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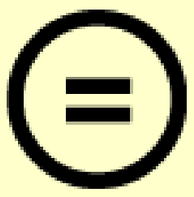

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CULTURAL CHANGE IN ORGANISATIONS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

by

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Abstract

Using a grounded theory approach, two case studies were carried out in large organisations which have recently implemented family-friendly policies. The studies asked whether or not cultural change has taken place as a result of the implementation of these policies. Using Shein's (1992) three level model and definition of culture, attention was focused on underlying assumptions or 'root' facets of organisational culture (and conceptual distinctions made between culture, image and identity). After establishing which facets are present and how they exist in combination with each other, shifts which have taken place as a direct or indirect result of the introduction of policies were identified. Especial interest was taken in the way the primacy of work was expressed through the ideal worker type and the extent to which this type has been replaced by the integrated worker type (Rapoport et al 2002), which acknowledges that family and other commitments are as legitimate as occupational demands. Both studies conclude that, as yet, there have been only slight adjustments in the construction of this ideal worker type and that employees do not make a permanent shift towards the integrated worker type but 'toggle' between these two types.

Explanations are developed for shifts in other cultural facets, such as the importance of autonomy, emphases on equality or individuation, sense of entitlement and attitudes to change. The utility of the notion of purposive cultural change is considered, given that high levels of anxiety are released when unconscious and shared mental structures are destabilised in such processes of organizational learning. The merits of a more evolutionary model are explored.

Keywords: organisational culture, family-friendly policies, ideal worker type, cultural change, case studies, grounded theory

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introductory comments

The focus of this thesis is on the culture of organisations and the extent to which changes in culture result from the implementation of family-friendly policies. Several related demographic and labour market changes in Western society, evident in recent British and international statistics, have necessitated the introduction of policies which are intended to make it easier for people to manage their work and domestic responsibilities. More than 63% of Britain's families have two wage earners (most commonly one full-time and one part-time wage) and around 70% of women return to work after having a baby (NFPI 2001). Indeed the largest change in labour market participation has come from mothers with a child under five, numbers working increased from 43% in 1991 to 54% in 2001 (Labour Market Trends 2002). The International Labour Organisation predicts that shortly after 2010, 80% of all women in Western countries, including the UK, will combine employment with being a parent (NFPI 2003). Mothers' entry into the labour force has partly resulted from their increased educational qualifications which have encouraged them to work outside the home. They have also been influenced by the high costs of housing and the decline both in men's real wages and in the security of the latter's earnings. The increase in marital breakdown and the formation of lone parent families has meant that single parents have become a significant segment of the workforce (Drago and Hyatt 2003). For many people, being able to work whilst also meeting parental obligations has become a matter of necessity, not just a means of securing a higher or more secure standard of living.

It is also the case that women have much higher potential earnings than in the past, making the out-sourcing of childcare a more attractive alternative to staying at home to look after children themselves (Dex 2003). Although fathers work longer hours than men with no children (NFPI 2001) they are, at the same time, becoming increasingly interested in their role as fathers and are less likely to be satisfied with seeing their children only for short periods at the beginning and end of the day or at weekends. Finally, in an ageing population, the care of elders is becoming a crucial issue in many families where there is no stay-at-home adult. It is these related trends

which have made the balancing of paid work and family obligations an important policy topic in most industrialised countries, a key workplace issue of our time (Dex 2003) and the background for the implementation of family-friendly policies.

Such widespread social, cultural and indeed political pressures are forcing employers to consider the extent to which their workplaces are family-friendly and facilitate a good work-life balance for their employees.[1] Almost every day there are media reports (such as Daily Telegraph, October 15th 2004 and Guardian, April 6th 2004) on these subjects, and books are published for popular, policy-making and management audiences (Bunting 2004, Ghazi 2002). The present government, partly in response to EU directives, has enacted legislation covering better maternity leave and pay, new parental leave, protection for part-time employees, paid paternity leave and flexible working for parents (Dex 2003). Googins describes the heightened interest in the work-family interface as "indicative of massive structural, institutional and cultural changes in the family and in corporations" (quoted in McKee et al 2000:559) although the issue of work-life balance is not a new one despite the current media interest. Employers' interest in their employees' non-work lives is almost as old as the industrial revolution itself (Kirchmeyer 2000:83). However the statistics quoted and the fact that the dominant pattern for UK families at the beginning of the twenty-first century is to have 1.5 earners, most commonly a full-time employed father and a part-time employed mother, (Dex 2003) indicate the particular contemporary salience of this issue.

In what is arguably the post-materialist world, organisations are challenged by the fact that many employees are willing to trade financial compensation for time and for perceived control and flexibility, because of the high priority which they place upon the need for balance and integration in their lives (Buck et al 2000:26). Due to the prevalence of dual-income families more individuals are concerned with the need to balance personal time and well-being with professional development and career

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[1] There is some difference between the aims of these two agendas in that policies or initiatives which promote the importance of a good work-life balance have a much broader application than those which aim to further the development of a family-friendly environment (Taylor 2001). The former potentially affect all people, not just those who currently have caring responsibilities as they are concerned with a range of workplace stressors and other determinants of general wellbeing.

success. Many couples in lower paid employment are trying, between them, to secure a high enough wage to support their families at the same time as providing continuous childcare in what has come to be known as shift or serial parenting (La Valle et al 2002). Alternative work arrangements are being sought in order to manage these multiple priorities. At the same time many employers are trying to get more work done by fewer people in what is often referred to as the postdownsizing era (Buck et al 2000). That this is a contentious subject is indicated by one example from the US political context. Robert Reich was Secretary of State for Labour in the first Clinton Administration. When he decided to leave Clinton's cabinet because it was taking too much time away from his family, his decision provoked strong, widespread public reaction. Many supported his decision but significant numbers expressed deep resentment. He received letters from women who claimed that his actions undermined their claim that it was possible to have a 'high powered' job whilst still being a good parent. Others claimed that he was setting a bad example for the workforce. Although he had the education and opportunity to find a more flexible position with equal if not better remuneration, people like them were forced to continue to sacrifice family time for their occupations because they didn't have his range of choices.[2]

The issue of how best to combine paid work with family responsibilities has implications for equal opportunities and gender equity. Women in the workforce are four times as likely as men to work part-time and the jobs they have are concentrated disproportionately in the low pay service sector (Hinds & Jarvis 2000:101). However 80% of women who work part-time do so because they do not want a full-time job (ONS 2000). Notwithstanding the prevalence of part-time working, many firms, even those which have implemented a bundle of family-friendly policies, do not acknowledge that it is compatible with career progression or indicative of a high level of organisational commitment. This is attributed to the persistence of "a traditional or 'male' model of work which embodies an expectation that an ideal employee will work full-time and continuously from the end of education to retirement, making no concessions to family involvement ....despite fundamental changes in the nature of families, the workforce and indeed of work itself." (Lewis and Lewis 1996:4) Formal policies intended to enable employees to meet family commitments may be important

[2] Information from the text of a speech given at the London School of Economics 14th May 2001.

indicators of an organisation's intent but they do not guarantee that the informal *culture* is supportive of employees' families or their attempts to manage occasionally conflicting priorities (Lewis and Lewis 1996).

Many writers have insisted upon the need to look at organisational culture in order to identify a) barriers to the adoption of policies and b) reasons for the continued pervasiveness of long hours working which resulted in the sharp decrease in work satisfaction in the last decade of the twentieth century (Taylor 2001). Kirchmeyer (2000:91) argues that for work-life initiatives such as family-friendly policies to change workers' lives, they must be part of a culture change in the individual organisation which is representative and constitutive of a shift in the wider organisational world (Rapoport et al 2002). Culture change involves a rethinking of taken-for-granted procedures and underlying assumptions (Bailyn 1993:141) which may be the cause or at least the contributors to much of the pain that attends work-life conflicts (Rapoport et al 2002:91). Nearly a third of workers now say they have less time for their caring relationships than they would like, compared with 21% in 1992 (Bunting 2004:210), despite the increased ideological importance of care which is now "part of an intense and hazy quest to create a kinder, gentler family and nation" (Hochschild 2003:2). For several years it has been the norm for employers to acknowledge the importance of their workers' caring responsibilities through the provision of family-friendly policies.

Family-friendly policies can usefully be subcategorised into a) leave arrangements, b) flexible working arrangements and c)workplace facilities. Leave arrangements include maternity, paternity and parental leave, as well as bereavement or compassionate leave and time off to care for dependents (which may mean, for example, short "emergency cover" or longer, scheduled career or employment breaks). Flexible working arrangements take many forms such as part-time, staggered hours, shift working (in which shift-swapping and self-rostering may be allowed), job share, termtime contracts, time off in lieu, flexitime, compressed working week (allowing people to work their total number of hours over a shorter number of working days as in, for example, nine day fortnights), reduced hours, annualised hours (working time is organised on the basis of the number of hours to be worked per year, better managing peaks and troughs of work) and working from home (often referred

to as teleworking where technology is being used to keep in touch with work). Workplace facilities include crèches or nurseries (employers may also provide subsidised childcare places, often in the form of vouchers) and counselling/stress management provision.

Nine out of ten employers in Britain in 1996 provided at least one family-friendly arrangement (Dex & Scheibl 1999:22), the most common of which was flexible or non-standard working (a total of 71% of employers offered some form of flexibility) and two thirds of employers provided two or more family-friendly arrangements. Data collected in the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS) indicated that family-friendly or flexible working arrangements were more common in larger organisations and in the public sector and where there were (among other things) lower degrees of competition, recognised unions, human resource specialists, high-commitment practices, consultative decision-making processes, larger proportions of women in the workforce and highly educated employees accustomed to using discretion (Dex and Scheibl 2002).

In order to explore the issue of the impact of such policies on the culture of organisations I conducted case studies in two companies: PharMerger, in the pharmaceuticals sector and EngCorp, an engineering company. Both have, in the last five years, implemented family-friendly policies and both are large and in highly competitive private sector industries but only one is unionised. My background in the discipline of social anthropology, with its tradition of thinking holistically about *systems* of meaning, values and actions (Ashkanasy et al 2000:5) was ideal for these culturally-oriented investigations. I have also adopted the anthropological convention of speaking about the data in the present tense wherever appropriate. As McDonald (1991) states, "the present tense conveys more of the feeling of being 'inside'." The idea of looking at the impact of policies on the process of culture change was suggested by Lewis and Taylor (1996) who said that "Organisational cultures are grounded in deep-seated beliefs about gender, the nature of work and the ideal employee, which reflect societal norms and are often implicit or even unconscious and are therefore difficult to challenge." They advocate surfacing and challenging some of the basic and often anachronistic assumptions underpinning these cultures

(Lewis 1997:21) and call for further research to explore strategies for overcoming cultural barriers and developing the conditions for effective family-friendly practices.

One of their case studies (Lewis and Taylor 1996, Lewis 1997) was carried out in the UK division of a multinational firm of chartered accountants which had recently implemented a bundle of policies in what they termed a 'family-unfriendly' context where, for example, missing work to deal with family crises was frowned upon. Interviews were conducted with women working on the reduced hours scheme, other new mothers who were not working overtime (unlike their colleagues) their spouses and their line managers. The other ongoing case study which informed their argument (Lewis 1997) was in a large public sector organisation which had more long-standing family-friendly policies. These were considered to be largely ineffective by the personnel department as the prevailing workplace culture made it difficult for most employees to take advantage of them. Data collection was largely achieved through interviews with those who were directly involved with the introduction of new policies and who were responsible for raising awareness and improving implementation (such as key personnel driving the changes, senior management, union representatives and members of the steering group of flexible working). Through their analysis of these and other organisations, Lewis and Taylor were seeking to identify barriers to cultural change, underlying and commonly held assumptions that were a) impeding the development of a genuinely family-friendly environment and b) likely to be unaffected by policies themselves. The focus of their enquiry therefore was on culturally-based reasons for the ineffectiveness of policies. In contrast, my case studies were carried out in firms which were already considered, to a certain extent, to be 'caring' and 'family-friendly' *before* formal policies were introduced.

In both organisations the personnel departments considered that the recent introduction of a comprehensive bundle of policies enhanced their reputations as 'employers of choice'. However long hours working was not uncommon and within both workplaces there were enclaves of inflexibility and resistance. My data collection strategy was intended to capture, as comprehensively as possible, the culture of the two companies, enabling me to tell their respective stories which are concerned less with 'facts as information' than with 'facts as experience' (Gabriel

1995:479). In both cases I considered it essential to interview manual and non-manual employees at every point in the hierarchy (Bulmer 1988), and to include people who were not directly affected by policies or planning to take them up. I asked questions about changes resulting from recently introduced policies with the intention of building up a composite picture of those facets of culture which had most salience for understanding their impact.

There was a longitudinal dimension to the study, albeit limited, in that respondent recall was elicited and interviews were conducted in three rounds, with some eighteen months elapsing between initial and final interviews. The intention was to chart changes in culture over time and the extent to which policies or other factors had influenced the change process. I wanted to see if and how culture in the two organisations had changed as a result of the implementation of policies and to determine which cultural facets are more or less conducive to the development of an increasingly family-friendly environment. I wanted to discover not only which aspects of culture acted as barriers to this development but also which were potential or actual aids. Although others have looked at cultural barriers to the ameliorative effects of policies, I was concerned with culture itself, its multiplicity and complexity (Lewis and Taylor 1996:112), its inherent ambiguities and conflictive elements (Parker 2000, Martin 1992) and with the effect of policies on the many processes which are contained therein. However it is important to point out that all three rounds of interviews took place after family-friendly policies had been introduced, although some had been implemented just before the study began and others were refined as the study progressed. A straightforward 'before and after', cause and effect analysis could not therefore be obtained with such a methodology. The timing of first entry and the dependence on respondent recall both set a boundary on the extent to which policies can be *definitively* said to have changed or influenced culture. Whilst acknowledging these limitations, the methodology can be defended on the grounds that I was looking for trends, the direction of movement in the culture and employees' perceptions of their 'lived' experience of these shifts. This necessitated the use of both respondent recall and the longitudinal dimension of the eighteen month lapse in time. Whilst acknowledging the above caveats, the mediating influence of policies, the key concern of the study, was, I believe, accessed using the different data collection methods employed in conducting the case studies.

1.2 Understanding what is distinctive about the study of culture

Schein (1992:12) defines the culture of an organisation as,

> the pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems.

When considering how effective new policies will be in an organisation, an appreciation of culture is especially important because it is a primary source of resistance to change. Schein's model of culture implies that there is some deep level of structural stability in the group which is less conscious and therefore less tangible and visible. This stability partly flows from the patterning or integration of key elements, such as values, behaviours, rituals, climates etc, into a larger, internally coherent whole. Culture can also be perceived as the accumulated shared learning of the group in terms of behavioural, emotional and cognitive elements, what Schneider terms the "psychological life" of the situation (2000:vii) and the challenges associated with organisational learning are similar to those concerning cultural change (Coutu 2002, Bailyn 2003).

Stability need not imply unanimity or absence of conflict (Schein 2000:xxv) and much of the practitioner-oriented and regulationist writings on organisational culture have been criticised on the grounds that they have, in common with debates about labour processes, "tended to adopt an over-managed and over-policed image of organisations," (Gabriel 1996:478) and have assumed that consensus is a normal state for organisations (Parker 2000). Taken to its logical conclusion, such consensus implies the wholesale imposition of views on a workforce and constitutes an intrusion into the private, mental world of employees, an invasion of ideational space which cuts across today's ethos that "my job is my job and my soul is my own" (Parker 2000:230). Considerable variations in the attitudes and values of departments and teams can exist within a strong dominant culture (Lewis and Taylor 1996) which is not itself a bounded entity but interacts with and is permeable to local, industry-wide and national culture (Parker 2000). I was concerned to see what, if any, 'us' and 'them' associations were evident along, for example, spatial/functional, generational and occupational/professional lines (Parker 2000). Such possible markers of difference (between 'us' and 'them') may be used to express distinct views of what

the purpose of the organisation is, what it should be concentrating on and to explain why and in what way the other group does not share the same perception and I was interested to see if the introduction of family-friendly work-practices created or widened a divide along *family-situational* lines, where workers with significant caring responsibilities - be they for elders or children - will experience the workplace in a completely different way to non-carers.

