is one which has some appeal; rather than jettisoning these theories about how employers respond, researchers might consider different approaches to data collection such as qualitative accounts of decision making processes.

Are different employer patterns apparent for providing different FWA options?

As noted the picture of the association of predictors with the provision of FWAs was found to be somewhat inconsistent, apart from the strong institutional effect of size on all types of provision. What is interesting is that the sorts of policies which can be accessed by the employee without direct penalty, are more likely to be associated with workforce characteristics relating to advantage. Certainly flexible location is positively associated with the proportion of managerial employees and the proportion of employees with a university degree, but negatively associated with the proportion of female employees. This provides stronger evidence for the claims of an organizational adaptive perspective as outlined by Ingram and Simons (1995) in their discussion of important exchange partners. In this account organizations respond to institutional and societal[31] pressures to provide FW options in order to secure the loyalty and commitment of their higher value employees.

How has recession affected the provision of different FWA options?

The research set out to test whether the recession had brought about change in the provision of FWAs. On the one hand, Lewis et al. (2017a; 2017b) have argued that due to recessionary pressures and policies of austerity which have affected the public sector more adversely than the private sector, that employers might seek to promote flexible working as a means of reducing costs for the business, for example by encouraging staff to work from home and thus having to maintain less office space. On the other hand, Sweet et al. (2014) have provided evidence of reduced provision of flexibility for US private sector firms following recession. Lewis et al. (2017a; 2017b) argue that notions of flexibility can be subverted so that provision of flexibility is a strategic tool used by management, and that this is a relatively recent development.

The findings presented in chapter four provide qualified evidence that private sector workplaces may be more likely to withdraw provision in times of greater economic uncertainty, even if the

[31] Part of the societal pressure to provide FWAs may result from benchmarking against competitors.

workplaces themselves have not been adversely affected by the recession. This would seem to support previous findings which have considered changes in the shadow of recession in the private sector (Sweet et al, 2014). As noted above, due to the time gap between the two waves and the issues with unobserved confounders in panel analysis, these findings in relation to recessionary effects must be treated with some caution.

No evidence was presented which supported the premise that flexibility can be used as a strategic measure to reduce costs in times of uncertainty (see Lewis et al., 2017a) particularly through facilitating more employees working remotely. This might be because the public sector already has a relatively high level of FWA provision, so therefore rather than increasing the coverage of policies, attempts to promote use would likely be more effective, and as outlined above, it is not possible to map changes in use within panel workplaces due to how WERS employee sampling operates.

Although there is little evidence to suggest more strategic approaches, this may be because the analysis was only able to capture provision in the sense of the formal policy for flexibility being in place. It is known that formal policy may not translate unproblematically into use, given issues discussed in chapter two about rationing provision, or how line managers may respond to requests (Daverth et al., 2016; Wilkinson et al, 2017). While work has tended to look at line managers as impediments to FW, it could equally be the case that line managers are tasked with promoting use of FWAs in order to meet organizational strategic priorities.

Drawing these points together, it suggests that further research into the question of whether employers are using flexibility as a strategic tool could focus on levels of use, or the way in which processes operate within the workplace to encourage or discourage employees use of FWA options. Patterns of use at public sector workplaces, if they could be accessed, and / or qualitative studies into strategic decision-making processes would give greater insight into such questions of the public sector's response to austerity and would shed greater light on relationships between employer interests and flexibility.

Perceived Accessibility and use of flexible working

Relationship between perceived accessibility and use of flexible options and workforce characteristics

The most significant finding from the results presented in chapter five is the observation of divergent patterns of use along gender lines. Female employees and employees with dependent children are both more likely to perceive all options to be accessible and are also more likely to use all types of flexibility compared with their counterparts. Looking at the regressions split by gender reveals that the dependent children variable is a significant predictor of use of hours flexibility for women but it is not for men. The coefficient for women on hours use suggests that female employees are much more likely to use hours flexibility compared with their male counterparts and, coupled with the differential effects by gender on the dependent children variable, points to a group of female employees who have "chosen", though of course the "choice" is constrained (Crompton, 2002; Crompton and Harris, 1998), to work in ways which reinforce existing gender structures based on their greater household contribution (Acker, 1990). Given the lack of reversibility of flexibility (Hegeswich, 2009), this may be indicative of a more permanent marginalization in the labour market.

In addition to the findings indicating higher use of all FW policies for women, they also suggest use of other FW types (ones which do not attract direct penalties) as being associated with more advantaged labour market positions. This effect is seen most obviously when the results for flexible location are considered. Furthermore the findings on location flexibility show similar patterns for male and female employees. This indicates that although there are some women who are located in marginalized positions in the labour market, there are others for whom the experience may be quite different. Results therefore indicate heterogeneity of work arrangements between different groups of women as well as between men and women.

Although this work has shown evidence of a gendered effect in the use of FWAs, it must be considered that this thesis uses data from 2011, and thus before the right to request was extended to all employees, rather than being restricted to only those with care responsibilities for either children or adults. The question of the degree to which these patterns of perceived accessibility and use remain in place following the extension of the right to request is something which merits attention with more up to date data. It should be noted however that for workplaces which did have policies regarding the different flexible options, that the limited evidence indicates that in the vast majority of these workplaces the managerial respondent indicated that the option was available across the entire workforce. Two points emerge from this. First, given the data and the method employed here, it is not possible to examine the processes at the workplace level. It is therefore not known if the patterns which emerge are the result of choices made by individuals or a consequence of restrictions imposed at the workplace level. Second, it would be instructive to have information on the degree to which flexible location policies are made available across the workforce, given the different patterning associated with its use.

Relationship between flexibility and privilege

The findings suggest that use of certain types of flexibility is associated with occupying a more privileged position in the workforce. Confirming the findings of Swanberg et al. (2005) and of Blake-Beard et al (2010) it is noted that access to and use of flexible location in particular is associated with higher status in the workplace. Although female employees are more likely than male employees to use this option, the significant predictors of use of this option are white, managerial, highly paid staff. The results align with Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) position that the working from home option also allows for a degree of schedule flexibility about when the work is done. It is an option which is associated with higher trust, and therefore the association with more privileged employees is to be expected.

What is the relationship between managerial / professional employees and a) perceived accessibility and b) use of different FWA options?

This question emerges from accounts by authors such as Blair-Loy (2009) and Kossek et al. (2010) who argue that managers may feel constraints in their use of policies either because of high job demands which have become normalized for managers (see also McCann et al., 2008) or that flexibility is simply incompatible with management positions (Kossek et al., 2016). There is no evidence of a gap between perceived accessibility and use for managers for the different FW options. At least there is no evidence of the gap between managers' perceived accessibility and use of the different options being greater than non-managers. If this were the case, it would be expected that there would be significant positive effects of managers believing the option to be accessible and negative or insignificant effects for use. As it is, the patterns of perceived accessibility for managers in relation to the different options, mirror the patterns for use.

Managers are more likely to make use of the working from home (flexible location) option, whereas they are no more likely to make use of the other options; indeed there is weak evidence to suggest that female managers are less likely to use schedule flexibility compared with other female employees.

To what extent does workplace provision of flexibility influence employees' perceptions of accessibility and use of policies?

There is strong evidence to suggest that written policy is associated with perceived accessibility and use of location and hours flexibility; the sorts of flexibility which are more likely to require formal sign off. For schedule flexibility, which may be more easily agreed informally, the existence of a workplace policy is not associated with either higher use or perceived accessibility. This may indicate a preference for informality wherever possible.