Finally, these issues have important implications for purposive cultural change. In the absence of consensus, to what extent is it meaningful to talk about changing the culture a) because the very notion implies an ability to manipulate what takes place in employees' "ideational space" and b) because of the heterogeneity, albeit at the level of values, within the organisation? Schein himself sounds a note of caution about the enthusiasm with which managers can tend to approach the subject of culture change. Managers should, he says, "seek not to change culture, but to change effectiveness... it is better to build on what is working than to obsess about what is not working. *It is easier to evolve culture than to change it* [my emphasis]." (Schein 2000:xxix) In conducting the case studies I was interested to see what was working as well as what was not working, to see what, if any, evolutionary processes were taking place and how they might be encouraged or discouraged by policies. Rather than assuming that direct intervention would be necessary for the removal of cultural barriers to the development of a family-friendly workplace, I sought to determine how *shifts* in different facets of culture were increasing policies' effectiveness and how changes in the way these facets were articulating with each other might, once identified, be encouraged to produce further shifts.

1.3 Cultural barriers which impede the ameliorative effect of policies

Studies have shown that factors which are grafted into the cultural value of work can make it hard to choose reduced or flexible working hours (Rapoport et al 2002, Fletcher & Bailyn 1996, White et al 2003). 'Presenteeism' refers to the importance employers attach to the physical presence of their employee which may be quite detached from his or her hourly productivity. In an organisation which values face-time or presenteeism, workers who choose to reduce their hours or who work flexibly (for example by regularly working from home) run the risk of being passed over for promotion regardless of the worth of the work they do. Related to this is the concern

with status rather then task which is often expressed by working long hours irrespective of need, in order, consciously, to create the impression of commitment and success (Bailyn 1993). Not only will this impair organisational performance but it may unnecessarily increase the absorptiveness of the occupational role which a worker occupies (Bailyn 1993:41).

The very notion of presenteeism implies that the constant availability of the worker is valued and, to a certain extent, expected in what has been described as "taken for granted notions of the ideal worker" (Lewis and Lewis 1996:161). Basic and unconscious assumptions shape the construction of the ideal worker type and it is therefore culturally determined. Where traditional images of the ideal worker prevail (due to the relative stability of culture) this may not fit with the circumstances of many employees, especially those who are managing family commitments alongside their work. Rapoport et al (2002:169) describe this traditional image of the ideal worker as someone for whom work is primary, who demonstrates commitment by making personal sacrifices and who does whatever it takes to get the job done. Not only are they spending a great deal of time in so doing but they are *seen* to do so. Traditional patterns of work assume that employees are constantly able to 'put work first' because there are no other areas of their life which conflict with the occupational priority. However, competing commitments have changed the reality of most people's circumstances without necessarily changing this traditional norm.

Where working parents feel obliged to conform to this traditional worker type they may be subject to some degree of dissonance between what Bailyn (1993:104) refers to as the prevailing ideology of professionalism (that work can and should take precedence in one's life) and the conflicting belief in the ultimate value of family and children. Working reduced or flexible hours may be necessary to fulfil family commitments and to acknowledge their importance. However, being unwilling or unable to work in a way that accords with the ideal worker type can be intrinsically unsatisfying as well as potentially detrimental for one's career prospects because work and self-esteem are intimately connected even in low-paid 'undesirable' work (Reeves 2001:35). Moreover, Hochschild found when she investigated the low take-up of policies in a company that was considered to be one of the ten most family-

friendly companies in the US, that "pressure from peers or supervisors to be a serious player could cancel out any desire to cut back on work hours" (Hochschild 1997:197). It has been suggested that at the root of this construction of the ideal worker is the conceptual separation of the spheres of work and family (Bailyn 1993, Rapoport et al 2002) such that spillover from one domain to another (for example in terms of the profound effects of the psychological demands which each entails) is not considered. When the *de facto* integration of these spheres is acknowledged and when commitments to family are not seen to imply a lesser commitment to occupation, then the integrated worker type will become an acceptable alternative to the (traditional) ideal worker type.

As such types are, to reiterate, culturally determined, when conducting the case studies the existence and characteristics of an ideal worker type became a key concern. Any change in the construction of this type, as a result of family-friendly policies, was considered to be a significant indicator of systemic, cultural change. Leadership is widely considered to be an important factor in cultural change (Schein 1992, Sadler 2001) so I was also aware of the need to establish the effect, if any, of role models on changing norms and on shifts in the way the ideal worker was constructed.

1.4 Conclusion

Although the case studies were conducted using a grounded theory approach, which aims, as far as possible to start an investigation with a mental *tabula rasa,* I was aware of issues in the literature which sensitised me to possible aspects of culture which might act as barriers to the development of a genuinely family-friendly environment, regardless of the intent of policies. The studies were concerned to map out the underlying assumptions, the 'essence' of these organisational cultures, as completely as possible so that policies' impact could be seen from this vantage point. Markers of difference or 'us' and 'them' oppositions within the organisation were of interest, especially where they appeared to be along family-situational lines. The presence of an ideal worker type and shifts in its construction were especially important to establish, as was the influence of leadership in the form of role models. Once explanations were developed for shifts in cultural facets, applications to wider theories were sought. Most notably, I was concerned to establish the extent to which

the notion of intentional and deliberately engineered cultural change was a useful one and whether a more evolutionary model might be more appropriate and effective in the long term.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will refer to previous research in the various different areas which impinge on the subject matter of this thesis. After a brief examination of the history of work-family research and how family-friendly policies have been defined, I shall look at the rationale for them, both in terms of the business case that can be made for their adoption and in terms of the aid they give to working parents. This will involve an examination of the kinds of organisations which more readily provide policies and the form these policies take. The deficiencies of policies in isolation has already been stated and the second section of this review will concentrate on the literature that calls for systemic, cultural change within organisations in order for them to become genuinely family-friendly. Aspects of culture which are considered to be implicit barriers to this process will be considered alongside theories for their successful removal. The final section acknowledges the diversity of ways in which the term 'culture' is used in the literature and in it I clarify how it is deployed in this thesis. I do this by specifying those aspects of organisational life to which the term culture refers which requires an explanation of how culture differs from identity and image, other symbolic, value-based constructions which are constitutive of the experience of involvement in an organisation. I conclude by explaining how cultural change has been problematised in the literature and how divergent perceptions of culture itself challenge the notion that an organisational culture can be easily understood or purposively manipulated.

2.2 A history of work-family reconciliation and research

Gonyea and Googins (1992) identified the 1970s and the early 1980s as the infancy stage of corporate ventures into the work-family arena, when employees' struggles to maintain a balance between their work and home lives were redefined from a private to a public concern and when employee expectations supplanted gratitude and satisfaction. Many initial corporate efforts took place in the positive economic climate of corporate expansion and labour shortages of the 1980s, and were based on a series of assumptions about their efficacy, which were backed up by very little research. During the 1980s work-family research was dominated by sociologists and

psychologists but the complexity of issues favoured an interdisciplinary approach and in the next decade increasing numbers of feminists, institutionalist economists, industrial relations researchers and anthropologists began undertaking studies in this area (Drago and Hyatt 2003, Ashkanasy et al 2000). Several important strands of work-family research have been identified such as research focusing on long hours of employment (Taylor 2002), their effects on family functioning and satisfaction (Taylor 2001) and difficulties faced in attempting to decrease these hours in what has become a more financially austere business environment (Hewlett 2002). Labour shortages characteristic of the 1980s, contrasted starkly with widespread 'downsizing' (amidst spiraling benefit costs) in the 1990s. The employers' context is delineated by McKee et al (2000) in their study of family-friendly policies in the oil and gas industry, "We need to see the evolution of work-life issues against the backcloth of bigger order structural change – such as the persistent demands for flexibility, continuous threats of lay-offs, mergers and downsizing." (McKee et al 2000:568) However, Gonyea and Googins (1992) and others argue that firms have approached the issue from a benefits and policies perspective, they have failed to perceive a strong link between corporate productivity and family-friendly policies and that a compelling business case can be made for the adoption of a more radical agenda for change.

Family-friendly policies have been defined by Simkin and Hillage (1992:13) as a "formal or informal set of terms and conditions which are designed to enable an employee to combine family responsibilities with employment." A wide range of practices are included in this category by Scheibl (1999) such as policies concerned with employees' hours of work (job sharing, part-time work, flexi-time, four and a half day weeks), leave entitlements (parental leave, career break), financial assistance (child care, maternity pay), and particular caring responsibilities, e.g. elder care or children. She also advocates the inclusion of homeworking, teleworking, term-time work, shift and evening work and annualised hours in a general definition but excludes temporary and seasonal work which are known as flexible work but cannot be described as family-friendly (Forth et al 1997, Casey et al 1997). Campbell and Charlesworth (2003) differentiate between broad definitions which cover a range of employment benefits, irrespective of how they have come into existence and how they continue to be supported (whether as a result of statute, generalised multi-employer collective bargaining, single-employer bargaining, company policy, or more informal

practices) from a narrower meaning that would exclude benefits established through external regulation and would confine the notion of 'family-friendly benefits' just to voluntary initiatives by individual firms. This narrow meaning appears in a recent OECD study, where family-friendly measures are defined as "practices, facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life, which firms introduce to complement statutory requirements" (OECD 2001:147). In this thesis the broader definition will be employed.

2.3 The role of employers and differing attitudes to work and family

Much has been written about the role employers play in alleviating work-family conflict by their provision of policies (Remery et al 2003, Evans 2001, Bond et al 2002, Berg et al 2003) and their necessity in the light of trends described earlier. Crompton and Birkelund's study on employment and caring in British and Norwegian banking showed that although a proactively family-friendly government or state policy can help atypical cases (such as men who have significant childcare responsibilities) the attitudes of the employer were more determinative in the majority of cases (Crompton & Birkelund 2000:345). As mothers and single parents have become an increasingly significant segment of the workforce and fathers are more concerned to spend time with their children, many more people are managing conflicting allegiances. Young and Wilmott (1973) predicted that if most people no longer had unfulfilling work then more would have two 'poles' to their lives instead of one and they would have to reconcile these competing priorities.

Reconciliation is diversely achieved, partly as a result of attitudinal heterogeneity. Friedman and Greenhaus' (2000) study of more than eight hundred male and female business professionals found that 42.4% of their sample was family focused, 29.6% both career and family focused and only 13% exclusively career focused. The remaining 15%, termed 'self/society' focused, had a low concern for status and material wealth and wanted time to spend either on themselves or, for example, in religious or political pursuits. 87% of their sample therefore did not consider themselves to be exclusively concerned with their careers. Similarly, Hakim's (2000) preference theory states that a large majority (60%) of women are what she terms adaptive, they combine work and family but are not committed to career in the same way as the much smaller group (20%) of work-centred women. The central tenet of

preference theory is that women are not a homogenous group but divide into three groups that are not only qualitatively different but also have conflicting interests, so analyses that seek to identify the 'average' women's life history will tend to obscure the very real and growing process of diversification. In our prosperous modern society, there is a much greater variety of lifestyle choices than in the past, so preferences become a more important determinant of outcomes than in the past, when economic necessity or relative affluence were the main dominant forces shaping women's employment decisions (Hakim 2000:169). Hakim's work is considered to be an important, and challenging, contribution to our understanding of women's employment (McRae 2003) but her theory has been criticised on the grounds that her focus on individualised preference neglects the importance of social ties and socially negotiated gendered moral responsibilities in shaping divisions of labour (Duncan 2003). Others have contended that it is not based on good enough evidence to support its claims (McRae 2003) but the essential weakness of preference theory is her argument that "there are no major constraints limiting choice or forcing choice in particular directions" (Hakim 2000:18) as "affluent and liberal modern societies provide opportunities for diverse lifestyle preferences to be fully realized . . . women [have] genuine choices as to what to do with their lives" (2000:273–4). This ignores the very real constraints all women face when making decisions about their lives (McRae 2003). However her suggestion that "women today are divided in their work–lifestyle preferences, and possibly always have been" (2000:273) is one with which many social scientists would concur (McRae 2003) and which, when seen alongside Friedman and Greenhaus' study, establishes the heterogeneity of attitudes towards paid work and the applicability of policies for the majority of the workforce.

Four rationales for family-friendly policies are considered by Lewis (1997). These are a) the quality of life/stress rationale, which emphasises that although multiple roles in work and family can be a source of satisfaction they can also be a source of role conflict, especially in the context of long hours of work, b) gender equality arguments, which stress the need to challenge traditional models of work, c) the synergy argument which I shall discuss in greater detail below and d) the business case which draws on both the quality of life and equal opportunities arguments but stresses bottom-line advantages of adapting to change. The business case looks at costs and benefits of adopting policies and receives extensive treatment in the

literature (Dex 2003, Gonyea and Googins 1992). The 1997 Institute for Employment Studies study (Bevan et al 1997) found that employers report savings from the introduction of flexibility but Dex and Scheibl (1999:26) suggest that firms have to take a longer term view of resultant improvements to profits and that larger firms will find it easier to do this than small and medium sized companies. They, and others, note that absenteeism can be sharply reduced (Eaton 2002) and retention rates improved (McKee et al 2000) when policies are introduced and implemented and that employees' attachment to organisations increases regardless of the extent to which individuals might personally benefit from policies (Grover and Crooker 1995). There are many, often unfounded, fears associated with the adoption of a more flexible working environment. Employers fear that flexible arrangements will set a precedent with extensive and uncontrollable consequences (Bailyn 1993) and that they will be swamped by a deluge of requests, but this is not borne out by research (Dex and Scheibl 1999:33). Studies also show that the business case for developing bundles of policies is strengthened when competitors also provide policies (McKee et al 2000, Dex and Scheibl 1999).

2.4 The role of management in facilitating a family-friendly environment

When looking at the kind of environment in which policies might be well-received, managerial approaches favouring the encouragement of workers' commitment rather than the imposition of control over them (Walton 1985) might be expected to be compatible with the provision of family-friendly policies. A shift from the traditional or control-oriented approach to work-place management to a commitment strategy was identified by Walton twenty years ago (Walton 1985:76). 'Commitment' policies which promote the development of human skills and individual self esteem were becoming increasingly common. Employees' views on production methods, problem solving and personnel policies and practices were sought with greater frequency. Levels of management hierarchy had been removed and supervisors were encouraged to delegate away most of their traditional functions. Organisations which have made such a shift would find it easier to adjust to highly flexible working patterns, which are effectively a further development of the trend Walton identified. On the other hand, those companies which still favour a control-oriented approach (possibly for legitimate, technical reasons) would find such flexible working practices to be conflictive with their basic assumptions. Working from home and other flexible

arrangements which involve less 'face-time' would not be popular with many managers. Such a conclusion concurs with Dex and Scheibl's (2002) observation that management styles based on control and dependence are a barrier to flexibility. Similarly the co-existence of bundles of policies (with a significant non-statutory component) with aspects of management practice was considered by Wood et al (2003) who link the rise of high-commitment/high-performance[1] management with wider adoption of work-family programmes. The commitment, motivation and productivity of beneficiaries of policies, such as part-time workers is often perceived, by employers, to increase (Boyer 1993). Buck et al (2000) described how people working shorter hours reported experiencing a completely different view of time. Whereas previously they thought of time as being linear, finite and scarce, their time out from work gave them a "nourishing sense of expanded time, generating new possibilities, increased creativity, vitality and resources" (Buck et al 2000:29).

However Berg et al's (2003) study of high-performance work organisations set out to discover if family-friendly policies which are designed to elicit high levels of commitment from workers, do in reality lead to a better work-life balance for employees. They cite Hochschild's (1997) research which describes how increased commitment to the organisation leads employees to choose to spend more time at work even if family-friendly policies are available. Benefits (such as on-site childcare) which allow workers with family responsibilities to spend more "unworried time at work," (Hochschild 1997:22) do not necessarily facilitate a better work-life balance. She and Bailyn (1993:67) distinguish between two categories of policies or benefits. The first category make it easier for employees with family responsibilities to spend time and energy at work and take the form of services or aid (in terms of finance and information) in obtaining them. This category would include childcare and concierge services and Bailyn describes a number of law firms which have recently made provision to care for employees' children who are sick or when normal arrangements break down. The second category consists of policies that create flexibility in location and time and varying arrangements for personal leave. These aim to provide employees with more control and discretion over the conditions of work and allow employees themselves to attend to family needs. Hochschild found

[1] White et al 2003 describe how these terms are used fairly interchangeably.

that the first category of benefits was in great demand in the American company she studied, however very few workers applied for the second type of benefit which "offer more unconflicted time at home" (1997:22). She ascribed this to the way home has become more like work than work itself. Emotional support and appreciation may be more readily available at work than at home, work provides many people with their community and their support network. They feel more relaxed there than they do at home where there are demanding family members and a depressing quantity of domestic chores. For many the site for unsatisfying labour has shifted away from the industrial sphere and now finds itself in the domestic context. Some workers in the company she studied had been employed there all their working lives, whilst during the same period they might have had several long term relationships. "For many work seemed to function as backup system to a destabilising family" (Hochschild 1997:201). Comfort, community and consideration are now in greater abundance outside the home, so shorter working hours or flexibility which allows a parent to take on a larger share of the dependent-care burden are frequently benefits with little take-up despite many comments about the desire to have more quality family time. This led her to question whether or not employees want working conditions which genuinely afford them more time at home, with their families. White et al (2003) also suggest a conflict between high performance practices and work-life balance policies (which include family-friendly policies). However, Berg et al conclude that greater commitment to the organisation increases rather than decreases workers' abilities to balance their work and family. They contend that Hochschild's view of high-performance workplaces may hold for professionals and managers but does not appear to be generalisable to non-supervisory workers.

The experience of managers in administering and benefiting from family-friendly policies has been the subject of much attention. Since 1998 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has supported a programme of research considering how families and businesses are coping with and responding to the pressures of greater work intensification and competition. All nineteen of the projects in this programme had reported by the time this thesis was written and together they constitute a rich seam of information. Yeandle et al's (2003) report on line managers and family-friendly employment brings together research data from four other projects in the programme and pooled interview data from over one hundred managers in a variety of

organisations across Scotland and England. The analysis focused on discovering a) how far line managers' personal characteristics structure their attitudes and behaviour in implementing policies, b) the impact of factors such as staffing levels, staff turnover and the type of work being managed and c) the awareness of managers of the policies in place and how this affects their role. Managers drew attention to the importance of discretion in their role which allowed them to make judgements and take decisions on the basis of their experience and managerial skills. Some were conscious that by exercising discretion, unfairness could result. Many line managers from Lewis and Taylor's (1996) study were uneasy about their discretionary roles and considered that they needed more training and support in order to fulfil them. As UK managers' general lack of ability to handle "people issues" is considered to be one of their largest skills gaps (Keep and Westwood 2002) this appears to confirm the need for further training which also emerged in Bond et al's (2002) study of family-friendly policies in the financial services sector in Scotland. Managers who support and take up part-time working themselves may face opposition further up the company hierarchy.

Boyer (1993) found that even where employers had positive experiences of part-time working they were commonly concerned that it increased administration and benefits costs and made day-to-day management more difficult. However Yeandle et al (2003) reported that in some organisations, managers were aware that directors and senior managers now viewed the adoption of family-friendly approaches as key components of organisational success. (This was the case in Lewis, Watts and Camp's (1996) study on the Midland Bank, now HSBC, which introduced policies relating to maternity and childcare in order to encourage women to return to work after pregnancy, thus offsetting the projected decline in numbers of youth entrants. In so doing this broadened the perspective on family-friendly policies such that their introduction deliberately fulfilled wider business objectives.) In such instances managers were more likely to feel that they would be supported in implementing flexible employment policies. This indicates that the adoption of policies (even where these exceed statutory requirements) does not, without other factors such as the support of senior managers, guarantee that employees will be able to change their practices so that their management of work and family priorities is more easily facilitated. As Lewis (1996:5) found, "Organisations are often described as 'family-

friendly' on the basis of the number of formal policies initiated to meet the needs of employees with family commitments. While these are important indicators of the will to change, they do not guarantee an informal culture which supports families" and Rapoport et al (2002:160) describe organisational settings which boast an array of flexible benefits but are filled with people who are struggling to manage work-life conflicts. To summarise, the literature indicates the decisive role which managers appear to play as mediators of policies within their organisation. Management styles can determine the relative popularity (ie. level of take up) of different policies, regardless of their stated intent. The discretion which managers are often expected to exercise can place them in situations for which they do not feel adequately trained and their uneasiness with policies, because of the challenges they represent, may hinder their staff from applying for them. Ambivalence towards policies at the senior management level can further complicate what may be already fraught decision making processes.

2.5 The need for cultural change

Many writers argue that if work-life initiatives are part of a genuine strategy to help workers balance their conflicting priorities then these have to be part of a culture change in the organisation itself. Kirchmeyer (2000:80) claims that, in contrast, many family-friendly policies are largely adopted on a piecemeal basis, that this tokenism is symptomatic of a conceptual deficiency as many initiatives are introduced in order to conform to industrial and local trends. Similarly the most significant finding of Wood et al's (2003) research on family-friendly management in the UK was that it is not an integrated phenomenon. They found that the pressure to create flexible working arrangements is discrete from that to create substitutes for the time and energy of employees (most notably childcare) and they suggest that variability in the adoption of family-friendly practices is explained by the extent to which the maintenance of social legitimacy is salient to the organisation, in that their introduction and promotion may be treated as part of the company's management of its image and reputation. Fombrun discusses the intangible assets which a company holds which may provide organisations with a more enduring source of competitive advantage than traditional assets like patents and technologies (1996:5). Family-friendly benefits would fit into his category of 'enlightened' investments which reflect a commitment to long term reputation building as well as to short term self interest if, for example, they proved

capable of attracting and retaining high-performing employees. Fombrun discusses how employers work to build strong relationships with and gain the esteem of all their key constituents, "they initiate policies that reflect their core values; that consider the joint welfare of investors, customers and employees" (1996:9). Well regarded companies can charge premium prices for their products which in turn will boost the share price; they have the pick of recruits because they benefit from what he terms the 'psychic income' generated by a good reputation; there is a sense of shared destiny and identification with a quality company which will engender high levels of employee loyalty. The types of organisations in which the presentation of the right kind of image is a key business consideration are described by Alvesson (1990). The more ambiguous the nature of the business or the products it is trying to sell, the greater is the significance of the image. He treats the service industry as more of a candidate for this description than the manufacturing sector, in that corporate identity emerges "to a lesser degree from service production process itself than from systematic efforts to anchor certain images of the corporation in the consciousness of the personnel" (Alvesson 1990:378), and "the achievement of legitimacy is partly a matter of symbolic activity aimed at producing the right kind of impression" (Alvesson 1990:383).

Neither of the case study companies is in the service sector. One is in the manufacturing sector, the other in the pharmaceuticals industry. However a high degree of ambiguity surrounds the products and indeed the profits of the latter. Drugs are considered to be beneficial to humanity but during that period in their life-cycle when they are ethical, in-patent and marketed under a brand name, they come at a price which strains the national health budget and there is little public sympathy for the high costs and long lead-times of their development. Moreover, within the UK economy the pharmaceuticals sector is considered to be a high-value added sector but its status as a relatively high-wage sector is much less certain (Froud et al 1998). It has been argued (Froud et al 1998) that the UK pharmaceutical industry is exceptional in that it combines high value added with average wages to benefit capital, not labour, so that the stakeholders who are doing well out of this sector are in fact the shareholders (and this point will be returned to in Chapter 6). However as the industry has to attract and retain an elite workforce, they have to preserve a reputation for generosity (to outsiders) and project the same image to staff. Family-friendly

initiatives may be part of their strategy to accomplish both of these goals but not necessarily to effect radical changes in the underlying assumptions which produced inclement working conditions in the first place. In order to ascertain whether initiatives have been introduced for these purely instrumental reasons, Gonyea and Googins (1992:223) insist that we need to examine the subjective meanings which key executives or decision makers attribute to changing social, economic and demographic conditions and to look at the perceived linkages which they draw between these, mainly external, circumstances and their own firm's growth and survival. These perceived linkages may or may not influence the company's strategy to adapt to the changing environment. They say that an integrative rather than a piecemeal application of family-friendly policies is only possible if their introduction and supported implementation is not associated with a single measurable outcome, such as productivity. It has to be seen in the context of productivity *and* those other complementary aspects to productivity in a company, such as employee morale, organisational commitment and the recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce because "if an issue is to survive it must ultimately establish links with other cherished corporate values and goals" (Gonyea and Googins 1992:224).

The surfacing of basic assumptions which determine how organisational effectiveness is measured and perceived may reveal that these are in conflict with the intent of policies. Kirchmeyer (2000:91) concurs that "without a firm grasp of the thinking that drives organisational action, the implications of any change effort will remain elusive and its ability to achieve consistent outcomes unlikely." She contends that many employers have responded to calls for family-friendly policies in ways which are integrative in nature but, importantly, she uses the term 'integrative' in a different and negative way. She links it to the belief that employees should be constantly available which has not been challenged by policies and says that the net result has been the usurpation of individual responsibility and freedom of choice. Concurring with Hochschild (1997) and Bailyn (1993) she warns that the provision of on-site day care allows the employee to spend more time at work and she treats it as an example of the paternalistic tendency which characterises many family-friendly initiatives. The integration response guards work against the resource demands of the worker's other priorities (Kirchmeyer 2000:89) but, in contrast, respect based initiatives ensure that boundary permeability is curtailed. That is, the boundaries between work and non-

work activities may be flexible, such that people are allowed to work at different work sites and at non-standard work times, but psychological crossover between the two domains is not expected as a corporate right. Workers are provided with the personal resources to fulfil non-work responsibilities, moreover employers literally 'respect' the enhancement which involvement in non-work domains brings to their work capabilities. Differing priorities are in a collaborative rather than a competing relationship with each other and the constant availability of the employee becomes a discredited concept. She argues that this shift from integration to respect is a cultural adjustment which requires a change of basic assumptions if employers are genuine in their commitment to release time and control to their employees. Similarly, in their study of organisational paradigms Lee et al (2000) evaluated the extent to which firms used individual cases of reduced-load (part-time) working as opportunities for learning new ways of working and new possibilities for dealing with core business priorities. They considered that this measure was representative of firms' willingness to engage in organisational learning as reduced-load working is a specific example of organisational experimentation with new ideas. The clear link between organisational learning and culture is established below and the supportiveness of the firm's culture is recognised as a key determinant of policies' ability to ameliorate working conditions (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000, La Valle et al 2002, Dumelow et al 2000).

2.6 Cultural barriers and suggestions for their removal

Rapoport et al (2002) caution that even where change appears to be proceeding in the desired strategic direction, old, deeply embedded, taken for granted assumptions can continue to influence concrete work practices. They found that such norms cluster in four categories: the use and politics of time, images of top performance (the presence of an ideal worker type), definitions of real work (some vital work which requires, for example, relational competence, is 'invisible') and beliefs about hierarchy and control. The first two of these categories are closely related and will receive attention here. The ways in which time, productivity and commitment are socially constructed are identified as a major barrier to cultural change by Lewis (1997) who says that the notion that time represents money and hence symbolises productivity, commitment and personal value is widespread. Where time is constructed as a commodity (Daly 1992) those who work long hours are considered to be more generous to the firm and those who do not give maximum time to the firm are defined as being less productive,

less committed and therefore less valued. Lewis and Taylor's study of a long hours culture revealed "pockets of awareness" (1996:123) that this could actually be inefficient and they state the importance of future research to identify the conditions under which such awareness arises. Where a culture of long hours indicates ineffective organisation of work, an emphasis on tasks, targets and competencies rather than time in the workplace (Lewis et al 1996, Bailyn 1993) may lead to progress.

The ideal worker type is considered to be bound up with notions of professionalism which "sustain definitions of selfhood that elevate the workplace over home life" (Kerfoot 2002:93) and is above all a gendered construction (Rapoport et al 2002, Bailyn 2003, Bailyn 1993, Lewis 1997) as it "embodies assumptions about competence that value stereotypically masculine ways of working – individualistically, competitively, hierarchically – and devalue or make invisible the relational skills that many women bring from the domestic sphere" (Rapoport et al 2002:170). For this reason there is a strong call for a greater acceptance of what they term the integrated worker type. "A new vision of an ideal employee is required...their value lies not in their ability to put work first but in their ability to operate as an individual who reconnects work and family in ways that benefit both. By valuing the private sphere, its values and skills, and incorporating them into work process design this leads to synergy" (Fletcher and Bailyn 1996:265). Again, it is important to be aware of the specific way in which the term 'integration' is being used. From this point on, and for the purpose of this thesis, when referring to the integrated worker I will not be using the term in the manner of Kirchmeyer (see pages 23 and 24) to infer an exploitative intent of family-friendly policies. Rather I will be inferring a positive association between integration of work and family on the one hand and genuinely family-friendly working on the other. This appears to be the majority usage of the term in the literature. The synergy argument for family-friendly policies mentioned earlier in this chapter (Lewis 1997) resists what is termed the separation of spheres in favour of their closer integration. "The traditional framing of work and family casts the two spheres as separate and competing...but a synergistic approach to work and family leads to the alignment of individual and business concerns" (Fletcher and Bailyn 1996:258, 260). Such an alignment requires systemic, cultural change and the pursuit of what is referred to as the Dual Agenda, which links

organisational effectiveness and gender equity and goes beyond the provision of policies by examining how job design itself can alleviate stress (described in Dex and Scheibl 1999). "A rethinking of taken-for-granted procedures and underlying assumptions is critical for the new organisational world. Neither *ad hoc* accommodations for individual employees nor the setting of new policies at the margins will create the kind of environment that will allow employees to manage their lives better while helping the business to become more productive" (Bailyn 1993:141). Where policies are seen as 'benefits' indirectly related to broader business goals and in some way adversarial to them (Fletcher and Rapoport 1996) the 'ideal worker' may not feel free to take them up without tarnishing their image (Lewis 1997).

Nothing less than "fundamental organisational change" (Lewis and Lewis 1996:159) and a paradigm shift are suggested by proponents (Rapoport et al 2002) of collaborative, interactive action research (CIAR) which is one key means by which the Dual Agenda can be carried out. Action research projects have demonstrated that cultural beliefs and norms which were problematic for work and family integration were also problematic for business concerns (Lewis 1997) and a key success factor in motivating workgroups to engage in job redesign was found to be the legitimation of personal as well as performance issues (Fletcher and Bailyn 1996). The reframing of issues of work-family integration as systemic issues related to organisational norms, work practices and structure and the new vision of an ideal worker that reflects the interdependence of the work and family spheres are proposed. Such reframing is considered to be an opportunity to challenge and innovate work practices in ways which would enhance productivity and gender equity in organisations (Fletcher and Rapoport 1996) to the extent that work-family issues catalyse cultural change.

The collaborative interactive action research (CIAR) paradigm promoted by researchers such as Rapoport, Bailyn, Lewis and others (Rapoport et al 2002) is guided by theories concerning gender equity and organisational effectiveness and is concerned with aspects of organisational culture which impede the development of 'family-friendly' working regardless of the provisions of policy. Reduced hours or flexibility may be a way of integrating successfully the different aspects of their personal identity and giving each life priority enough attention to achieve success

across the board. However hierarchies and career advancement patterns can preclude such idiosyncratic approaches. The inflexible assumptions on which available career paths are based is constraining many workers from contributing fully to their companies without jeopardising their personal needs (Bailyn 1993:27). Dual career ladders which offer alternatives to managerial positions are often based on the assumption that success in organisational terms lies in hierarchical achievement. Ironically this assumption can detrimentally affect the company as well as the employee's family or non-work life in that workers are oriented to career advancement rather than to fulfilling their present job requirements to the best of their ability. As mentioned in the last chapter, Bailyn calls for an emphasis on the task responsibility of all employees and a reduced concern with status which can often be at the expense of work itself (1993:39). The contribution each individual in a diverse work force could make must, by logical conclusion, be restricted by making all conform to organisational norms of success. The job satisfaction of many will also be sharply reduced by these structural inflexibilities.