It was suggested that access to flexibility would be affected by whether or not there was a policy at the workplace and would result in more equal access to flexible options. The question of whether the existence of policy results in more equal access to FWA options is difficult to answer given the method employed here, given that nothing is known about proportions of, or the relative success of requests. Policy is unlikely to circumvent the importance of the line manager so the biases suggested by Wilkinson et al., (2017) and Daverth et al., (2016) are likely to still be in evidence. It should also be noted that the existence of the policy at the workplace level does not necessarily mean that someone using an FWA has made a formal request, nor equally is it the case that in the absence of a policy there is not a formal agreement via the right to request, for instance. The evidence does show different patterns of use where there is policy compared to where there is not. For example female workers are more likely than male workers to use the flexible location option than male workers where there is a workplace policy in place. Similarly there is some evidence which indicates that policy is more likely to be helpful for traditionally marginalized labour market groups accessing the option. Those with a disability and those with dependent children are more likely to use flexible location where there is a policy in place.

Effects on individual level outcomes

Goodness of fit for outcome models

As discussed in chapter three measures of goodness of fit were used for the mixed linear models to try to provide some indication of the extent to which the theoretical perspectives account for the observed variation in the dependent variables. Snijders and Bosker (1994, 1999) and Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) measures of R squared were used.

Given that the measures of goodness of fit used above are not generally reported for linear mixed models, it is difficult to assess what might generally be a high or low value on the different measures. For all of the regressions reported in chapters five and six these measures indicate that the models explain more variance at the workplace level than at the individual level.

It should be noted though that generally when employee outcomes are used as dependent variables for single level models, that the pseudo R squared values are generally low. For example, Wheatley (2017) provides estimates for job, life and leisure time satisfaction using ordered logit analysis and the largest R squared value for the six regressions presented is 0.029. The relatively low values for R squared are not necessarily a problem for the analysis especially when the principal intention of running the models is to estimate different effects among the predictor variables.

The various regressions reported in chapter six showed the relationships between use and accessibility of FWA options and the outcomes of job satisfaction, affective commitment, work-related anxiety and WLB.

Regressions which were specified for the effect of FW on the two forms of worklife conflict failed to show any significant effect, thus indicating that those who use WLB policies have the same conflict outcomes as those who do not. As discussed above, this does not necessarily point to lack of impact of using FWAs. Unlike for outcomes such as job satisfaction, FWAs are designed to help employees achieve better WLB, and it is implicit that these workers are experiencing higher than average conflict in the first instance. It would not necessarily be expected that making use of flexibility would then reduce levels of conflict to below that of those not using flexible options.

The relationship between outcomes and use of FWA options

The debates above centre on whether FW options need to be used for employees to derive benefit from them. More positive outcomes may be a result of social exchange (Casper and Harris, 2008); the employee receives certain treatment from the employer and therefore responds more positively on a range of outcome variables. Alternatively, signalling theories would suggest that it is not the use of the options per se which would be the predictors of outcomes, but the idea that options would be available to the employee if they were needed.

Evidence of outcomes (particularly attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment) being associated with perceived accessibility to FWA options as well as their actual use is often taken to be supportive of signalling theories (e.g. Chen and Fulmer, 2018; Butts et al., 2013)

Social exchange explanations tend to concentrate on the actual use of the policy, and signalling theory develops this idea to argue that use of the option may not be as important as believing it to be available if needed. However, one of the key tenets of signalling theory in management literature is that it is used to communicate where parties have different access to information (Connelly, et al., 2011) and the crucial aspect of its operation is how the one party chooses to communicate the information and how the other party chooses to interpret it. In the simplest model of communication in a business, the information is communicated to employees from management (i.e. a one to many form of communication) and the recipient chooses how to interpret the signal (ibid).

Recent work has shown that where there are strong signals from management and where there is consensus about the reasons for their implementation, then this is associated with positive employee outcomes on attitudinal measures (Guest et al., 2020). This naturally raises questions of what happens when signals are weak, ambiguous, misunderstood or even subverted within the organization. For example, the literature in chapter two has pointed to the potential role of the line manager in interpreting the directives and policies and chapter six has highlighted some differential effects by outcome in the context of a perceived lack of managerial support.

Moreover , and especially in the context of examining outcomes from FWA options, it would be a mistake to concentrate solely on the workplace without wider reference to how signals within the workplace might be interpreted given wider social context about both the reasons employers might offer flexibility, and the normative assumptions employees might hold about who flexibility is for (Chung, 2017).

For flexible working, employers may implement the policy as a means to improve performance at the workplace and therefore have implicitly designed the policy with the intention of offering it only to high performing or high value employees. This may contrast with messages (e.g. from the Government) about how FWAs are primarily about achieving better WLB (rather than improving organizational performance).

A challenging research agenda could seek to explore the operations of FW in workplaces examining the messages which are given by managers and how they are interpreted by employees. Some small scale qualitative work might be the most appropriate method for doing this and would enable employees to elaborate on the relative importance of wider social norms on how they interpret messages from managers.

The findings in chapter six provide insight into the relationship between signalling and social exchange. A number of regressions were presented where the signalling effect of the option (i.e. where the option was perceived to be accessible but not used) had a larger effect on the outcome variable than the exchange effect (i.e. where the option was used), mirroring earlier findings by Butts et al. (2013). This may suggest that the expectation of how flexibility might operate is not matched by the experience which employees face when actually trying to make flexibility work for them, either because managers fail to keep their side of the bargain (Clarke and Holdsworth, 2017), or that there are other issues in implementing the chosen FWA such difficulties relating to boundary permeability (Fleming and Spicer, 2004; Duxbury et al, 2014). Evidence from Wheatley (2017) suggests that some of the positive effects on job satisfaction which result from flexible working may attenuate over time, though this may not only be a phenomenon observed in those working flexibly.

The findings suggest that use of flexible hours is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction for male employees, whereas the same effect is not observed for female employees. Social exchange theory could help understand this finding. As Chen and Fulmer (2017) note, employees tend to view their own rewards relative to what others in the organization are receiving, and if some male

employees are receiving "perks" which other male employees are not, then there is more likely to be a positive effect. It could also be indicative of a relatively free choice for those male employees who use the reduced hours options, compared to more constrained choices for female employees (Wheatley, 2017).

The relationships between work and family conflict (in both directions) and work-related anxiety could be explored in more detail in further research. The findings presented here suggest that there is no difference on these measures between users of the flexible options and non-users.

What this measure fails to capture is whether individuals who have taken up use of flexible working practices have experienced a reduction in their levels of conflict or anxiety. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the data it cannot be established whether users of the policies experienced higher levels of conflict before taking up the policy. Examining whether take up reduces conflict would require individual level panel data. Wheatley (2017), as discussed, does use panel data to examine relationships between forms of flexible working and "satisfaction with life" and "satisfaction with leisure", though these indicators may not fully capture conflict and may in part reflect individual expectations in addition to their experienced reality, as opposed to the more "objective" way in which WERS asks about work and family conflict (see chapter three).

Implications for future work

The findings in this thesis are of interest to various actors in the labour market. For employees, the findings suggest that the different forms of flexibility have different effects on the outcome measures presented. Employees who are considering adopting a FWA may wish to consider what outcomes they want to achieve in order to select the option most appropriate for their circumstances. For employers and those in human resources roles within organizations the findings could prompt reflection on the degree to which employees are able to access the policies which are being provided.

This research is extremely timely and has wider relevance as employers and employees consider how the events around the global Covid-19 pandemic which shaped 2020 will affect future forms of work organization. The data were taken from 2011 which was before the right to request flexible working was extended to all employees. Therefore there is value in reconsidering the nature of provision and options in light of this. There are questions to be answered about whether the positive effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment will still be observed as larger proportions of the workforce are, at least in theory, able to ask for flexibility. Social exchange theories might be taken to imply that these effects would disappear with greater access and the relatively privileged position of those who are permitted flexibility diminishes. There are also questions to be answered about whether discourses of flexibility have moved beyond equating flexibility with female employees with caring responsibilities.

Moreover the issue of working from home has been thrown into sharp relief by the events of 2020. There has been renewed interest in the policy (e.g. Acas, 2021) and academic communities (e.g. Rofcanin and Anand, 2020) and some of the questions addressed in this thesis should be readdressed for those employees who have been forced to work from home. As noted in chapter two, given the nature of data collection, the thesis necessarily assumes that the employees using the flexible working options have made the positive choice to work flexibly, though it is appreciated that these choices may be constrained.