Researchers from the CIAR paradigm also emphasise that work-family stress may be alleviated by indirect means which do not involve the implementation of specifically family-friendly policies. Long working hours may result from inefficient work patterns which can be adjusted accordingly. Dex and Scheibl (1999:30) describe research which was conducted in order to alleviate high levels of work-family stress and constant failure to meet deadlines in a product development team at an engineering site. The study discovered that these dysfunctions were due to the high levels of disruption which the team experienced from supervisors and other team members during the working day. A 'quality time' system was introduced which gave the team blocks of uninterrupted quiet time to complete their work. Although the outcome was 'family-friendly' this costless solution required a seemingly unrelated adjustment on the part of the managers who had to take one step back from the process and allow workers to meet their own objectives.

It is not only advocates of CIAR who have argued for an integration of spheres or at least for flexible and permeable boundaries between employees' work and personal lives. Industrialisation is generally accepted as being the catalyst which led to the separation of work from home – in actual and in analytic terms (Finch 1983:4).

Hochschild describes the overlapping temporal and spatial worlds of family and work in a farming community in 1800 (1997:47). In space and time, family and work were continuous and intermingled and the interdependence of these two spheres was self-evident. However with the advent and widespread application of industrial processes, the profile of this interaction changed completely. Work and family came to inhabit completely different spheres and a hierarchy of values became apparent. The public sphere of work, externally visible and tied to economic increase, gained ascendancy over the private domestic sphere despite the business gains that can be made by blending skill sets from both (Fletcher and Bailyn 1996). Reeves (2001) has argued similarly that the boundary is an artificial one and that work-life balance problems are themselves a result of our misguided attempts to keep work and leisure separate. He states that we need to abolish the distinction between work and leisure which he calls "one of the greatest mistakes of the last century, one that enables employers to keep workers in lousy jobs by granting them some leisure time. We should strive to be employed in such a way that we don't realise what we are doing is work" (Reeves 2001:22). Moreover when work is intrinsically enjoyable and fulfilling and people have complete time sovereignty they will no longer be averse to working long hours and their working commitments will be met in so flexible a way that they will flow smoothly with all the other, previously conflicting, priorities of our lives. Reeves offers no solutions to the problems of dependent-care, merely suggesting that if people prefer their working environments to their home environments, their working tasks to their domestic tasks, then such preferences are completely reasonable and should be accommodated. Neither does he acknowledge that many people prefer to keep work and leisure completely separate, both spatially and temporally. Such preferences may not be determined so much by the culture of organisations as by personal temperament.

As much has been said about the need for systemic, cultural change it is essential that there be clarity about which elements of organisational life are constitutive of culture, how change might be effected and how culture might be said to differ from other aspects of organisational life such as identity and image.

2.7 Establishing conceptual distinctions between culture, identity and image

Although the concepts of organisational culture, identity and image derive from various theoretical disciplines, they are all symbolic value based constructions that are becoming increasingly intertwined (Hatch and Schulz 1997:364). They are also used as co-referents by analysts in the field, such as consultants, and such collapsing together of terms can lead to conceptual difficulties (Whetten and Godfrey 1998) which will make it difficult to identify what has actually changed in an organisation. If culture and image are considered to be the same thing then does the launch of a new logo, for example, indicate that organisational life has changed for participants and, if so, in what ways? Disentangling these three terms renders them useful tools for understanding how an organisation is experienced by its members, how they see themselves and how they are perceived by external stakeholders. Obviously these terms overlap in that they can be applied to the same aspect of an organisation but will reveal different facets of it. I shall introduce each of these three concepts in turn and then define them in relation to each other by adopting Saussure's method of defining words using relational differences. Hatch and Schulz (2000:20) advocate his approach where words are defined not in relation to what they are believed to represent in the world but how they affect each other in use.

I am adopting Hatch and Schultz's (1997:357) differentiation between the qualifying terms 'organisational' and 'corporate' as they are applied to these three concepts and throughout this thesis my emphasis is on *organisational* culture, identity and image. They argue that these terms represent different perspectives on the organisation, that 'corporate' culture, identity and image are all conceptualised as a function of leadership and they focus on visual aspects of the company and link strongly with the company's vision and strategy which emphasise the explicit role of top management in their formulation. They refer to symbols which have been consciously chosen to represent the organisation, for example, by consultants and advisors to top management whether to internal or external stakeholders and therefore represent the managerial perspective. However where 'organisational' is applied to these terms it refers to the many ways in which all organisational members perceive, feel and think of themselves as an organisation and is especially concerned with informal expressions rather than those which are planned or deliberate. This organisational,

unmediated perspective is obviously not independent from the mediated managerial one and both influence each other (Hatch and Schulz 2000).

2.7.1 Culture

In the literature there are many definitions of culture, some of which are so all-encompassing that they are of little practical use, especially when attempting to distinguish 'culture' from other ideational aspects of organisational life such as image and identity. For example, Van Ess Coeling & Simms (1993:47) describe organisational culture as values developed by a group in order to survive their tasks, a set of beliefs shared by the group, expected behaviors, a set of solutions for problems they face in common, and "...the way things are done around here."

Schein's (1992) three-level model of culture is the one which is most closely followed throughout the thesis. It minimises confusion over definitions of culture which arise from not differentiating the levels at which it manifests itself. As stated earlier, he defines culture as "the pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to these problems" (Schein 1992:12) and describes the levels of culture as:

Level One: Visible artefacts (culture does not just exist in the realm of ideas)
Level Two: Espoused values (such as norms and rules of behaviour)
Level Three: Underlying assumptions (termed by Schein the "essence of culture")

Schein is implying that there is a synechdochic relationship between culture and these constituent parts. The term 'culture' is used for all three of these levels but it refers *essentially* to the underlying assumptions. Throughout this thesis I follow Lewis (1997) in referring to underlying assumptions as 'root' culture in order to differentiate my own usage of the term 'culture' from the more informal ways it often appears in the literature and presents itself as an *in vivo* code in the field. Organisational members talk about various practices which are "part of our culture," but this usage of the term 'culture' is indicative of the 'emic' or insider view of culture (Pike 1954, Harris 1979, Headland et al 1990, Martin 1992) where distinctions between levels two

and three are almost never made. A hierarchical relationship of causality (and inverse relative explicitness) is implied in this three level model and is challenged by Hatch (1993). She advocates the introduction of symbols as an additional element (whereas Schein treated symbols as a subset of artefacts) on the grounds that "they combine artefacts with a meaning that reaches beyond or surrounds it" (Schultz 1993:669) and she also makes the elements of culture less central so that the relationships between them become focal. In so doing a shift is effected from a static to a dynamic conception of culture. Whereas Schein focuses on what artefacts and values reveal about basic assumptions her perspective is on the constitution of culture by assumptions, artefacts, symbols and the processes that link them. She states that an emphasis on cultural dynamics does not undermine Schein's interests but reaches beyond them to a more complex, process-based understanding of organisational culture. Schein himself cautions that it is not really possible to describe an entire culture (1992:28) and my own emphasis is on 'root' culture, the underlying assumptions which are implicit and often 'pre-conscious' (Pondy et al 1988) and how they exist in combination with each other. "Single elements of a paradigm do not explain how an organisation can function, we need to see the combination of assumptions" (Schein 1992:37). As such I do not make a rigorous distinction between artefacts and symbols but I do follow Hatch in rejecting any suggestion of unidirectional causality or a static model of culture. Through interrelations between persons and their contexts, cultures are more or less continuously and mutually created (Becker, cited in Bryman 1991:212, Hosking and Morley 1991).

Understanding and describing distinctions between what respondents say about how their social world works and how it actually works lies at the heart of the ethnographic project in any research context and theory has to accommodate the complexity of difference between what people believe and what they actually do (Gillham 2000a:14). Moreover "the most important things to know about a people are things they take for granted and find most difficult to discuss" (Whyte cited in Jones 1991:204). The emphasis of the ethnographer or anthropologist on what might be termed 'level three' or 'root' culture brings a distinct contribution to a full treatment of what has been termed the 'expressive organisation' (Hatch et al 2000) and complements other emphases on identity and image.

2.7.2 Identity

Identity, like culture, is best understood as existing and manifesting itself on different levels (Whetten and Godfrey 1998:49). Again, this is partly to do with the perspective from which it is being observed. Organisational theorists are interested in the set of beliefs which are at its deepest level whilst marketing and design practitioners within the organisation treat identity at a more superficial level by looking at the symbols through which beliefs are expressed and shaped, the physical artefacts and behaviours. Albert and Whetten's (1985:292) classic definition of organisational identity as that which members believe to be central, enduring and distinctive about their organisation has been refined in order to accommodate the paradoxical and non-static nature of identity. For identity to be enduring it must accommodate both stability and fluidity, consistency in value and action must coexist with an "aura of adaptability" (Whetten and Godfrey 1998:22). Identity is imputed from expressed values (in other words from the context of its level two culture) and constitutes employees' views of the organisation, but the interpretation of these values is not immutable. Even if central or core values remain fairly constant, their representations and the modes of translation into action necessarily take different forms over time. It is for this reason that organisations display some tendencies for maintaining ambiguity in their identity which allows for flexible interpretations and a repertoire of values to fit many instances. Gioia (1998) emphasises that identity is fundamentally a relational and comparative concept, it is created, sustained and modified by a co-creative discursive process. Organisational identity also defines the relationship between employees and their organisations and is *embedded in* organisational culture because when members of organisations express their organisational identity they use cultural artefacts symbolically to present an image that will be interpreted by others.

2.7.3 Image

The concept of image addresses impressions and perceptions of organisations formed and held by external stakeholders (Hatch and Schulz 2000:19). Dutton and Dukerich (1991) define image as the way organisational members believe others see their organisation, what organisational members *think* these external constituencies think of them – in contrast to identity which they define as the way insiders see their organisation. Although image is a product of processes internal to the organisation there are obviously feedback mechanisms from these external recipients back into the

organisation. Alvesson (1990:378) describes image as a fabrication of public impression created to appeal to the audience rather than to reproduce reality, loosely coupled to the referent it is supposed to say something about and capable of being affected in itself without directly affecting what it refers to. In other words it is something which might be said to have a life of its own.

2.7.4 Separating culture from identity from these definitions

Culture is the context in which the mental construction of identity is based. People's understanding of what they are like as an organisation and how this organisation compares with others, draws from what might be thought of as a 'subterranean lake' of basic assumptions which has been termed here 'root' culture. Moreover those values which flow from basic assumptions with which people can *identify* and the evidence of those values in the form of artefacts (such as practices, rituals, stories etc), provide sense-making material with which members can construct a coherent identity. Figure 2.1 (see page 36) proposes a three-dimensional model portraying the relationship between culture and identity, with the various levels of culture lying flat, acting as a backdrop, out of which identity arises.

2.7.5 Understanding culture, identity and image in terms of relational differences

When defining these terms in isolation from each other it is hard to draw clear distinctions, to keep identity and culture completely separate for example. This is because identity is embedded in culture and it is expressed by using cultural artefacts symbolically which will in turn be interpreted by others (thus forming the company's reputation). This is not a unidirectional process however. Those images which are projected outwards are then absorbed back into cultural systems of meaning by being taken as cultural artefacts and are then used symbolically to infer identity. Organisational image has an influence on internal processes of identity formation. As Hatch and Shultz (1997:359) summarise, "Who we are [identity] is reflected in what we are doing [level one culture] and how others interpret who we are and what we are doing [image]." To further elucidate the differences between culture, identity and image it is useful to take the perspective of each and see how the other two articulate with that perspective. Hatch and Schulz (2000) 'map' the three aspects and their relational differences in Figure 2.2 (see page 37). From the culture side of the map, image and identity are difficult to distinguish, lying as they do beyond the cultural

core. They also seem to be more superficial in the sense of being concerned with appearances and surface representations (especially when compared with 'root' culture). However by taking the middle 'identity' perspective on the map this appears to be markedly different from both culture and image. By looking at the relational differences between identity and image and then those between identity and culture a richer appreciation of the conceptual separation which exists is achieved.

Starting with culture and identity, Hatch and Schulz locate distinctions between the contextual and the textual, the explicit and the tacit and the instrumental and the emergent. Taking these in turn, insofar as cultural assumptions, meanings and shape answers to who we are, culture contextualises identity, provides it with the raw material from which identity's *text* or story about 'who we are' is produced. This text is articulated in relation to the cultural context. Reflections on an organisation's identity will take place at a more conscious and explicit level than that at which (level three) tacit cultural knowledge resides. Finally the instrumental aspects of identity are contrasted with the more emergent aspects of culture. Cultural analysis focuses on how members maintain their interpretive systems as a context for organisational sense making activities while identity analysis focuses on how the symbols and values of an organisation are combined with external influences and used as material to construct an organisational identity.

The distinctions between image and identity concentrate on internal and external orientations, considerations of other and self and multiplicity and singularity. The first has been described already and is apparent in Figure 2.1. Image (and reputation) are situated outside the organisation and are concerned with how organisational members want to be perceived by others and what organisational members know about others' perceptions of them. Identity is not exclusively internally constructed but its orientation is more towards the internal than the external. Identity takes as its starting point how members develop, express and project their organisational sense of self whereas image is concerned with how organisational self-expressions and identity projections are interpreted by others. Finally, there are many audiences to which an organisation will want to project its image and this contrasts with the underlying unity of an organisation's identity (to which the images refer).

To reiterate, in this thesis the term 'culture' encapsulates all three of Schein's levels and indicates the context or backdrop in which identity is formed. Where underlying assumptions are being discussed, as opposed to values (about which members are more or less aware) and visible artefacts, the term 'root' culture will be used. This usage is preferable to 'pure' or 'true' culture because these two terms suggest a hierarchy of value. Culture, the context in which members experience their organisation, is valid and meaningful for these members at all three levels.