There will be a need to investigate how employers respond in a post-covid world, and whether employers are more likely to push or insist on working from home. The way this might work will merit attention from the point of view of the experiences of employees, the nature of the way in which organizations organize their production including how knowledge is shared in a virtual world and the way in which employers choose to manage the employment relationship.

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Appendix A Use / perceived accessibility split by gender

Table 5.1a Use of flexible hours – gender split

	Flexible hours use (All)	Flexible hours use (Male employees)	Flexible hours use (Female employees)
female	0.110 (0.015)***		
White	-0.073 (0.038)*	-0.141 (0.060)**	-0.015 (0.045)
Living with a partner	-0.009 (0.016)	-0.020 (0.024)	0.001 (0.021)
Union member	0.012 (0.124)	-0.002 (0.020)	0.025 (0.026)
Degree educated	0.028 (0.017)*	0.011 (0.019)	0.038 (0.025)
Managerial / professional	-0.002 (0.016)	-0.003 (0.019)	0.003 (0.027)
Care responsibility	0.025 (0.019)	0.061 (0.029)**	0.004 (0.024)
Dependent children	0.094 (0.016)***	0.011 (0.020)	0.016 (0.023)***
Disability	-0.002 (0.926)	0.024 (0.034)	-0.014 (0.035)
Long hours culture	0.014 (0.015)	0.003 (0.019)	0.027 (0.021)
Managerial support	0.049 (0.013)***	0.036 (0.013)***	0.058 (0.020)***
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.154 (0.016)***	-0.110 (0.022)***	-0.173 (0.022)***
high	-0.182 (0.023)***	-0.110 (0.28)***	-0.212 (0.038)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.053 (0.022)**	0.020 (0.024)	0.078 (0.032)**
HPWPs	-0.003 (0.063)	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.004)
Total FWAs provided	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.005 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.007)
N	12,090	5,244	6,846

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible hours use is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy and 0 if the policy is not available or is available and not used.

Table 5.2a Use of flexible schedule – gender split

	Flexible schedule use (All)	Flexible schedule use Male employees	Flexible schedule Female employees
female	0.056 (0.016)***		
White	-0.045 (0.029)	-0.081 (0.045)*	0.006 (0.036)
Living with a partner	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.044 (0.024)*	0.011 (0.018)
Union member	-0.024 (0.017)	-0.004 (0.028)	-0.027 (0.024)

Degree educated	0.058 (0.180)***	0.048 (0.027)*	0.063 (0.022)***
Managerial / professional	-0.023 (0.021)	0.006 (0.028)	-0.050 (0.028)*
Care responsibility	0.031 (0.018)*	0.032 (0.028)	0.034 (0.022)
Dependent children	0.096 (0.018)***	0.087 (0.025)***	0.109 (0.025)***
Disability	-0.036 (0.025)	0.049 (0.039)	-0.081 (0.030)***
Long hours culture	0.008 (0.014)	0.004 (0.020)	0.003 (0.020)
Managerial support	0.105 (0.013)***	0.088 (0.021)***	0.118 (0.019)***
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.005 (0.018)	-0.012 (0.028)	0.042 (0.024)*
high	0.009 (0.027)	0.050 (0.040)	-0.015 (0.037)
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.040 (0.030)	0.002 (0.035)	0.087 (0.039)**
HPWPs	-0.004 (0.004)	0.000 (0.004)	-0.010 (0.005)*
Total FWAs provided	0.024 (0.009)***	0.035 (0.009)***	0.015 (0.012)
N	15,361	6,700	8,661

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible schedule use is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy and 0 if the policy is not available or is available and not used.

Table 5.3a - Use of flexible location – gender split

	Flexible location use (All)	Flexible location use Male employees	Flexible location use Female employees
female	0.037 (0.012)***		
White	0.039 (0.019)**	0.057 (0.031)*	0.032 (0.024)
Living with a partner	0.010 (0.012)	0.008 (0.020)	0.008 (0.014)
Union member	-0.020 (0.014)	0.012 (0.019)	-0.043 (0.018)**
Degree educated	0.031 (0.014)**	0.015 (0.021)	0.039 (0.019)**
Managerial / professional	0.074 (0.019)***	0.073 (0.024)***	0.075 (0.025)***
Care responsibility	0.020 (0.126)	-0.027 (0.023)	-0.014 (0.013)
Dependent children	0.038 (0.013)***	0.025 (0.019)	0.051 (0.018)***
Disability	0.006 (0.016)	0.025 (0.031)	-0.010 (0.016)
Long hours culture	-0.001 (0.011)	-0.008 (0.015)	-0.000 (0.015)
Managerial support	0.045 (0.009)***	0.041 (0.014)***	0.053 (0.011)***
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	0.033 (0.016)**	0.017 (0.020)	0.058 (0.021)***
high	0.283 (0.028)***	0.289 (0.037)***	0.287 (0.038)***

Policy for the type of flexibility	0.167 (0.019)***	0.172 (0.027)***	0.160 (0.023)***
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.003)
Total FWAs provided	0.002 (0.005)	0.003 (0.007)	0.002 (0.006)
N	15,235	6,618	8,617

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible location use is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy and 0 if the policy is not available or is available and not used.

Table 5.4a Availability of flexible hours – gender split

	Flexible hours available (All)	Flexible hours available Male employees	Flexible hours available Female employees
female	0.148 (0.019)***		
White	-0.080 (0.036)**	-0.125 (0.055)**	-0.023 (0.039)
Living with a partner	-0.010 (0.019)	-0.045 (0.029)	0.011 (0.025)
Union member	0.042 (0.021)**	0.055 (0.030)*	0.044 (0.028)
Degree educated	0.066 (0.018)***	0.062 (0.029)**	0.063 (0.026)**
Managerial / professional	0.010 (0.021)	0.010 (0.031)	0.019 (0.028)
Care responsibility	-0.001 (0.021)	0.014 (0.034)	-0.019 (0.027)
Dependent children	0.083 (0.019)***	0.015 (0.026)	0.138 (0.025)***
Disability	-0.053 (0.028)*	-0.038 (0.041)	-0.061 (0.036)*
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.014 (0.020)***	-0.132 (0.030)***	-0.121 (0.027)***
high	-0.091 (0.029)***	-0.032 (0.042)	-0.127 (0.047)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.089 (0.028)***	-0.001 (0.036)	0.137 (0.038)***
HPWPs	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.005)
Total FWAs provided	0.014 (0.007)**	0.023 (0.009)**	0.011 (0.008)
N	13,450	5,789	7,661

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible hours availability is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy, or believes it to be available but does not use it, and 0 if the policy is not available.

Table 5.5a Availability of flexible schedule – gender split

	Flexible schedule available (All)	Flexible schedule available Male employees	Flexible schedule available Female employees
female	0.079 (0.019)***		
White	-0.108 (0.038)***	-0.102 (0.059)*	-0.086 (0.043)**
Living with a partner	0.009 (0.177)	-0.021 (0.029)	0.040 (0.022)*
Union member	-0.023 (0.019)	0.026 (0.038)	-0.047 (0.026)*
Degree educated	0.033 (0.019)*	0.071 (0.029)**	0.007 (0.026)
Managerial / professional	0.034 (0.023)	0.053 (0.033)	0.036 (0.032)
Care responsibility	-0.006 (0.020)	0.004 (0.030)	0.002 (0.025)
Dependent children	0.089 (0.019)***	0.046 (0.027)*	0.111 (0.026)***
Disability	-0.009 (0.026)	0.033 (0.039)	-0.035 (0.036)
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	-0.039 (0.023)	-0.060 (0.035)*	0.035 (0.027)
high	0.049 (0.034)	0.094 (0.048)*	0.018 (0.043)
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.051 (0.040)	-0.010 (0.044)	0.120 (0.049)**
HPWPs	-0.005 (0.005)	0.002 (0.011)	-0.015 (0.007)**
Total FWAs provided	0.038 (0.011)***	0.044 (0.011)***	0.027 (0.014)**
N	13,111	5,830	7,281

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible schedule availability is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy, or believes it to be available but does not use it, and 0 if the policy is not available.

Table 5.6a Availability of flexible location – gender split

	Flexible location available (All)	Flexible location available Male employees	Flexible location available Female employees
female	0.026 (0.014)*		
White	0.032 (0.019)**	0.055 (0.044)	0.028 (0.025)
Living with a partner	0.000 (0.012)	-0.012 (0.021)	0.007 (0.015)
Union member	-0.023 (0.017)	0.017 (0.031)	-0.051 (0.019)***

Degree educated	0.051 (0.016)***	0.054 (0.025)**	0.052 (0.018)***
Managerial / professional	0.101 (0.021)***	0.121 (0.029)***	0.082 (0.026)***
Care responsibility	-0.017 (0.016)	-0.012 (0.031)	-0.022 (0.015)
Dependent children	0.052 (0.014)***	0.035 (0.021)*	0.076 (0.018)***
Disability	0.002 (0.019)	0.054 (0.036)	-0.032 (0.019)*
Pay (low ref)			
Medium	0.065	0.057 (0.023)**	0.096 (0.022)***
high	0.313	0.334 (0.041)***	0.326 (0.040)***
Policy for the type of flexibility	0.201 (0.022)***	0.189 (0.031)***	0.208 (0.027)***
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.003)	0.000 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.004)
Total FWAs provided	0.005 (0.005)	0.004 (0.008)	0.008 0.006)
N	15,590	6,778	8,812

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, public / private sector, trade union recognition, employee age, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Flexible location availability is coded 1 if the employee uses the policy, or believes it to be available but does not use it, and 0 if the policy is not available.

Appendix B Outcome models without controls

	Satisfaction	Commitment	Work-related anxiety	Family to work conflict	Work to family conflict
flexible hours used	0.029 (0.027)	0.094 (0.031)***	0.122 (0.039)***	0.049 (0.033)	-0.183 (0.043)***
flexible schedule used	0.126 (0.025)***	0.089 (0.031)***	0.050 (0.037)	-0.007 (0.032)	-0.154 (0.043)***
flexible location used	0.264 (0.035)***	0.313 (0.039)***	0.016 (0.038)	-0.008 (0.041)	0.173 (0.060)***
N	15,412	15,414	15,399	15,422	15,451
flexible hours perceived accessible or used	0.112 (0.026)***	0.115 (0.031)***	0.170 (0.031)***	-0.001 (0.028)	-0.092 (0.041)**
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used	0.260 (0.027)***	0.184 (0.033)***	0.116 (0.033)***	-0.008 (0.030)	-0.160 (0.043)***
flexible location available or used	0.258 (0.031)***	0.302 (0.035)***	-0.035 (0.034)	0.016 (0.036)	0.170 (0.053)***
N	14,946	14,949	14,936	14,954	14,982
flexible hours not available					
flexible hours used	0.064 (0.031)*	0.113 (0.036)***	0.166 (0.038)***	0.058 (0.036)	-0.143 (0.049)***
flexible hours perceived accessible	0.129 (0.030)***	0.103 (0.035)***	0.167 (0.036)***	-0.050 (0.033)	-0.060 (0.049)
flexible schedule not available					
flexible schedule used	0.198 (0.027)***	0.128 (0.035)***	0.089 (0.037)**	-0.008 (0.033)	-0.180 (0.049)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible	0.361 (0.035)***	0.280 (0.042)***	0.164 (0.041)***	0.007 (0.045)	-0.134 (0.057)**
flexible location not available					

flexible location used	0.263 (0.036)***	0.315 (0.041)***	-0.021 (0.039)	-0.011 (0.041)	0.170 (0.064)***
flexible location perceived accessible	0.264 (0.042)***	0.292 (0.046)***	-0.057 (0.053)	0.089 (0.060)	0.171 (0.070)**
N	14,946	14,949	14,936	14,954	14,982

Appendix C Effects of FWAs on employee level outcomes split by gender

Table 6.1a Effects of Flexible working on job satisfaction: Male employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	-0.025 (0.079)	-0.067 (0.094)	-0.104 (0.092)	-0.010 (0.090)
Living with a partner	0.003 (0.043)	0.020 (0.047)	0.048 (0.049)	0.046 (0.049)
Union member	-0.066 (0.051)	-0.111 (0.060)*	-0.121 (0.056)**	-0.122 (0.056)**
Degree educated	-0.090 (0.035)**	-0.064 (0.038)*	-0.097 (0.037)***	-0.096 (0.037)***
Managerial / professional	0.071 (0.043)	0.076 (0.048)	0.072 (0.046)	0.067 (0.046)
Care responsibility	-0.191 (0.051)***	-0.143 (0.057)**	-0.142 (0.056)**	-0.145 (0.056)***
Dependent children	0.073 (0.037)**	-0.000 (0.041)	-0.010 (0.039)	-0.007 (0.038)
Disability	-0.162 (0.080)**	-0.133 (0.064)	-0.137 (0.069)**	-0.139 (0.069)**
Long hours culture	-0.033 (0.037)	0.012 (0.041)	0.018 (0.041)	0.018 (0.041)
Managerial support	0.502 (0.038)***	0.437 (0.035)***	0.393 (0.035)	0.393 (0.035)
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.196 (0.051)***	0.183 (0.050)***	0.185 (0.052)***	0.190 (0.051)***
high	0.356 (0.059)***	0.330 (0.062)***	0.290 (0.063)***	0.296 (0.063)***
flexible hours used		0.203 (0.067)***		
flexible schedule used		0.061 (0.038)		
flexible location used		0.143 (0.052)***		

flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.199 (0.041)***	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.159 (0.041)***	
flexible location available or used			0.146 (0.046)***	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.263 (0.074)***
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.168 (0.041)***
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.119 (0.042)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.225 (0.056)***
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.151 (0.053)***
flexible location perceived accessible				0.152 (0.061)**
Private sector	0.091 (0.064)	0.109 (0.071)	0.127 (0.074)*	0.126 (0.074)*
HPWPs	-0.008 (0.007)	-0.007 (0.008)	-0.009 (0.008)	-0.009 (0.008)

Total FWAs provided	0.017 (0.012)	0.015 (0.013)	0.009 (0.013)	0.011 (0.013)
N	7,007	5,117	5,032	5,032

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Job satisfaction is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

Table 6.2a Effects of Flexible working on organizational commitment: Male employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female				
White	-0.173 (0.080)**	-0.182 (0.099)*	-0.182 (0.101)*	-0.179 (0.099)*
Living with a partner	-0.001 (0.045)	0.018 (0.053)	0.045 (0.053)	0.043 (0.053)
Union member	-0.062 (0.047)	-0.072 (0.054)	-0.096 (0.055)*	-0.099 (0.054)*
Degree educated	-0.073 (0.041)**	-0.053 (0.049)	-0.067 (0.047)	-0.066 (0.047)
Managerial / professional	0.151 (0.046)***	0.110 (0.053)	0.094 (0.052)*	0.087 (0.052)*
Care responsibility	-0.061 (0.048)	-0.057 (0.061)	-0.092 (0.060)	-0.092 (0.059)
Dependent children	0.070 (0.043)*	0.009 (0.051)	0.011 (0.048)	0.016 (0.048)
Disability	-0.053 (0.071)	-0.065 (0.084)	0.006 (0.073)	0.008 (0.074)
Long hours culture	0.014 (0.040)	0.037 (0.047)	0.050 (0.048)	0.051 (0.048)
Managerial support	0.565 (0.040)***	0.557 (0.045)***	0.516 (0.046)***	0.512 (0.046)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.120 (0.051)**	0.162 (0.061)***	0.157 (0.062)**	0.161 (0.062)***

high	0.326 (0.064)***	0.330 (0.072)***	0.262 (0.070)***	0.268 (0.070)
flexible hours used		0.174 (0.065)***		
flexible schedule used		0.029 (0.051)		
flexible location used		0.185 (0.070)***		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.152 (0.047)***	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.127 (0.059)**	
flexible location available or used			0.212 (0.061)***	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.184 (0.073)**
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.125 (0.049)**
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.063 (0.061)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.235 (0.074)***
flexible location not available				

flexible location used				0.206 (0.069)***
flexible location perceived accessible				0.245 (0.072)***
Private sector	0.123 (0.072)*	0.161 (0.078)**	0.187 (0.078)**	0.186 (0.078)**
HPWPs	-0.005 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.011)
Total FWAs provided	0.024 (0.014)*	0.018 (0.015)	0.010 (0.015)	0.013 (0.015)
N	7,008	5,117	5,033	5,033

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Employee commitment is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of organizational commitment.