2.8 Problematising cultural change

There is an extensive managerial literature on purposive culture change (Deal and Kennedy 1988, Collins and Porras 2000, Kotter & Cohen 2002) and, according to Schein (1992) it is deemed to be necessary when basic assumptions conflict with the values being expressed, for example in family-friendly policies. Identifying and analysing deeply embedded, unconscious and shared mental structures temporarily destabilises the cognitive and interpersonal world and releases large amounts of anxiety (Schein 1992:16). He makes clear the close relationship between organisational learning, development and planned change by stating that "when we speak of cultural change in organisations we are referring to transformational learning, and change of this magnitude requires people to give up long held assumptions and to adopt radical new ones" (Coutu 2002:106). Culture is a primary source of resistance to change (1992:xiv) and organisations embarking on learning and development processes have to do so acknowledging the contradictions of stability, learning and change (1992:363) as there will always be "a large group of people who are willing to pay a high price for stability" (Coutu 2002). The inherent paradox surrounding learning is that anxiety inhibits learning but is necessary if learning is going to happen at all, and Schein explains this by describing two kinds of anxiety associated with learning: learning anxiety and survival anxiety. Learning anxiety, the fear of trying something new for the first time, the concern that an innovative working arrangement may cast us a deviant in the group we belong to, can threaten self esteem and even identity. It is the basis for resistance to change and without survival anxiety, "the horrible realisation that in order to make it you are going to have to change" (Coutu 2002:104), its intensity is such that learning, (profound, 'root' cultural change) will only take place when survival anxiety is greater than learning anxiety. This is one reason why Schein cautions those who

Figure 2.1 A three-dimensional model portraying the relationship between culture, image and identity

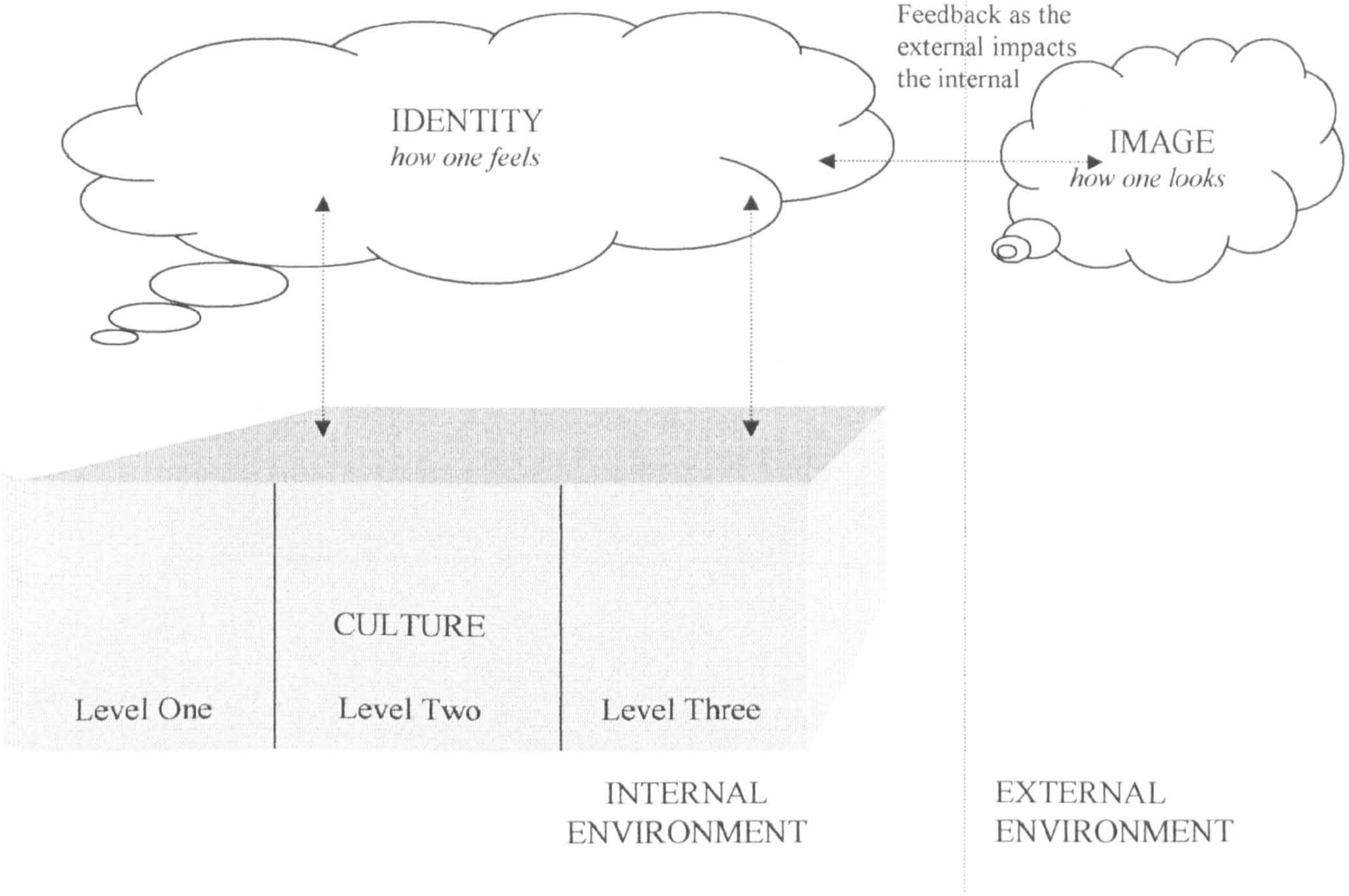
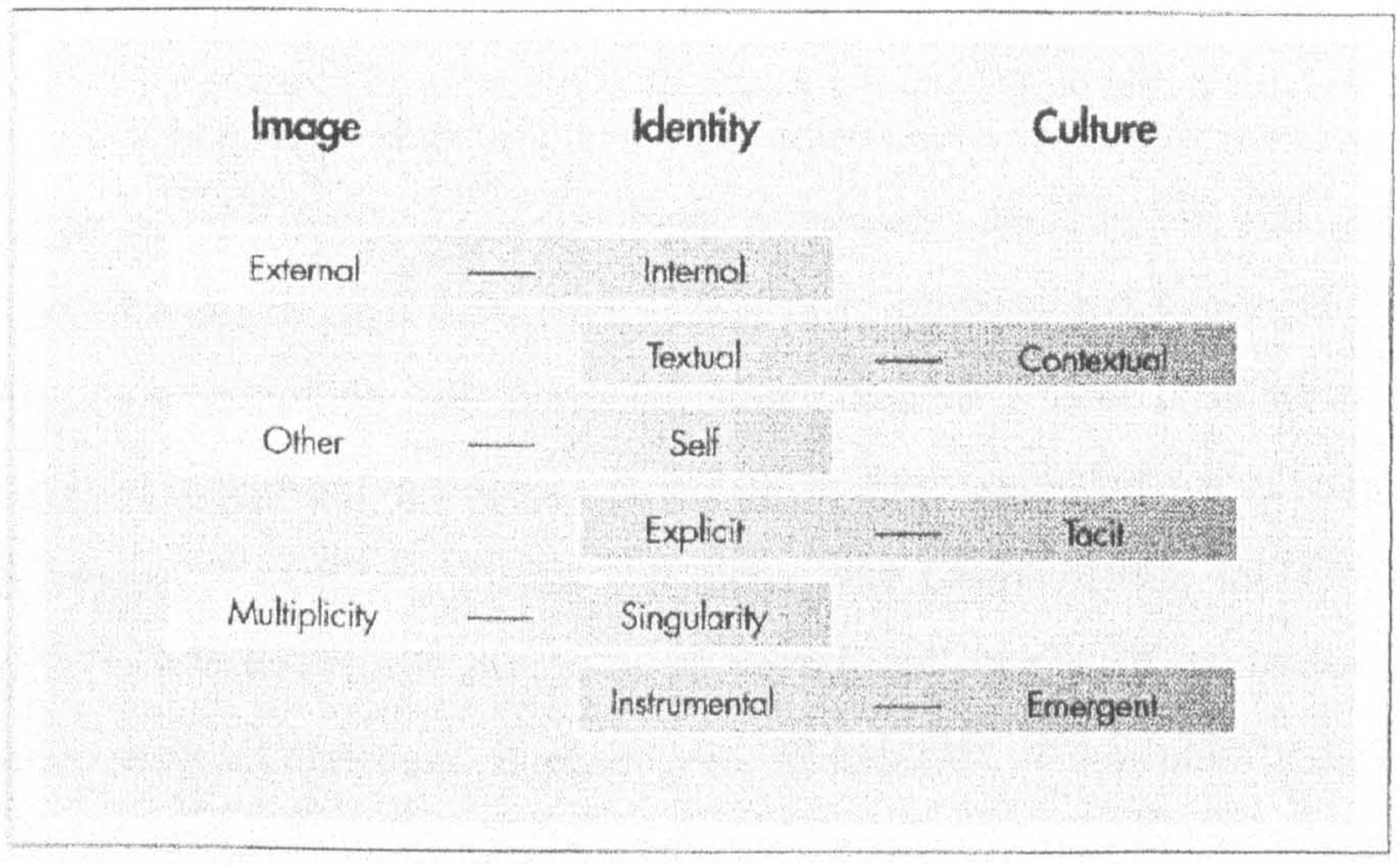


Figure 2.2 Related differences between organisational image, identity and culture
reproduced from Hatch and Schulz (2000:21)



underestimate the difficulties of effecting cultural change and after many decades in the field his conclusion is that "we do not know how to systematically intervene in the culture to create transformational learning" (Coutu 2002:103). In the light of the difficulties entailed in purposively effecting cultural change he favours gradual evolution.

When McKee et al (2000) describe how employers in the oil and gas industry encourage employees to plan their own career development and progression such that work-family considerations are favoured when mobility and relocation issues are tabled (in a system known as 'open resourcing') they state that some refer to this as adopting a corporate welfare agenda. For those, like Lewis (1996, 1997) and Gonyea and Googins (1992) who insist on the need for radical change in recognition of work-family issues, such an approach is perceived, in contrast, to be incremental in nature. The implication is that such employers have not gone far enough and in our society it is almost a truism that change and progress must be ongoing. In his description of the ethics of modernity, Munch (2000) explains how we are driven by instrumental activism, the relentless drive to deploy all our technological, intellectual and financial capital to improve our lives incrementally, throughout the whole of our lives. However, the necessity and desirability of a period of more dramatic transformation is challenged by Schein's caveats about the difficulties of profound cultural change which requires the unlearning of cherished (though often unconscious) beliefs and the relearning of new ones which is, he says, a lengthy and painful process (Coutu 2002).

2.9 Paradigms for the conceptualisation of culture

Martin (1992) recognises three different perspectives apparent in the proliferation of culture research. Organisational researchers disagree fundamentally on the extent to which culture is a source of harmony, an effect of irreducible conflicts of interest or a reflection of the inescapable ambiguities that pervade contemporary organisational life. They ask if culture must be internally consistent, integrative and shared or whether it can be shot through with inconsistencies, expressive of difference and incorporate confusion, ignorance, paradox and fragmentation (Martin 1992). Schein's work on culture represents the integrationist perspective which has three defining characteristics. All cultural manifestations are interpreted as consistently reinforcing the same themes, all members are considered to share in an organisation-wide

consensus and the culture is described as a realm where all is clear and ambiguity is excluded. However research conducted from a differentiation perspective describes cultural manifestations as something inconsistent, people may say one thing but do another and consensus occurs within the boundaries of subcultures which often conflict. For example, Gabriel (2000:171) writes that he was frequently impressed by the cognitive and emotional gulf that separates old from young organisational members. This is evident in research conducted by Parker (2000) who describes culture as a process of making claims about the differences and similarities between people and groups within organisations, that any formulation of organisational culture needs to theorise it as a process of making multiple claims about membership categories, about 'us' and 'them' typifications. His research revealed multiple divides emerging within organisations along spatial/functional, generational and occupational/professional lines. 'Us' and 'them' associations formed between people who worked in one section of the workplace as opposed to the other, between old-timers and new-comers and, for example between NHS managers and doctors, providers of very different services but both working for the same organisation. He describes how dichotomous thinking, a marker of difference (between 'us' and 'them') is used to express a distinct view of what the purpose of the organisation is, what it should be concentrating on and to explain why and how the other group doesn't share the same perception, "understand the truth" about the organisation. Studies taking the third, fragmentation perspective treat ambiguity as the essence of culture. Consensus and dissensus are issue specific, constantly fluctuating and clear consistencies and even clear inconsistencies are rare. March and Olsen (1976) identify four major kinds of 'opaqueness' in organisations: the ambiguity of intention, understanding, history and organisation itself and Pondy et al (1988:xiii) urge that we refine our images of decision making to accommodate conditions of high ambiguity. Martin and Myerson (1988) differentiate between formal and informal ambiguity and suggest that cultures viewed from this paradigm be considered as 'organised anarchies'.

However, the three perspectives are to be thought of as ideal types, Schein himself wrote that although the conservative nature of culture has been stressed and its ability to draw members into shared meanings, it doesn't have to imply unanimity or absence of conflict (Ashkenasy et al 2000:xxv) and "any single perspective ignores or distorts

crucially important aspects of an organisation's culture" (Martin 1992:174). A multiperspective approach is advocated by Martin as any cultural context contains elements that can only be understood when all three perspectives are brought to bear on the analysis. Young (1991:90) describe how an awareness of the interdependence between these processes illuminates how values and issues are negotiated between organisational participants such that social events are attributed meaning. Moreover the need for a three-perspective approach becomes even more evident when considering the process of cultural *change* (Frost et al 1991:158). For example, an integration study must acknowledge the conflicts that accompany change and the fragmentation perspective that clarity, consistency will be required for coordinated action. In the light of such comments the research I undertook was concerned to identify consensus, dissensus and ambiguity, the presence and articulation of subcultures and the extent to which they were enduring and consistent across a range of issues.

Finally, writers have emphasised the fallaciousness of treating culture and organisation as bounded entities. Parker (2000) stresses that culture making processes take place 'inside', 'outside' and 'between' formal organisations, and members of individual organisations may have 'understandings' and identities which are specific to their situation but both these categories of psychological construct are influenced by 'understandings' and identities that circulate within the broader society in which the organisation finds itself. A similar point is made by Martin who refers to 'feeder cultures' (1992:113) and says that once these are considered "the boundaries of the organisation must be seen as permeable and, in a sense arbitrary." She continues by saying that in so doing the usual notions of what an organisation includes and excludes are challenged, thus opening up new topics for study by organisational scholars, such as the role of the family.

2.10 Conclusion

Given the abundance of literature on work-life reconciliation, family-friendly policies, culture and its transformation, this review has focused on those conceptual issues which have most salience for the specific concerns of this thesis, namely the impact of policies on what I have termed 'root' culture. Having described the problems which governments, firms and individuals face as a result of the social trends which

necessitate that far more parents and carers manage the often conflicting priorities of work and family, the extent to which they have been resolved is questionable. However the notion that profound cultural change is the panacea has been challenged given the difficulties which this entails. Surfacing and altering basic assumptions is a profoundly unsettling experience for organisations and will only be attempted if survival is in question. Moreover, at the conceptual level, cultures cannot be understood as unified systems whose logic lies waiting to be discovered. They are dynamic systems, seething with oppositional thinking and multiple realities such that "one and the same culture can have very different results in concrete performances and actions" (Munch 2000:9) and as even the advocates of radical systemic change admit, "the difficulties in achieving an 'accurate' picture of organisational culture change cannot be overlooked" (Lewis and Taylor 1996:125).

Chapter Three

Case Study Research, Grounded Theory and their Utility for the Research Question

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology and methods employed to answer the research question of the thesis. Travers (2001) makes the distinction between methodology and methods by saying that whereas methods are the techniques used to collect data, methodology refers to the assumptions one has as a researcher which can be epistemological or political in character. The research question was addressed using (mainly) qualitative methods. A case study design and grounded theory approach were considered to be the most appropriate for reasons which shall be made clear by describing the conceptual and methodological fit that exists between this research design and this theoretical approach, determining what a case study actually is and introducing the subject of its utility in theory building.

Problems of rigour and generalisability associated with case study research will be explored as well as its strengths, the role of the researcher in its conduct and its potential for building theories based on comparison. A common feature of the case study design is the use of different methods of data collection and these will be discussed before the appropriateness of the case study method for the research question itself is made clear. The two case studies carried out will then be described in operational terms, such as the ways in which the units of analysis were chosen, access was negotiated and questions, in the broadest sense of the word, were framed for and posed in the field. Once the site of enquiry has been established the focus of the chapter will then move on to a more thorough consideration of grounded theory itself. Familiarisation with this tradition and with the tools that it employs sets the scene for its application to the large volume of data collected in the case studies. The ensuing analysis will receive a brief and initial treatment but this will be greatly expanded in Chapter Six.

3.2 Setting case study research in a broader context

Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to "get under the skin" of a group or organisation to find out what really happens (Gillham 2000a:11). They emphasise

words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data and embody a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation (Bryman 2001:20). To restate the research question, I wanted to examine whether or not cultural change had taken place as a result of the implementation of family friendly policies. Qualitative research is interpretivist in its epistemology in that it emphasises understanding the social world by examining how that world is interpreted by its participants. Its constructionist ontological orientation assumes that the properties of that social world are themselves largely dependent on interactions between people and do not have a reified existence outside of them (Bryman 2001:264). As organisational 'culture' is of concern in this study, a quantitative approach would be inappropriate as it is better equipped for measuring "things that exist and act independently of thought" (Bhaskar 1975:250) rather than for grasping the subjective meaning of social action. Karen Locke (2001:9) expresses it similarly

> Social reality is not a given. It is built up over time through shared history, experience and communication so that what is taken for 'reality' is what is shared and taken for granted as to the way the world is to be perceived and understood. Interpretive social research focuses on what events and objects mean to people on how they perceive what happens to them and around them and how they adapt their behavior in the light of those meanings and perceptions. Meaning is composed through situated interaction, not standardized from place to place or person to person.

3.3 Relating case study research and grounded theory

Case study research and grounded theory (both of which largely fall within the remit of qualitative research, though neither are exclusive to it) are intrinsically concerned with the very issues Locke describes. "Case studies allow investigations to retain holistic and *meaningful* [emphasis added] characteristics of real life events – such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes" and they are necessary because they help us "understand complex social phenomena" (Yin 1994:3). Grounded theory "requires that the interpretations and perceptions of actors on their own and others' actions become incorporated into researchers' interpretations" (Locke 2001:10). Similarities of emphasis and underlying philosophy lead to a methodological fit which Post and Andrews (see Locke 2001:19) explicitly acknowledge when they advocate the incorporation of grounded theory's tools for comparative analysis and its style of handling and interpreting data, for case study research. When using grounded theory and conducting case study research the

intention is to start with as little in the way of *a priori* theoretical notions as possible (whether these are derived from the literature or not) because until one becomes familiar with the data it is unclear what theories or explanation will work best or make most sense (Gillham 2000a:2). Inductive theorising and an emergent design are employed in order to make sense of "what you have found after you have found it" (Gillham 2000a:6). Eisenhardt (1989:547) describes the "bottom up approach" of case study research and how the specifics of data lead to the generalisations of theory. "Good theory" is that which emerges at the end and not at the beginning of the research process and the strength of the case study method lies in the grounding of theory in the evidence.

Writers like Eisenhardt acknowledge that the tie to actual data has often been tenuous in the development of theory (1989:532) but intimate connection with empirical reality is what permits the development of a testable, relevant and valid theory. A case study approach is a strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings. It is often the preferred method of empirical enquiry when investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and the relevance of these contextual conditions *to* the phenomenon of study is of interest (Yin 1994:10, Gillham 2000a:1). Indeed Ragin & Becker contend that an important part of the research is concerned with delimiting the case, establishing the boundary and not treating formal parameters as given (1992:14). They consider that Webster's dictionary's grammatical definition of 'case' expresses this very aptly as "a form taken by a noun, pronoun or adjective to show its relation to neighbouring words; any such relation whether expressed by inflection or otherwise" (1992:84) and they stress that any definition of case study should build in an awareness of the relational significance of cases. The research reported in this thesis was concerned with policies' impact on company culture and the problematic nature of the boundedness of culture and its openness to influence from the wider external culture received brief attention in Chapter Two. The unique strength of the case study method lies in its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence, qualitative and quantitative, (although the majority of evidence collected in this research was of the former kind) such as documents, artefacts, interviews and observations. Gillham (2000a:2) describes how

no one kind or source of evidence is likely to be sufficient (or sufficiently valid) on its own, each comes with its own strengths and weaknesses.

It is important at this stage to mention that 'case study' is not a term used in a clear and fixed sense. Indeed literature on the subject is fragmented across different disciplines and topic areas and there is scant indication of a common understanding of the problems this research raises (Gomm et al 2000:1). As the beginning of the chapter indicated, case study research has to be seen as more than a method, involving as it does marked assumptions about how the social world can and should be studied which differ from those of other approaches. Gomm et al advocate its status as a distinct research paradigm formulated in terms of a contrast between positivism on the one hand and naturalism, interpretivism and constructionism on the other (however Bryman draws attention (2001:33) to the fluctuating and sometimes even contradictory meanings of the term naturalism which problematise a simple opposition between it and positivism).

3.4 Moving beyond description to theory building

Case study research shares common roots with ethnography which has been described by Harper (1992:139) as the case study of the small group (and the unit of analysis in a case study could be an individual, a community, an organisation, a nation-state, an empire, or a civilisation (Sjoberg et al 1991)). He states that the task of developing case study methods appropriate for the kin group, informal network or small community was left to anthropologists working among smaller groups in traditional, non-industrial societies. There are distinct commonalities between case study research and such ethnographic practice as the value of the latter is found, according to Van Maanen, not in its analysis and interpretation of culture but in its decision to examine culture in the first place; to conceptualise it, reflect on it, narrate it and ultimately to evaluate it. "We need more not fewer ways to tell of culture," (Van Maanen 1988:140) and this is facilitated by the intention and ability of case study research to generate accounts of a culture which are rich in detail, and in the contextualisation of meaning (Williams 2000:218) otherwise known as "thick description" (Geertz 1973). It is important to bear in mind however that description is not an endpoint in itself but should lead to theoretical understanding. Glaser and Strauss (1967:30) attest to the utility of case study research in theory building and describe how a single case can

indicate a general conceptual category or property. Subsequent cases can confirm this indication through a strategy for generating theory of comparative analysis. Such a strategy puts a high emphasis on theory as process, that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not a perfected product. Conceptualising theory as process "renders quite well the reality of social interaction and its structural process." (Glaser and Strauss 1967:32) The aim of this process is to make *moderatum* generalisations (Williams 2000) in order to provide what Merton describes as "middle-range" theories which are "intermediate to general theories of social systems which are too remote from particular classes of social behaviour, organisation and change to account for what is observed and to those detailed orderly descriptions of particulars that are not generalized at all" (Merton 1967:39). Within this category of middle range theories Glaser and Strauss make a further distinction between substantive theory (developed for a substantive or empirical area of sociological inquiry) and formal theory (developed for a formal or conceptual area of social enquiry). They contend that "a substantive theory generated from data must first be formulated in order to see which formal theories are perhaps applicable for furthering additional substantive formulations" (Glaser and Strauss 1967:34) and thus establish the starting point of theory formulation as being grounded in and interactive with relevant data. Emergent theory is testable with constructs that can be readily measured (by returning to the data) and hypotheses which can be proven false (Eisenhardt 1989:547).

3.5 Addressing the problematic nature of case study research

Many of the criticisms which have been levelled at qualitative research in general have been considered by some writers to be especially salient when assessing the robustness of case study research. Bryman summarises how qualitative research has sometimes been criticised as being too subjective, difficult to replicate (as the researcher is the main instrument of data collection) and especially vulnerable to problems of generalisation and accusations of lack of transparency (2001:282) Where case studies are concerned, in terms of the final point, Locke concurs that the procedures through which the gathered interview, observational (and quantitative) data are reduced in order to fashion the final account of the unit being studied are not always clear and do not seem to be codified (2001:15). Wolcott goes so far as to say that the case study is better regarded as a form of reporting than as a strategy for conducting research. The fact that I have adopted the case study strategy indicates that

I do not concur with Wolcott but useful caveats are contained in this critique which states that where researchers consider the case study to be "an eclectic but nonetheless identifiable method" (Wolcott 2001:91) it is vital that they provide adequate detail about the specific research techniques employed rather than treating the phrase 'case study' itself as sufficient to describe the mode of proceeding. The clear, initial definition of the research question is of primary importance (Eisenhardt 1989:535) but is not always treated as such. Scepticism surrounding the usefulness of case study research (Scholz & Tietje 2002:3) has not always been well-founded however. Of necessity case studies look at small numbers of units (because they go into so much detail) but the dichotomy of looking at a 'population' or a large N versus a case study (small N) has often been conflated with the totally different dichotomy of 'causal analysis' versus 'narrative account' (Lieberson 1992). In other words the explanatory power and theory building potential of the case study has been underestimated or dismissed completely, although I would reiterate here the limitations expressed in the introductory chapter, that this study cannot claim to provide a straightforward cause and effect analysis.

The area in which perhaps the greatest concerns are raised about the merits of the case study as a strategy for conducting research is in that of generalisability. "Generalisations are assertions of enduring values that are context free. Their value lies in their ability to modulate efforts at prediction and control" (Gomm et al 2000:27). The most common way of generalising from scientific research is by statistical means. An inference is made about a population or universe on the basis of empirical data collected about a sample, what Yin (1994:30) refers to as Level One inference. This is for example the most common way of generalising when doing surveys. If the sample size of a case study is one, then its potential for *statistical* generalisation is severely compromised. However Yin states that this way of generalising from the case study is wholly inappropriate because cases are not sampling units and should not be chosen as such. Rather they should be selected in much the same way as a laboratory investigator selects the *topic* of a new experiment. In other words they are not analogous to single experiments in a series but to the series of experiments itself. A similar point is made by Stake when he says that the case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of object to be studied (Locke 2001:16). Whilst it is sometimes argued that the aim of case study research is to

capture cases in their uniqueness rather than use them as a basis for wider generalisation or for theoretical inferences (Gomm et al 2000:3) their usefulness in theory building has already been described and it is in this area that their generalisability is sited. Case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes (Yin 1994:10). Therefore they are useful for *analytic* generalisation in which previously developed theories are used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of a more recent case study. Level Two inferences are made when an investigator is striving to generalise a particular set of results to a broader theory, so theories become the vehicle for examining other cases. Theories are tested through replications of the findings in other and subsequent cases which should, according to the theory present the same results. A replication logic rather than a sampling logic is being followed. Cases should be chosen either to predict similar results (literal replication) or to produce contrasting results for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) (Yin 1994:45). The same point is made by Gomm et al (2000:24) that case studies can be used to test hypotheses, especially to create a single exception that shows the hypothesis to be false. Where Yin talks about the power of cases to build analytic generalisations, Stake contrasts generalisations which are rationalistic, propositional and lawlike with those which are *naturalistic* (intuitive, empirical, based on personal, direct and vicarious experience) and cases are a powerful means of building the latter (see Lincoln & Guba 2000). He personalises naturalistic generalisations and describes how they develop within the individual as a product of experience, how they lead to expectation and guide action. As such, case studies themselves are "epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person *a natural basis for generalisation"* (emphasis added by Lincoln & Guba 2000:36). Thus one of the main disadvantages of case study research has been addressed by clarifying the grounds for generalisation.

3.6 Appropriateness of a case study approach for the research question

Organisational culture, with its "biographic, authentic and historic dynamics and perspectives" (Scholz and Tietje 2002:4) was the specific focus of enquiry and was, as such, a highly appropriate subject for a case study approach. When looking through the lens of culture "truth is relative, reality is realistic and a structural relationship is contingent" (Scholz and Tietje 2002:25). In such a research context it is important to establish ecological validity (Bryman 2000:31). This criterion is concerned with the

extent to which findings are applicable to people's everyday, natural social settings and reflect mundane (rather than experimental) realism. The aim was to provide an indepth elucidation of what it means to be part of a particular culture (or subculture) and this necessitated first hand empirical enquiry (Bulmer 1997:158) and a flexible approach with relatively little structure. There was also an emphasis on process and a concern to show how events and patterns unfold over time. Furthermore a sensitivity to contradictions, the development of which is a major driving force of change (Kvale 1996:55), is a key component to both the study of culture and the scope of a case study. Others have noted that the case study is valuable when studying the leading edge of change (Donmoyer 2000) as it allows the research to be structured in a way that explicitly probes the impact of issues which are likely to change over time and which takes note of where an organisational characteristic is in its lifecycle. The case study firms considered their family-friendly provision to be generous, it was certainly above the statute and it was possible that they were leading the field either in their industry or geographical area. In the wider culture, the impact of the government's rolling programme of regulation which is intended to ensure that flexibility in the workforce continues to expand will have a particular kind of impact in companies which tend to treat the legislative imperative as the *minimum*, a necessary but not always sufficient level of provision. However, whether or not they were perceived by their employees to be on the "leading edge of change" was a substantive issue for the study.

The merits of the case study approach have been established in relation to the research question but it remains to establish the characteristics of well designed studies. Yin (1994:145) identifies five general features of what he terms the exemplary case study. Firstly the case or cases chosen must be significant. In order to examine the impact of policies it was necessary to choose firms with a substantial portfolio of policies and a fairly high awareness of the HR issues driving their implementation. As both cases were carried out in large firms which enjoy a marked level of influence in their respective industries and locations this further increased their significance. Secondly, each must be complete (it must be clear that evidence was exhaustively collected and attention given to what Gillham calls 'discrepant' data (2000a:29) that challenged emerging theories) and the boundaries to the case must be given explicit attention so that a distinction is made between the phenomenon under question and the context.

Furthermore there must be an absence of those artifactual conditions which are derived from time and resource constraints. In both cases it was clear that access to interviewees would be limited. Alongside what I refer to as the 'formal track' of respondents, those selected by the HR departments in each organisation, it was necessary to develop an 'informal track' of respondents, the characteristics of which are described below. This addresses the requirements of the third feature which is that alternative perspectives are sought, the points of view of all major actors in the case are presented. "Shared meaning is an achievement" (Locke 2001:9) and can in no way be taken for granted. For this informal track, interviewees were chosen at all points in the organisational hierarchy to avoid managerialist bias. Previous employees and spouses of current staff members were also approached. Fourthly, and this naturally follows on from the second point, sufficient and especially critical evidence must be displayed. Finally Yin urges that the written report should be engaging and clear. It is the researcher's task to distil the essentials of the case into the most parsimonious but complete form. Given the volume of data which a case study produces this is a significant challenge. "We do not write up all that we saw or heard or were told. Rather we write up what all of our thinking and *comparing* (emphasis added) has led us to believe our field experience means" (Locke and Golden-Biddle 1997:7).

3.7 A comparative design and the benefits of a multiple case study

From the outset it was decided that more than one company would be studied and within one of these companies more than one business unit was explored in depth. The first, a pharmaceutical company, was the subject of a holistic case study and in the second, an engineering company, an embedded design was used (Yin 1994:38). The case study design's markedly comparative nature which disposes it towards theory building, is greatly enhanced by conducting multiple case studies. By comparing two or more cases the researcher is in a better position to establish the circumstances in which a theory will or will not hold and, by going through the very process of comparison, concepts may become discernible which are relevant to an emerging theory. The strength of a comparative design lies in its ability to allow the distinguishing characteristics of two or more cases to act as a springboard for theoretical reflections about contrasting findings (Bryman 2001:51). Indeed a foundational operation in this research practice is the assignment of meaning through the activities of naming and comparing (Locke 2001:44). Writers who emphasise the

value of designs involving a comparative logic also discuss the way in which a diachronic view offers a second valuable perspective which brings together theory and empirical data (Bulmer 1988:158). The case study research conducted here necessarily included a longitudinal element as the sites were returned to at later stages and this is not an uncommon feature of the research method (Bryman 2001:51).

By incorporating a longitudinal element into the multiple case study this not only facilitated the capturing of change over time but allowed the iterative process of data collection and analysis to develop fully. Indeed insights and theories emerge in a decidedly non-linear way (Locke 2001:45) and Eisenhardt similarly stresses that it is through constant iteration between steps throughout the research process that theory building is achieved. Data analysis and collection frequently overlap. The researcher moves from cross-case comparison, sometimes even to a redefinition of the research question,[1] then back to the field to regather evidence in a process which is "alive with tension between divergence into new ways of understanding data and convergence into a single theoretical framework" (Eisenhardt 1989:546).

However the process of comparison should not obscure what is particular to each case. Special characteristics pertaining to one organisation may produce certain findings (Schofield 2000:90) and, again, the advantages and imperative of looking at a case as a (fairly) bounded whole are apparent. By way of example, one of the cases here was of a research and development facility in a pharmaceutical company in which the way of working for many people in the past might more closely be associated with an academic environment than with a multinational enterprise. The historical backdrop which this provided to current working practices was significantly unusual. So, whilst a multiple case study provides innumerable and potentially very fruitful points of comparison, each study is important in its own right.

Returning to the subject of research design, this is the logic which links the data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial question of the study, it is an

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[1] My own experience was that the research question came ever more sharply into focus as I was faced with a potentially overwhelming volume of data. The only way sense could be made of the many different strands of evidence or slices of data (Glaser and Strauss 1967:65) was by returning continually to its defined field of inquiry.

action plan for getting from here (the initial set of questions to be answered) to there (the set of conclusions or answers to those questions). It also defines the domain of generalisability, whether or not the obtained interpretations can be generalised to a larger population or to different situations (Yin 1994:19). Therefore the design needs to determine what is the question to be studied, what data are relevant and what to collect as well as how to analyse the results. The limits of data collection and analysis will be determined by specifying the unit or units of analysis, that is the (relatively) bounded entity which is the subject of the study.