Table 6.3a Effects of Flexible working on work related anxiety: Male Employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	0.280 (0.158)*	0.268 (0.179)	0.041 (0.094)	0.034 (0.095)
Living with a partner	-0.008 (0.048)	-0.017 (0.054)	-0.030 (0.054)	-0.032 (0.054)
Union member	-0.118 (0.056)**	-0.149 (0.068)**	-0.184 (0.67)***	-0.187 (0.066)***
Degree educated	-0.093 (0.046)**	-0.015 (0.048)	-0.027 (0.046)	-0.026 (0.046)
Managerial / professional	-0.087 (0.050)	-0.072 (0.052)	-0.075 (0.050)	-0.077 (0.050)
Care responsibility	-0.176 (0.061)***	-0.112 (0.066)*	-0.167 (0.062)	-0.159 (0.062)**
Dependent children	-0.005 (0.052)	-0.019 (0.062)	0.019 (0.049)	0.019 (0.049)
Disability	-0.405 (0.104)***	-0.244 (0.098)**	-0.257 (0.093)***	-0.247 (0.093)***

Long hours culture	-0.143 (0.053)***	-0.173 (0.059)***	-0.129 (0.047)***	-0.127 (0.047)***
Managerial support	0.384 (0.048)***	0.346 (0.050)***	0.340 (0.049)***	0.338 (0.049)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.116 (0.065)*	0.099 (0.066)	0.081 (0.064)	0.078 (0.064)
high	0.029 (0.078)	0.008 (0.075)	-0.027 (0.072)	-0.036 (0.072)
flexible hours used		-0.079 (0.128)		
flexible schedule used		-0.064 (0.063)		
flexible location used		0.076 (0.068)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.131 (0.050)***	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			-0.013 (0.052)	
flexible location available or used			0.004 (0.060)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.053 (0.078)
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.0151 (0.057)***
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				-0.031 (0.056)

flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.025 (0.072)
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.019 (0.065)
flexible location perceived accessible				-0.021 (0.092)
Private sector	0.028 (0.079)	0.010 (0.090)	0.021 (0.087)	0.023 (0.088)
HPWPs	0.002 (0.007)	0.000 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)
Total FWAs provided	0.006 (0.014)	0.015 (0.016)	0.002 (0.013)	0.002 (0.013)
N	7,005	5,116	5,031	5,031

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Work-related anxiety is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the highest level of work related anxiety and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with lower levels of work-related anxiety.

Table 6.4a Effects of Flexible working on family to work conflict: Male Employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	-0.166 (0.098)*	-0.190 (0.123)	-0.241 (0.126)*	-0.236 (0.125)*
Living with a partner	-0.026 (0.042)	-0.008 (0.051)	-0.017 (0.052)	-0.015 (0.053)
Union member	0.084 (0.051)*	0.047 (0.058)	0.052 (0.057)	0.052 (0.057)
Degree educated	-0.012 (0.045)	-0.024 (0.056)	-0.052 (0.058)	-0.054 (0.058)

Managerial / professional	-0.063 (0.046)	-0.047 (0.050)	-0.050 (0.050)	-0.051 (0.050)
Care responsibility	0.102 (0.052)*	0.131 (0.059)**	0.145 (0.062)**	0.142 (0.062)**
Dependent children	0.093 (0.041)**	0.105 (0.0511)**	0.114(0.053)**	0.115 (0.052)**
Disability	0.072 (0.063)	0.100 (0.073)	0.115 (0.078)	0.112 (0.078)
Long hours culture	0.109 (0.037)***	0.116 (0.044)***	0.134 (0.044)***	0.134 (0.044)***
Managerial support	-0.084 (0.039)**	-0.099 (0.044)**	-0.097 (0.047)**	-0.097 (0.046)**
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	-0.057 (0.043)	-0.054 (0.053)	-0.086 (0.053)	-0.087 (0.053)
high	0.009 (0.057)	0.018 (0.069)	-0.017 (0.071)	-0.007 (0.071)
flexible hours used		0.033 (0.098)		
flexible schedule used		-0.002 (0.056)		
flexible location used		-0.062 (0.059)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.039 (0.059)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			-0.022 (0.057)	
flexible location available or used			-0.011(0.058)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.057 (0.111)
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.034 (0.061)

flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				-0.026 (0.060)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				-0.019 (0.082)
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				-0.049 (0.062)
flexible location perceived accessible				-0.061 (0.091)
Private sector	-0.113 (0.066)*	-0.174 (0.080)**	-0.135 (0.081)*	-0.135 (0.080)*
HPWPs	0.002 (0.007)	0.005 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)
Total FWAs provided	-0.008 (0.011)	-0.012 (0.014)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.014)
N	6,985	5,107	5,022	5,022

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Family to work conflict is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of conflict and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of conflict.

Table 6.5a Effects of Flexible working on work to family conflict: Male employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	-0.011 (0.103)	-0.118 (0.118)	-0.130 (0.134)	-0.118 (0.132)

Living with a partner	-0.042 (0.062)	-0.085 (0.070)	-0.066 (0.073)	-0.062 (0.072)
Union member	0.072 (0.076)	0.118 (0.090)	0.152 (0.092)*	0.155 (0.092)*
Degree educated	0.067 (0.066)	-0.004 (0.077)	0.020 (0.077)	0.018 (0.077)
Managerial / professional	0.144 (0.075)*	0.159 (0.076)**	0.152 (0.082)*	0.151 (0.081)*
Care responsibility	0.313 (0.090)***	0.205 (0.072)***	0.220 (0.075)***	0.209 (0.075)***
Dependent children	0.183 (0.065)***	0.202 (0.070)***	0.177 (0.073)*	0.178 (0.073)**
Disability	0.225 (0.085)***	0.166 (0.090)*	0.138 (0.094)	0.125 (0.094)
Long hours culture	0.315 (0.050)***	0.379 (0.056)***	0.405 (0.058)***	0.404 (0.057)***
Managerial support	-0.546 (0.052)***	-0.523 (0.056)***	-0.517 (0.057)***	-0.516 (0.057)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	-0.030 (0.073)	0.045 (0.077)	0.017 (0.078)	0.022 (0.079)
high	0.257 (0.010)**	0.366 (0.105)***	0.330 (0.106)***	0.350 (0.107)***
flexible hours used		0.041 (0.109)		
flexible schedule used		-0.050 (0.082)		
flexible location used		-0.038 (0.106)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			-0.039 (0.075)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			-0.038 (0.075)	
flexible location available or used			0.001 (0.083)	

flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.082 (0.118)
flexible hours perceived accessible				-0.076 (0.082)
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				-0.038 (0.090)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				-0.046 (0.094)
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				-0.044 (0.102)
flexible location perceived accessible				0.087 (0.109)
Private sector	0.098 (0.093)	0.028 (0.105)	0.027 (0.107)	0.026 (0.106)
HPWPs	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.002 (0.012)	0.001 (0.012)	0.001 (0.012)
Total FWAs provided	-0.020 (0.016)	-0.028 (0.019)	-0.029 (0.019)	-0.028 (0.019)
N	6,999	5,116	5,031	5,031

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Work to family conflict is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of conflict and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of conflict.

Table 6.1b Effects of Flexible working on job satisfaction: Female employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	0.037 (0.044)	0.020 (0.065)	0.055 (0.060)	0.056 (0.055)
Living with a partner	0.032 (0.029)	0.016 (0.035)	0.016 (0.036)	0.018 (0.036)
Union member	-0.018 (0.030)	-0.029 (0.035)	-0.041 (0.038)	-0.042 (0.037)
Degree educated	-0.128 (0.035)***	-0.123 (0.042)***	-0.127 (0.040)	-0.117 (0.040)***
Managerial / professional	0.153 (0.036)***	0.182 (0.043)***	0.159 (0.043)***	0.152 (0.042)***
Care responsibility	-0.101 (0.034)***	-0.119 (0.040)***	-0.097 (0.039)**	-0.090 (0.038)**
Dependent children	0.047 (0.027)*	0.059 (0.034)	0.049 (0.034)	0.062 (0.033)*
Disability	-0.088 (0.039)**	-0.126 (0.043)***	-0.118 (0.044)***	-0.123 (0.045)***
Long hours culture	-0.044 (0.028)	-0.036 (0.034)	-0.036 (0.032_	-0.036 (0.032)
Managerial support	0.523 (0.030)***	0.527 (0.036)***	0.503 (0.034)***	0.503 (0.034)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.084 (0.038)**	0.078 (0.047)*	0.092 (0.046)**	0.082 (0.046)**
high	0.142 (0.060)**	0.079 (0.067)	0.109 (0.066)*	0.088 (0.068)
flexible hours used		-0.054 (0.043)		
flexible schedule used		0.121 (0.036)***		
flexible location used		0.150 (0.057)***		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.050 (0.039)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.252 (0.035)***	

flexible location available or used			0.131 (0.046)***	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				-0.013 (0.051)
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.081 (0.040)**
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.200 (0.038)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.347 (0.049)***
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.139 (0.054)**
flexible location perceived accessible				0.150 (0.070)**
Private sector	0.038 (0.046)	0.019 (0.060)	0.027 (0.062)	
HPWPs	-0.006 (0.008)	0.000 (0.008)	0.001 (0.008)	
Total FWAs provided	-0.001 (0.010)	-0.008 (0.011)	-0.023 (0.011)**	
N	9,223	6,506	6,273	6,273

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Job satisfaction is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

Table 6.2b Effects of Flexible working on organizational commitment: Female employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
female				
White	-0.032 (0.049)	-0.045 (0.060)	-0.033 (0.063)	-0.033 (0.061)
Living with a partner	-0.013 (0.029)	-0.007 (0.035)	-0.008 (0.035)	-0.007 (0.035)
Union member	0.001 (0.032)	0.014 (0.039)	0.012 (0.040)	0.012 (0.040)
Degree educated	-0.068 (0.037)*	-0.086 (0.048)*	-0.090 (0.048)*	-0.085 (0.047)*
Managerial / professional	0.149 (0.042)***	0.154 (0.046)***	0.134 (0.047)***	0.129 (0.038)***
Care responsibility	-0.015 (0.037)	-0.020 (0.042)	0.001 (0.043)	0.005 (0.043)
Dependent children	0.116 (0.031)***	0.135 (0.037)***	0.122 (0.038)***	0.130 (0.038)***
Disability	0.011 (0.044)	-0.016 (0.050)	0.019 (0.050)	0.016 (0.048)
Long hours culture	-0.015 (0.028)	-0.021 (0.035)	-0.019 (0.036)	-0.019 (0.035)
Managerial support	0.542 (0.032)	0.528 (0.040)***	0.529 (0.040)***	0.528 (0.040)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.044 (0.038)	0.026 (0.046)	0.037 (0.048)	0.030 (0.048)
high	0.058 (0.063)	0.022 (0.073)	0.050 (0.074)	0.035 (0.075)
flexible hours used		-0.055 (0.039)		
flexible schedule used		0.075 (0.041)*		
flexible location used		0.171 (0.054)***		

flexible hours perceived accessible or used			-0.008 (0.041)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.160 (0.042)***	
flexible location available or used			0.147 (0.050)***	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				-0.049 (0.049)
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.013 (0.046)
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.131 (0.046)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.213 (0.054)***
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.158 (0.057)***
flexible location perceived accessible				0.144 (0.074)*
Private sector	0.030 (0.055)	0.007 (0.063)	0.014 (0.065)	0.014 (0.065)
HPWPs	-0.001 (0.007)	0.003 (0.008)	0.005 (0.008)	0.005 (0.008)
Total FWAs provided	0.001 (0.010)	-0.006 (0.011)	-0.018 (0.011)	-0.018 (0.011)

N	9,216	6,499	6,268	6,268

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Employee commitment is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of organizational commitment.

Table 6.3b Effects of Flexible working on work related anxiety: Female Employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	0.159 (0.065)**	0.142 (0.093)	0.167 (0.093)*	0.168 (0.095)**
Living with a partner	0.052 (0.031)*	0.055 (0.037)	0.084 (0.040)**	0.084 (0.040)
Union member	-0.080 (0.042)*	-0.126 (0.044)***	-0.126 (0.048)***	-0.125 (0.047)***
Degree educated	-0.001 (0.036)	-0.021 (0.041)	-0.027 (0.041)	-0.022 (0.01)
Managerial / professional	-0.050 (0.039)	-0.076 (0.046)	-0.098 (0.046)**	-0.103 (0.046)**
Care responsibility	-0.102 (0.039)**	-0.105 (0.042)**	-0.076 (0.043)*	-0.073 (0.043)*
Dependent children	0.132 (0.032)***	0.156 (0.038)***	0.153 (0.039)***	0.155 (0.038)***
Disability	-0.246 (0.057)***	-0.277 (0.065)***	-0.253 (0.064)***	-0.258 (0.063)***
Long hours culture	-0.195 (0.030)***	-0.216 (0.034)***	-0.201 (0.035)***	-0.203 (0.035)***
Managerial support	0.510 (0.036)***	0.473 (0.039)***	0.467 (0.04)***	0.467 (0.040)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	-0.149 (0.039)***	-0.108 (0.043)**	-0.089 (0.044)**	-0.083 (0.045)*
high	-0.215 (0.063)	-0.135 (0.071)*	-0.099 (0.070)	-0.105 (0.071)

flexible hours used		0.073 (0.036)**		
flexible schedule used		0.013 (0.040)		
flexible location used		0.037 (0.049)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.095 (0.040)**	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.074 (0.040)*	
flexible location available or used			-0.022 (0.047)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.109 (0.045)**
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.077 (0.044)*
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.044 (0.045)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.138 (0.050)***
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.007 (0.053)

flexible location perceived accessible				-0.076 (0.080)
Private sector	-0.067 (0.063)	-0.061 (0.064)	-0.049 (0.067)	-0.048 (0.066)
HPWPs	-0.004 (0.007)	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.008)
Total FWAs provided	0.013 (0.010)	0.011 (0.011)	0.008 (0.012)	0.008 (0.012)
N	9,214	6,499	6,268	6,268

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Work-related anxiety is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the highest level of work related anxiety and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with lower levels of work-related anxiety.