Validity is of vital concern whatever method is being employed although there are many different opinions as to the criteria which should be used to judge or evaluate qualitative as opposed to quantitative work (Bryman and Bell 2003:288). Lecompte and Goetz (1982) for example, write about *external reliability* (the degree to which a study can be replicated), *internal reliability* (a similar notion to inter-observer consistency (Bryman and Bell 2003:76) which was not relevant to this study as only one researcher was involved), *internal validity* (the level of 'fit' between a researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas they develop) and finally *external validity* (the degree to which findings can be generalised across social contexts.) Yin (1994:34) has formulated similar criteria of validity for case study research although he talks about construct validity (rather than internal reliability) which is perhaps more relevant where a single researcher is collecting data from multiple sources. To ensure construct validity he stresses the need to avoid using subjective judgements to collect the data. As the presence or absence of cultural change is the subject of enquiry it is necessary to specify significant operational events that indicate that change has taken place and not rely *merely* on impressions. The role of the researcher as the instrument of enquiry does, however, become relevant when we start to discuss the role of impressions on this kind of research. Interpretivist, qualitative research assumes that researcher agency in formulating judgements cannot be eliminated and acknowledges that researchers are "caught up in the same human meaning making web as those they study." (Locke 2001:9) As this is a comparative design and we are all constantly making naturalistic comparisons (Stake 1978), it becomes increasingly difficult to discount the role of impressions although I would stress the importance of subjecting theories arising from these impressions to the full glare of discrepant data. Impressions therefore are indispensable starting points but must be accompanied by

chains of evidence, (Yin 1994:34) albeit inductively obtained. "The self is an instrument of enquiry. Every time we see we compare...so our subjectivity, with the wealth of comparisons it implants in us transplants us into tourists of ourselves, visitors of the odd sights of everyday life. It removes the dull sense that anything is at all obvious" (Hochschild 2003:6). Having one's draft case study report reviewed by key informants (respondent validation) provides a further safeguard against an over reliance on impressions.

Ideally, when selecting the cases to be studied, the criteria for theoretical sampling should be met. In other words, if the aim of data collection is to develop emerging theory then the researcher should choose units of analysis which will help to generate as many properties of the categories of interest as possible until saturation is achieved. Thereby categories can be related to each other and to their properties and so build up the theoretical framework. However, theoretical sensitivity, which discerns the relevance of data for emerging theories can be lost if the researcher is too devoted to one specific preconceived theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967:45). Herein lies the paradox of grounded theory. Moreover, when conducting research in organisations the all important issue of access proves to be determinative in many cases.

3.8 Gaining access to implement the research design

As organisations and researchers have inherently different roles (Beynon 1988:23) such studies are shot through with conflict between what is theoretically desirable and what is practically possible and "theoretical, philosophical and epistemological concerns are important but they have to be clearly bracketed for the purposes of practical field research" (Buchanan et al 1988:53). Two organisations (PharMerger and EngCorp) were approached to be the units of analysis and I benefited from connections established through the charity which is funding this PhD. A consultant who advises the charity on organisational issues had strong relationships with senior figures in these companies which were appropriate because they were sufficiently local for ease of access, were of a similar size and both had what has been termed a "bundle" of family-friendly policies (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000, Remery et al 2003). On many occasions, I found that I needed to be opportunistic and that a reactive rather than preplanned approach to the decidedly non-static character of the research context was essential. In this study there were chance events and encounters

in the data collection process and it is appreciated that the valuable insights obtained were at the expense of comparability with the other case (Beynon 1988:23). However, as they often reinforced existing impressions or provided starting points for further inquiry the reliability of the process was not unduly affected. Indeed Eisenhardt advocates what she terms flexibility or "controlled opportunism" in which the uniqueness presented in the course of studying a specific case is taken advantage of to provoke the emergence of new themes which will actually improve resultant theory (Eisenhardt 1989:539).

Also, as "getting back" (Buchanan et al 1988) was of vital concern in satisfying the longitudinal dimension of the multiple case study, it was essential to steer a careful course between opportunistic and proactive gathering of data and respecting the parameters laid down by the designated gatekeeper to the organisation. In one of the studies (the pharmaceutical company) it was repeatedly emphasised that all interviewees were under severe time constraints and that interviews must not overrun the twenty minute allotted period. Access to their working environments was explicitly prohibited in almost all cases. (The majority of interviews took place in the HR department.) Although it would have benefited the study greatly if the follow up (checking) phase of interviews could have been arranged directly with the interviewees and conducted at their work stations, it was clear that this was not going to be permitted.

There were very few opportunities for *participant* observation and, according to Gans' typology (Bryman 2001:300) I almost exclusively occupied the role of the total researcher, although I did attend PharMerger's annual employee event, Pharm Day. The most senior respondent arranged for me to interview her in her office at the first and final stage. This context illustrated her responses well as the intensity of work reported was exemplified by her constantly receiving emails whilst we spoke and the informality of culture she described was seen, for example, in the way she made her own coffee. A request to participate in team meetings to observe interactions was disallowed and the control which the HR department exercised over the selection of interviewees in both case studies necessitated the development of an 'informal track' of employees. These were either known to me beforehand through friends and former working relationships or were referred on to me in a 'snowballing' fashion (see

Franwick et al 1994). Not only did current employees agree to be informally interviewed off the company premises but many of their partners were also willing to join the sample ('spousal respondents'). It must be stressed that there was no indication that the selection process was intentionally biased by either HR department to make the company 'look good', or that the 'formal track' employees they provided were guarded in their responses. I emphasised the complete anonymity of the process and, although they knew that their employers would be receiving a report on the findings, the majority expressed satisfaction that this would be the case, as they were keen that change would result. However, as 'formal track' respondents knew that HR were aware that they were being interviewed and might conceivably have recognised unattributed responses, this may have influenced the data they provided. The development of the alternative 'informal track' was intended to compensate for this to some extent, as well as to facilitate the pursuit of variation at different levels which Locke advocates (2001:56).

When choosing which organisations would be the units of analysis the main criteria were that both were of a similar size, that is either both were large or both were SMEs (small and medium enterprises with less than 500 employees). The pharmaceutical company study took place on a single site although there are other sites in the UK to which many people travel fairly regularly and in some ways it is organisationally part of a greater 'super site.' However, for most of the participants in this study there was a sense that the site was bounded and that they belonged to a workforce which was just over a thousand (although this was a subset of a much larger global company). In the engineering company it was agreed that I would study two business units out of the four which were located in a geographical area. To study all four of the business units which loosely comprised the working community in that area would have been impossible as it involved several thousands of employees. However, by studying two sites, each incorporating over a thousand staff, some comparability was obtained in this embedded case, with the holistic study conducted at the pharmaceutical company. The engineering company was also part of a larger global entity and there were many other underlying similarities between the two companies despite the major differences in their reasons for existence.

Table 3.1 Interview Process at PharMerger

	Preliminary Phase July 02-Oct 02	First Phase November 02	Second Phase Jan 03-May 03	Third Phase Mar 04-Apr 04
Details of Phase	Setting up study: Formal discussions re. access with HR vice president and first designated contact person Induction session (with first designated contact person) Pilot interview Informal discussions with placement student and former HR manager	First round of interviews: Formal Track: 23 interviews conducted in person in HR department (with exception of most senior respondent) Interviews of 20-30 minutes length were recorded and fully transcribed	Following up and checking responses from first round (dependent interviewing): 13 employees interviewed Conducted by telephone (recorded and fully transcribed) and email Informal track: 5 employees plus 4 spousal respondents (one of whom works on-site for a sub-contractor) plus 2 ex-employees (and one of their spouses). Conducted in person at respondents' homes. Interviews of 20-30 minutes length were recorded and fully transcribed. Line of quest-ioning based on interview guide for first phase and that developed for following up formal track.	Capturing change over time (longitudinal aspect): 17* employees and one spousal respondent interviewed, 12 from first phase plus six additional respondents. One was the new designated contact person in HR and five more were added through snowballing (referred to in interview with a member of the initial sample.) Interviews with original sample were conducted as per first phase (length and location), additional respondents were interviewed at work stations. All interviews were recorded and partially transcribed
Breakdown by sex	2 men, 3 women	9 men,14 women	Formal Track: 4 men, 7 women Informal Track: 6 men, 4 women	10 men, 8 women *One more dual-company couple were added to the Informal Track at this stage

Table 3.1.1 Breakdown of PharMerger interviews by length of service

	< 4 years	4 - 9 years	10 – 14 years	15+ years
Length of Service (current employees only)	4	15	10	7

Table 3.1.2 Breakdown of all PharMerger interviews (formal and informal track) by sex

	Current employees	Spouses of current employees (not at PharMerger*)	Ex-PharMerger employees
Male	17	2	2
Female	19	2	2

* One spousal respondent also worked for a contractor on-site so is included with current employees in this table

Table 3.2 Interview Process at EngCorp (see additional table below for breakdown by business unit)

	Preliminary Phase Feb 03-June 03	**First Phase July 03**	**Second Phase Jan 04**	**Third Phase July 04**
Details of Phase	Setting up study: Formal discussions re. access with head of employment policy and HR managers of different business units Induction session (with head of employment policy) Informal discussion with current RR employee (formerly in one of the two relevant business units) Discussions and trial interviews with trades unions representatives from manual/non-manual working areas.	First round of interviews Formal Track: 43 interviews conducted in person in business units' HR departments Interviews of 20-30 minutes length were recorded and fully transcribed	Following up and checking responses from first round: 22 employees interviewed by telephone (recorded and fully transcribed) and email. 3 TU reps and HR manager from prelim phase also interviewed as was another HR manager Informal track: 4 employees plus 4 spousal respondents. Conducted in person off the company premises. Interviews of 20-30 minutes length were recorded and fully transcribed. Line of questioning based on first phase interview guide and that developed for following up formal track.	15 employees, 14 from formal track and 1 (male) from informal track Interviews with original sample were conducted either as per first phase (length and location) or by telephone (due to constraints imposed by one of the business units) One informal track from relevant business unit respondent re-interviewed in person to compensate for lack of face to face contact All interviews were recorded and partially transcribed
Breakdown by sex	7 men, 1 woman	24 men, 19 women	Formal Track: 14 men, 8 women Informal Track 4 men, 4 women	6 men, 9 women

Table 3.2.1 Breakdown of EngCorp interviews by length of service

Differing bands (to those of PharMerger) were chosen because of the much longer average length of service of the sample. For example only one person had worked for the company less than 4 years and as so many had worked for the company more than 15 years it was appropriate that a more detailed breakdown be given of these respondents

	< 10 years	10 - 19 years	20 – 29 years	30+ years
Length of Service (current employees only)	10	27	10	3

Table 3.2.2 Breakdown of all EngCorp interviews (formal and informal track) by sex

	Current employees	Spouses of current employees (not at EngCorp)	Ex-EngCorp employees
Male	29	0	0
Female	21	4	0

Table 3.2.3 Breakdown of EngCorp interviews by business unit

	First Phase July 03	Second Phase Jan 04	Third Phase July 04
Business Unit 1 (BU1)	21 interviews (12 men, 9 women) Manual : 6 (4 men, 2 women) Non-Manual: 15 (8 men, 7 women)	Formal Track: 6 men, 4 women Informal Track*: 3 men, 3 women *One man and one woman of which were a dual-company couple	Formal Track: 3 men, 5 women
Business Unit 2 (BU2)	22 interviews (12 men, 10 women) Manual: 6 men Non-Manual: 16 (6 men, 10 women)	Formal Track: 8 men, 4 women Informal Track: 1 man, one woman	Formal Track: 2 men, 4 women Informal Track: 1 man

3.9 Carrying out case study research in the two companies

As already stated, in both companies and due to data protection issues, HR personnel chose the majority of the interviewees (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2). In the main this was done by randomly selecting people from a wide range of functions across the sites. A minority of interviewees were chosen purposively and often at my request, for example, when an interviewee suggested that some other person was well placed to answer my questions. In the pharmaceutical company a male and female from the site consultative committee were deliberately included, as were key people in the wellbeing programme. In both companies isolated individuals were chosen because they had taken up unusual leave arrangements. The pharmaceutical company offered unpaid leave up to a maximum of three months. This was their equivalent of parental leave and available not only for parents, but also for those wanting time off for study, extended travel etc. One individual who had used this facility was deliberately included in the sample. Similarly in the engineering company, a non-manual employee who had been allowed to customise his annual working pattern and a father who had been granted extensive flexibility when his wife died were purposively sampled, as were two female engineers. The company was specifically interested in how female engineers perceived the level of family-friendly provision and therefore stipulated that their views should be elicited as a condition of the study. As the engineering company had a more unequal gender mix, and discrete manual and non-manual populations, appropriate proportions of each were chosen (see Table 3.2.2). EngCorp has a significant union presence, so in this company I also talked to representatives from the main unions a) so that they were fully apprised of a study which would involve and possibly affect their members and b) because their insights were considered to be valuable to the study. In both companies the opinions and experience of several HR personnel were sought.

The interview guide (reproduced in Appendix I) was designed in conjunction with senior members of HR in the pharmaceutical company who were especially concerned to establish the level of awareness of policies and contentment with their provision. As well as looking at awareness and take-up of policies, the guide included questions regarding the organisational culture. This guide was then used as a template for the engineering company and was only adjusted in minor ways to reflect the specific policies and interests of HR personnel in that context. This permitted a degree

of comparability of responses between the two companies but still captured the unique aspects of each setting. First round interviews were conducted on site, in the HR departments. Clarification which generated further insights (Gillham 2000b:46) took place during the follow up or 'checking' round of interviews (typical questions are included in Appendix I). The majority of these encounters took place over the telephone for reasons mentioned earlier and a shorter bank of questions were asked, most of which were common to all 'follow up' round respondents. A small minority preferred to reply to questions in an email, for reasons either of time or discretion as they worked in an open plan office and could be overheard. These questions were generated after full transcription (no participants except the original gatekeeper in the pharmaceutical company rejected my request to record the interviews) and primary analysis of first round interviews, and they were intended to shed greater light on emerging issues. A minority of the questions in this follow up round were tailored to the individual concerned in the interests of clarification.

The longitudinal aspect of the study was facilitated partly by asking retrospective questions concerning previous policies, practices and attitudes. Although respondent recall can be very impressionistic and present difficulties of reliability, the size of the sample permitted corroboration and the exploration of outlier opinion. It was mainly facilitated by conducting a final round of interviews back on the company premises a significant period of time after the initial phase (see Appendix I for interview guide). Changes which had taken place in the twelve to sixteen month intervening period were thus captured. These final round interviews were conducted on the premises of the organisations whenever possible. In the pharmaceutical company most took place, again, in the HR department. A new gatekeeper had been assigned to me due to extensive reorganisation of many parts of the company, including the HR function. She had joined the site from another part of the company only six weeks earlier and an interview with her yielded valuable insights into the nature of the culture from the point of view of someone who was still, to a certain extent, an outsider. Most of the final phase interviewees had been in the original sample but snowballing brought in new categories of respondents. A site services manager stated that although flexitime arrangements were available across the site, security officers "work shifts, twelve hour shifts and they love it but it is not that flexible, there is a roster." (4HFF) As flexibility was so valued across the rest of the sample I decided that I should, if

possible, ascertain whether or not these employees did "love" this working pattern. I interviewed two security officers who informed me that they were not the only shift workers on site. There was a unit of engineers who provided twenty four hour cover on all essential services. A further interview with a member of this unit was arranged and a completely new perspective on the company was added to the study. In total, interviews were conducted with forty employees (past and present) and four spouses from the pharmaceutical company and fifty four employees (past and present) and four spouses from both business units of the engineering company (see Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.2.2).