Table 6.4 Effects of Flexible working on family to work conflict: Female employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	-0.041 (0.056)	-0.035 (0.076)	-0.027 (0.076)	-0.025 (0.077)
Living with a partner	-0.031 (0.032)	-0.036 (0.037)	-0.058 (0.038)	-0.058 (0.038)
Union member	0.015 (0.049)	0.079 (0.055)	0.077 (0.056)	0.077 (0.056)
Degree educated	-0.083 (0.036)**	-0.059 (0.043)	-0.062 (0.044)	-0.061 (0.043)
Managerial / professional	0.027 (0.042)	0.022 (0.047)	0.022 (0.047)	0.020 (0.047)
Care responsibility	0.181 (0.041)***	0.197 (0.049)***	0.166 (0.049)***	0.166 (0.048)***
Dependent children	0.170 (0.037)***	0.161 (0.044)***	0.170 (0.045)***	0.164 (0.045)***
Disability	0.098 (0.063)	0.097 (0.078)	0.152 (0.078)**	0.151 (0.078)*
Long hours culture	0.145 (0.032)***	0.130 (0.038)***	0.156 (0.038)***	0.152 (0.038)***

Managerial support	-0.142 (0.033)***	-0.144 (0.039)***	-0.135 (0.040)***	-0.135 (0.040)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.030 (0.038)	0.040 (0.048)	0.020 (0.047)	0.033 (0.047)
high	0.029 (0.072)	-0.000 (0.069)	-0.012 (0.069)	0.000 (0.069)
flexible hours used		0.072 (0.048)		
flexible schedule used		-0.009 (0.042)		
flexible location used		0.078 (0.059)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			-0.014 (0.042)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			0.021 (0.038)	
flexible location available or used			0.071 (0.052)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				0.045 (0.056)
flexible hours perceived accessible				-0.060 (0.043)
flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				0.014 (0.042)
flexible schedule perceived accessible				0.048 (0.061)

flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.079 (0.059)
flexible location perceived accessible				0.045 (0.078)
Private sector	0.049 (0.053)	0.061 (0.060)	0.030 (0.058)	0.034 (0.058)
HPWPs	-0.005 (0.007)	0.003 (0.007)	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.001 (0.007)
Total FWAs provided	-0.015 (0.010)	-0.017 (0.011)	-0.021 (0.11)*	-0.021 (0.011)*
N	9,178	6,482	6,250	6,250

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Family to work conflict is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of conflict and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of conflict.

Table 6.5b Effects of Flexible working on work to family conflict: Female employees

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
White	-0.141 (0.082)*	-0.123 (0.089)	-0.103 (0.093)	-0.103 (0.092)
Living with a partner	-0.079 (0.044)*	-0.101 (0.053)*	-0.141 (0.055)**	-0.141 (0.055)***
Union member	0.109 (0.057)*	0.162 (0.064)**	0.144 (0.066)**	0.145 (0.066)**
Degree educated	-0.055 (0.052)	-0.054 (0.061)	-0.047 (0.066)	-0.041 (0.065)
Managerial / professional	0.385 (0.063)***	0.404 (0.069)***	0.422 (0.070)***	0.415 (0.068)***

Care responsibility	0.246 (0.052)***	0.268 (0.060)***	0.245 (0.059)***	0.249 (0.058)***
Dependent children	-0.066 (0.048)	-0.072 (0.055)	-0.061 (0.057)	-0.051 (0.057)
Disability	0.110 (0.070)	0.142 (0.078)*	0.167 (0.077)**	0.162 (0.078)**
Long hours culture	0.420 (0.044)***	0.457 (0.051)***	0.480 (0.055)***	0.482 (0.054)***
Managerial support	-0.495 (0.045)***	-0.472 (0.054)***	-0.447 (0.054)***	-0.446 (0.054)***
Pay (low ref)				
Medium	0.223 (0.055)***	0.230 (0.063)***	0.233 (0.067)***	0.228 (0.068)***
high	0.400 (0.087)***	0.250 (0.096)***	0.268 (0.093)***	0.248 (0.096)***
flexible hours used		-0.070 (0.059)		
flexible schedule used		-0.107 (0.054)**		
flexible location used		0.078 (0.083)		
flexible hours perceived accessible or used			0.034 (0.059)	
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used			-0.097 (0.058)*	
flexible location available or used			0.021 (0.071)	
flexible hours not available				
flexible hours used				-0.012 (0.069)
flexible hours perceived accessible				0.058 (0.067)

flexible schedule not available				
flexible schedule used				-0.129 (0.063)**
flexible schedule perceived accessible				-0.040 (0.084)
flexible location not available				
flexible location used				0.051 (0.084)
flexible location perceived accessible				-0.026 (0.091)
Private sector	0.078 (0.071)	0.029 (0.075)	0.003 (0.076)	0.001 (0.076)
HPWPs	-0.003 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.010)	-0.001 (0.010)
Total FWAs provided	-0.019 (0.013)	-0.022 (0.015)	-0.030 (0.015)*	-0.030 (0.015)*
N	9,198	6,497	6,266	6,266

*, **, *** Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Work to family conflict is measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents the lowest level of conflict and 5 the highest. Positive coefficients are therefore associated with higher levels of conflict.

Appendix D Outcome models in context

Satisfaction	Long Hours Culture	No managerial support	With care responsibilities	With dependent children	Managers / Professional employees
flexible hours used	0.050 (0.049)	0.120 (0.058)**	0.063 (0.081)	0.068 (0.051)	0.051 (0.073)
flexible schedule used	0.106 (0.042)**	0.105 (0.048)**	0.156 (0.057)***	0.082 (0.035)**	0.209 (0.050)***
flexible location used	0.047 (0.058)	0.069 (0.063)	0.118 (0.076)	0.119 (0.050)**	0.025 (0.054)
N	4,917	4,587	3,142	4,757	3,463
flexible hours perceived accessible or used	0.223 (0.039)***	0.061 (0.047)	0.151 (0.069)**	0.227 (0.036)***	0.198 (0.052)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used	0.122 (0.039)***	0.215 (0.046)***	0.207 (0.052)***	0.131 (0.035)***	0.227 (0.048)***
flexible location available or used	0.103 (0.049)**	0.099 (0.051)*	0.185 (0.068)***	0.167 (0.047)***	0.076 (0.048)
	4,761	4,471	2,274	4,576	3,460
flexible hours not available					
flexible hours used	0.174 (0.053)***	0.105 (0.065)	0.125 (0.090)	0.221 (0.052)***	0.168 (0.087)*
flexible hours perceived accessible	0.244 ((0.042)***	0.023 (0.050)	0.168 (0.068)**	0.231 (0.042)***	0.210 (0.050)***
flexible schedule not available					
flexible schedule used	0.113 (0.043)***	0.162 (0.048)***	0.169 (0.057)***	0.097 (0.038)***	0.237 (0.054)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible	0.134 (0.051)***	0.322 (0.064)***	0.314 (0.066)***	0.196 (0.049)***	0.210 (0.066)***

flexible location not available					
flexible location used	0.064 (0.058)	0.086 (0.059)	0.135 (0.074)*	0.147 (0.051)***	0.038 (0.057)
flexible location perceived accessible	0.183 (0.075)**	0.123 (0.080)	0.296 (0.102)***	0.224 (0.064)***	0.161 (0.060)***
N	4,761	4,471	2,274	4,576	3,460

Organizational Commitment	Long Hours Culture	No managerial support	With care responsibilities	With dependent children	Managers / Professional employees
flexible hours used	-0.013 (0.055)	0.017 (0.074)	0.074 (0.066)	0.053 (0.049)	-0.057 (0.061)
flexible schedule used	0.078 (0.046)*	0.098 (0.064)	-0.023 (0.066)	0.029 (0.045)	0.207 (0.055)***
flexible location used	0.100 (0.059)*	0.104 (0.085)	0.136 (0.078)*	0.157 (0.058)***	0.063 (0.062)
	4,916	4,584	2,327	4,754	3,462
flexible hours perceived accessible or used	0.102 (0.050)**	-0.020 (0.059)	0.093 (0.062)	0.136 (0.045)***	0.092 (0.056)
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used	0.079 (0.051)	0.170 (0.065)***	0.031 (0.062)	0.101 (0.048)**	0.228 (0.058)***
flexible location available or used	0.158 (0.059)***	0.179 (0.070)**	0.210 (0.070)***	0.177 (0.054)***	0.130 (0.058)**
	4,761	4,468	2,273	4,573	3,460
flexible hours not available					
flexible hours used	0.027 (0.066)	-0.013 (0.082)	0.119 (0.074)	0.126 (0.056)**	-0.001 (0.072)

flexible hours perceived accessible	0.136 (0.053)**	-0.034 (0.065)	0.059 (0.068)	0.139 (0.051)***	0.130 (0.059)**
flexible schedule not available					
flexible schedule used	0.066 (0.052)	0.122 (0.069)*	-0.020 (0.068)	0.050 (0.053)	0.234 (0.065)***
flexible schedule perceived accessible	0.104 (0.068)	0.266 (0.094)***	0.174 (0.078)**	0.201 (0.060)***	0.212 (0.069)***
flexible location not available					
flexible location used	0.122 (0.065)*	0.141 (0.079)*	0.153 (0.079)*	0.172 (0.060)***	0.092 (0.065)
flexible location perceived accessible	0.233 (0.077)***	0.272 (0.093)***	0.328 (0.086)***	0.198 (0.071)***	0.206 (0.068)***
	4,761	4,468	2,273	4,573	3,460

Work related anxiety	Long Hours Culture	No managerial support	With care responsibilities	With dependent children	Managers / Professional employees
flexible hours used	0.059 (0.085)	0.066 (0.087)	0.110 (0.070)	-0.032 (0.096)	0.096 (0.060)
flexible schedule used	-0.033 (0.066)	0.057 (0.067)	0.011 (0.068)	-0.058 (0.059)	0.008 (0.049)
flexible location used	0.011 (0.066)	-0.039 (0.100)	-0.091 (0.078)	0.062 (0.065)	-0.010 (0.058)
	4,915	4,586	2,325	4,753	3,460
flexible hours perceived accessible or used	0.144 (0.050)***	0.079 (0.063)	0.144 (0.067)**	0.139 (0.047)***	0.153 (0.056)***

flexible schedule perceived accessible or used	-0.033 (0.049)	0.062 (0.065)	0.054 (0.072)	-0.019 (0.047)	-0.013 (0.055)
flexible location available or used	0.002 (0.056)	-0.019 (0.082)	-0.077 (0.073)	0.055 (0.052)	-0.008 (0.053)
	4,759	4,469	2,270	4,574	3,456
flexible hours not available					
flexible hours used	0.179 (0.062)***	0.065 (0.092)	0.154 (0.088)*	0.137 (0.057)**	0.144 (0.071)**
flexible hours perceived accessible	0.127 (0.055)**	0.081 (0.068)	0.131 (0.077)*	0.139 (0.053)***	0.157 (0.060)***
flexible schedule not available					
flexible schedule used	-0.026 (0.055)	0.045 (0.072)	0.024 (0.074)	-0.049 (0.051)	-0.010 (0.059)
flexible schedule perceived accessible	-0.050 (0.071)	0.099 (0.095)	0.140 (0.103)	0.042 (0.065)	-0.021 (0.073)
flexible location not available					
flexible location used	-0.002 (0.066)	-0.025 (0.092)	-0.083 (0.081)	0.044 (0.058)	-0.015 (0.060)
flexible location perceived accessible	0.009 (0.090)	-0.006 (0.134)	-0.060 (0.106)	0.089 (0.082)	0.005 (0.079)
	4,759	4,469	2,270	4,574	3,456

Family to work conflict	Long Hours Culture	No managerial support	With care responsibilities	With dependent children	Managers / Professional employees
flexible hours used	0.032 (0.067)	-0.034 (0.090)	-0.001 (0.082)	0.023 (0.063)	0.086 (0.089)

flexible schedule used	0.040 (0.050)	0.070 (0.056)	0.020 (0.065)	0.024 (0.047)	-0.063 (0.058)
flexible location used	-0.038 (0.059)	-0.138 (0.074)*	0.129 (0.097)	0.012 (0.062)	-0.032 (0.058)
	4,900	4,575	2,320	4,746	3,445
flexible hours perceived accessible or used	0.033 (0.056)	-0.014 (0.057)	-0.018 (0.068)	0.018 (0.058)	0.032 (0.068)
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used	0.032 (0.053)	0.049 (0.058)	-0.032 (0.062)	-0.047 (0.055)	0.010 (0.054)
flexible location available or used	-0.012 (0.056)	0.026 (0.075)	0.092 (0.085)	0.060 (0.062)	-0.039 (0.056)
	4,744	4,458	2,266	4,563	3,443
flexible hours not available					
flexible hours used	0.048 (0.080)	-0.038 (0.091)	-0.029 (0.091)	0.034 (0.075)	0.078 (0.104)
flexible hours perceived accessible	0.023 (0.062)	0.010 (0.060)	0.002 (0.070)	0.014 (0.063)	0.003 (0.068)
flexible schedule not available					
flexible schedule used	0.025 (0.054)	0.058 (0.054)	-0.004 (0.067)	-0.022 (0.056)	-0.035 (0.061)
flexible schedule perceived accessible	0.043 (0.076)	0.007 (0.106)	-0.115 (0.091)	-0.099 (0.081)	0.095 (0.079)
flexible location not available					
flexible location used	-0.019 (0.060)	-0.114 (0.070)	0.161 (0.094)*	0.035 (0.065)	-0.040 (0.060)
flexible location perceived accessible	0.006 (0.098)	0.402 (0.169)**	-0.045 (0.126)	0.119 (0.090)	-0.018 (0.091)
	4,744	4,458	2,266	4,563	3,443

Work to family conflict	Long Hours Culture	No managerial support	With care responsibilities	With dependent children	Managers / Professional employees
flexible hours used	-0.095 (0.083)	-0.021 (0.089)	-0.026 (0.132)	-0.162 (0.072)**	-0.069 (0.115)
flexible schedule used	-0.151 (0.066)**	0.093 (0.076)	0.017 (0.094)	0.077 (0.067)	-0.179 (0.092)*
flexible location used	0.026 (0.086)	0.047 (0.125)	0.060 (0.129)	-0.013 (0.084)	0.148 (0.103)
	4,912	4,582	2,324	4,753	3,459
flexible hours perceived accessible or used	-0.025 (0.076)	-0.013 (0.074)	0.172 (0.100)*	-0.118 (0.071)	-0.159 (0.092)*
flexible schedule perceived accessible or used	-0.092 (0.063)	-0.019 (0.073)	-0.020 (0.089)	-0.048 (0.071)	-0.032 (0.102)
flexible location available or used	0.002 (0.075)	0.092 (0.107)	-0.020 (0.115)	-0.025 (0.077)	0.133 (0.094)
	4,757	4,466	2,270	4,571	3,457
flexible hours not available					
flexible hours used	-0.063 (0.098)	-0.032 (0.098)	0.092 (0.145)	-0.175 (0.089)**	-0.141 (0.128)
flexible hours perceived accessible	-0.020 (0.081)	-0.010 (0.083)	0.251 (0.100)**	-0.085 (0.079)	-0.177 (0.095)*
flexible schedule not available					
flexible schedule used	-0.147 (0.069)**	-0.051 (0.080)	-0.009 (0.098)	-0.073 (0.078)	-0.102 (0.111)
flexible schedule perceived accessible	-0.011 (0.102)	0.047 (0.107)	-0.053 (0.147)	-0.009 (0.100)	0.092 (0.125)
flexible location not available					
flexible location used	0.007 (0.094)	0.036 (0.126)	0.078 (0.128)	-0.029 (0.090)	0.143 (0.111)

flexible location perceived accessible	0.023 (0.094)	0.237 (0.134)*	-0.201 (0.154)	-0.010 (0.090)	0.128 (0.106)
	4,757	4,466	2,270	4,571	3,457

Controls were also included for workplace size, industrial sector, trade union recognition, employee age, employee tenure, and temporary or permanent employment contract

Multilevel linear analysis, WERS 2011 MQ and WERS 2011 SEQ. Coefficients given, standard errors in brackets. All estimates are weighted.

Dependent variables are measured as per tables 6.1-6.5