3.10 Preparation for the field

Prior to embarking on these case studies, preparation was made in the form of a pilot study, a company visit, an academic interview with a leading sociologist in the field and finally a "dress rehearsal" interview (Gillham 2000b:52). The pilot study was conducted on the premises of the charity which is funding this PhD (and the report which I provided for the organisation is in Appendix II). This was an ideal environment in which to refine my skills as an interviewer, test out the potential fruitfulness of a first draft of questions and encounter some of the typical problems of fieldwork. A pilot case study may reveal inadequacies in an initial design or may help to articulate it (Yin 1994:54). The latter was the case here as the research design grew out of the formative experience of conducting the pilot which assisted me in developing relevant lines of enquiry. Although the charity employs less than a hundred people and is different in many ways from the final case studies it was still a valid site of inquiry for refining data collection plans (Yin 1994:74). Although I had permission from the managing director of the charity, I had to negotiate with the HR function as to the way the interviews would be conducted and deal with their concerns about the possible impact on employees and ethical reservations regarding confidentiality and data storage. The framing of questions for the case studies proper was greatly aided by conducting the dozen interviews which comprised the major part of this pilot study.

As culture was the specific lens through which the case study research was intended to look, a visit was made to a manufacturing company in Derbyshire which has implemented flexible working and family-friendly policies and considers that its

current commercial success has been as a result of the change in culture which these measures brought about. Again, no attempt has been made to compare the global companies that form the case studies with this firm (which employs less than forty people) but the issues which the management and staff of this company face are not dissimilar to those of line managers and their direct reports in these larger organisations. I interviewed the managing director of this small manufacturing company and his assistant (who works school terms) who explained how the highly variable shift patterns and greater devolution of decision making power in more general terms have produced a far more motivated workforce. The managing director described how policies had been deliberately "embedded in the culture" rather than grafted on (see Lee et al 2000) and how he had used his approach to flexible working as a management tool. Everyone can determine their own shift pattern providing it meets operational requirements (and there are 35 different shift patterns currently being followed), people are never forced to cover in emergencies but have, for example, voluntarily succeeded in quadrupling output on one function when it was required and levels of sickness, absenteeism and employee turnover are significantly lower than before.

Having read Suzan Lewis' work on the relationship between cultural change and family friendly policies (Lewis 1997 and Lewis & Lewis 1996) it was considered highly beneficial to discuss my research design with her. She has undertaken organisational case studies in related areas and was able to direct me towards relevant literature and other researchers in the field who have a similar cultural emphasis. We also discussed the framing of questions and ways in which future orientations could be elicited through the interview process.

Finally, the interview guide which had been through the refining process described above, was 'piloted' itself at PharMerger. Although I had requested to use it with two organisational members, as Gillham (2000b:52) recommends (in addition to the sample requested for the interviews proper), only one person was permitted to 'pilot' the interview (again, for reasons of conserving employee time). Having gone through this process it was clear that one question might occasionally need clarification and supplementary probes (Gillham 2000b:46) which were built into the final interview guide. Before beginning the interview process at EngCorp, the guide was 'trialled' by

trades unions representatives in both business units. This reassured them that the line of questioning would not put their members in a difficult position but also highlighted the need to clarify the meaning of certain terms such as 'family-friendly' itself.

3.11 A consideration of the interview method

Semi-structured interviews generated the majority of the data in this multiple case study but inherent weaknesses of bias and particularism were compensated for by a diversity of other corroborating evidence (Yin 1994:90) detailed below. Key informants are often critical to the success of the case study (Yin 1994:80) and data is most commonly elicited from them by the process of the interview conversation, a strength of which lies in its ability to "capture the multitude of subjects' views of a theme and to picture a manifold and controversial human world" (Kvale 1996:7). Interviews seek to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the subject, especially those which are intimately connected with the research question, "to understand the meaning of respondents' experiences and lifeworlds" (Warren 2001:83) and to gain an appreciation of the nuances and depths of this experience. When looking at the history of the interview, Young (quoted in Platt 2001:37) describes how "The personal interview is penetrating, it goes to the 'living source', through it the student is able to go beyond mere outward behaviour and phenomena. He can secure accounts of events and processes as they are reflected in personal experiences, in social attitudes." The impact of the interview process on those being interviewed must also be considered. It may provoke respondents to voice subjective views never explored by them before, expressing multiple subjectivities as they consider how the issues in question affect their various different identities. "A single interview could in practice be an interview with several subjects, whose particular identities may be only partially clear" (Gubrium and Holstein 2001:23).

Interviewees who were fathers, managers and long-standing members of staff were often trying to reconcile different internal perspectives on people's rights to family-friendly working. Value judgements about different responses to policies were often expressed in a way that resonates with Atkinson and Coffey's observation that (2001:808) "interviews are occasions in which are enacted particular kinds of narrative and in which 'informants' construct themselves and others as particular kinds of moral agents." If interviews are opportunities for moral constructions then

they can also be performances (Atkinson and Coffey 2001) in which the interviewee is consciously and deliberately expressing what they consider to be a laudable attitude or approach. The interview may have given the respondent a stage on which to play a preferred role, such as that of the highly understanding father and manager or the mother of a disabled child who considers that the company's family-friendly provision is second to none. The data which such 'performances' generate cannot be treated as either 'truth' or 'distortion' but as accounts which Fontana describes as "series of fragments [of life] in continuous flux" which must be understood in their own right. Differences should not be glossed over and we should resist the temptation to try to patch them together into paradigmatic wholes (Fontana 2001:162). As a result of all these facets of the interview, the material which is produced is rich, vivid (Gillham 2000a:10) and unwieldy in its quantity. Wolcott (1990:18) makes the point that "the major problem we face in qualitative enquiry is not to get data but to get rid of it" and this assessment was certainly borne out by the material generated mainly from the quantity of interviews which it was necessary to conduct before the boundaries of the case and theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss 1967:64, Eisenhardt 1989:545) were reached. Semistructured interviews took place in three stages at each of the two companies and Tables 3.1, and 3.2 provide details of the separate phases of interview process such as length of interviews, quantity of interviews and type of interview ie. face to face/telephone/email. Tables 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 give a breakdown by length of service and sex. Finally, Table 3.2.3 (EngCorp only) provides a breakdown of interviews by business unit and occupation (manual/non-manual).

As will be clear from Tables 3.1 and 3.2, most interviews were conducted face to face, but constraints imposed by the gatekeepers to the organisation dictated that a minority were conducted over the telephone or by email. In both companies it would clearly have been very difficult to obtain access for a third and final phase if I had insisted on interviewing them face to face for the second phase. As I had met them only four months earlier and had established rapport, this second phase (conducted by telephone/email) yielded rich supplementary data. When access was requested for the final phase this was readily granted despite the fact that I had already furnished them with a report which laid out the findings from the first two phases. No direct further benefit accrued to *them* by acceding to this request but goodwill had been maintained

over the two years since I first approached the companies. Shuy (2001) and Bryman and Bell (2003:120, 506-508) describes the advantages of face to face, in-person interviewing over telephone/email interviewing and vice versa. Most notably, in-person interviewing generates more accurate (and often longer) responses owing to contextual naturalness, face to face interaction compels more 'small talk' and non-verbal communication provides a fuller range of expression. However telephone interviews benefit from reduced interviewer effects, greater standardisation of questions as well as faster results although the interviewer cannot guarantee that the respondent is not being overheard, making the issue of confidentiality less controllable. This was easily circumvented by making a prior arrangement for the interviewee to talk *in camera*, for example by booking a conference room. Constraints of space at one of the business units in the second case study necessitated the conduct of telephone interviews for the final phase of interviews (a major office refit was taking place and all working areas were fully occupied, making it impossible to conduct private interviews on site) so 'informal track' respondents were interviewed away from the company premises to offset any leanness of data obtained through this section of the study. Similarly, although there are advantages of speed and cost-efficiency to email interviewing, such asynchronous computer-mediated communication is lean in terms of flow and dynamics according to Mann and Stewart (2001) but they concede that an on-line relationship can be productive if prior face to face contact has taken place, as was the case in the two case studies. The second, checking phase took place shortly after the first in-person interviews and the speed with which data could be collected was beneficial for the iterative movement between data collection and analysis.

3.12 Collection of additional data

Much attention has been given here to the use of the interview to collect data but a variety of other sources were included in the design. Company documentation was made available both on relevant policies and wider employee issues and many publications intended for external consumption (such as graduate employee prospectuses[2] and annual reports) were also collected. As both firms are in the FTSE

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[2] I also attended an EngCorp Open Day. Informal interviews with two female engineers were carried out, their impressions of EngCorp's family-friendly provision (and overall culture) were sought and fieldnotes made.

100 Financial Index several relevant news items were covered in the national media throughout the two and a half year period of the case studies. Articles naming these organisations have appeared in recent professional and academic journal articles (although it is not possible to provide precise bibliographical citations as this would identify the companies). PharMerger offers placements in its information services department to students at the local university and one such student gave me access both to their summer 2002 placement report and also to their personal archive of news cuttings.[3] Twelve years ago I worked in one of the companies for eighteen months (although on another site) and had access to several ex-employees as well as to current employees (and their spouses) who were added to the sample pre-selected by HR. Both firms conducted organisational climate surveys and findings from the most recent ones provided a quantitative aspect to the study and extended the range of evidence on the topics under investigation (Gillham 2000a:80). Some of the results from a survey carried out for PharMerger in late 2002 showed comparators with a similar survey carried out in 2000, making it possible, albeit in a fairly limited way, to identify where changes had taken place. I also had access to a secondary analysis which an employee in EngCorp had carried out on his firm's climate survey as part of an MSc programme. His analysis was written up in the form of a report on cultural change which yielded some fresh insights and corroborated some of those previously gained. Both companies provided an 'acclimatisation' session in which the history of the company and the main characteristics of the site(s) were outlined. Although geographical access to all sites was limited for reasons of security and health and safety, I was able to observe several of the buildings and gain some understanding of the working environment. I also attended PharMerger's annual corporate event, Pharm Day. Further detail on the way in which these sources of data contributed to the findings of this multiple case study will be provided in the relevant chapters below. At this point in the discussion of the methodology it is important to establish the wider theoretical framework which was used to explore the relevance of the rich and varied data to the research question itself.

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[3] Similarly the director of PharMerger's information services delivers an annual lecture in the local university's department of information science which I was able to attend.

3.12 Grounded theory and its applicability to the case study data

According to Glaser and Strauss, who originally systematised it, grounded theory is derived *from* data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of the data. They contrast this with what they call 'exampling' in which a researcher finds examples *for* "dreamed-up, speculative or logically deduced theory, after the idea has occurred," (1967:5) according to a rhetoric of verification (of theory) which employed terms such as testing, proving, tentativeness and demonstrating, among others. Their formulations were intended to provide sociologists with a set of categories which would constitute a rhetoric of generation (of theory). They acknowledged that in the past, work based on qualitative data was either not theoretical enough or theories were too 'impressionistic' and, importantly, they were not advocating the derivation of theory from single facts or particularities. Rather, they were pressing for the development of concepts and categories from the facts, the relations between which would in turn form the building blocks of theories. "In generating theory it is not the fact upon which we stand but the conceptual category that was generated from it" (Glaser and Strauss 1967:21). The process which they described involved the generation of these conceptual categories or their properties from the evidence, after which the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. The elements of theory generated by this comparative analysis (referred to above) are, first, conceptual categories and their conceptual properties and second, hypotheses or generalised relations among the categories and their properties. In their typology a category stands by itself as a conceptual element of the theory and a property is a conceptual element of the category. Treating the data in this way raises the level of abstraction in order to get away from the particularities of the data. The categories and their properties have a life apart from the evidence that gives rise to them. Furthermore they state that a grounded theory that is faithful to the everyday realities of a substantive area is one that has been carefully induced from *diverse data* such as is the output from a case study approach.

Two essential features characterise the type of concept that should be generated. Firstly the concepts should be analytic, generalised and should designate the characteristics of concrete entities. Secondly they should be sensitising. By this they mean that the concepts should yield a meaningful picture, they should indicate the kind of thing to which they refer but they should not be too definitive. As it is with the

refinement of ideas that grounded theory is concerned, sampling should be done with this in mind, rather than in order to boost sample size. Events, contexts as well as people, relevant and meaningful for the emerging theory are interrogated for data in this process of theoretical sampling (Bryman 2001:302).

Grounded theory provided sociologists with systematic operational strategies and interpretive practices, in other words a distinct set of procedures. Bryman (2001:390) identifies the chief tools of grounded theory as being theoretical sampling, coding, theoretical saturation and constant comparison. He also specifies the outcomes which are the concepts, (the 'building blocks of theory'), the categories (at a higher level of abstraction than concepts and which include core categories around which other categories pivot), properties (attributes or aspects of a category), hypotheses (about relationships between concepts) and theory itself (constituted from a set of well-developed categories). Sometimes the typology is not so clearly followed, for example Locke describes how categories are sometimes used synonymously with concepts (Locke 2001:39) Moreover Glaser and Strauss diverged in their later treatment of the relative importance of the development of concepts (rather than theories) and the different path along which Strauss developed grounded theory (Strauss 1987, Strauss and Corbin 1990) has resulted in the addition of many different analytic devices to his writings (Bryman 2001:391).

Before looking in greater detail at the actual process of developing grounded theories it is important to locate the approach in a historical interpretivist paradigm. Grounded theory's concern with subjective experience derives from its conceptual roots in American pragmatism and the symbolic-interactionist school of sociology. The latter frames life as social process which carries over to the pragmatist view of knowledge. Ontologically speaking, pragmatism conceives of knowledge as an experiential process rather than a mirror of some independent reality. As knowledge is experiential the reality that is composed (by researchers and social actors) shifts as it is built up in transaction with the world and with others in it. Therefore knowledge generated by social researchers can never be complete, but when grounded in particular experiences it can possess a limited authenticity (Locke 2001:20). Blumer (1954) formulated the research methodology which is known as symbolic interactionism based on this view of the social world (identified most closely with the work of George Herbert Mead),

and its most important premise is that all social inquiry must be grounded in the particular empirical world studied. It was Blumer who recommended the use of sensitising concepts in that they provide "a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances" (1954:7) and they are best employed in order to give a very general sense of what to look for and act as a means for uncovering the variety of forms that the phenomena to which they refer can assume (Bryman 2001:270). Where concepts incorporate a sense of variety rather than commonality this draws the researcher away from the use of definitive concepts, from an inflexibility which is not always appropriate when seeking to classify reality. Although such a general formulation of a concept runs the risk of being too broadly defined this treatment of concepts can be identified in the process of conducting grounded theory in that it allows for the broad outline of a concept to be revised and narrowed during the process of data collection in the manner of the iterative process already described. Glaser and Strauss were working within the legacy of this tradition and were concerned to develop a different kind of social theory which advocated a close and oscillating relationship between empirical research and theory. The importance of such a development is succinctly expressed by Locke who states that "A *theoretical* [emphasis added] perspective informs how we understand complex social realities and what we direct our attention to when collecting and conceptualizing data" (Locke 2001:30).

3.13 Following the procedures of grounded theory

As the grounded theorist's goal is to represent conceptually what the data reflects empirically (Martin & Turner 1986:153) the researcher undertakes the process of coding the data presented, for example, in the form of interview transcripts. This requires that the analyst suspends bias ('bracketing') in order to think creatively about what the 'incidents' recorded in the data mean, which is accompanied by a naming and comparing process which involves looking at what is similar and different in the slices of data and building up exhaustive and exclusive (Gillham 2000b:59) categories from these codes or concepts. These processes aid in the identification of emerging patterns within the data as "examining the category we created in the light of them helps clarify what we view as uniform and stable in the data" (Locke 2001:48).

'Coding' involves the labelling or naming of data fragments within a transcript (as well as field notes) which are of potential theoretical significance and which seem to represent prominent issues in the social context of the participants of the study. "Codes...serve as shorthand devices to *label, separate, compile* and *organise* data" (emphases in original, Charmaz 1983:186) These codes are not rigidly and statically defined but their indicators are subject to constant comparison throughout the duration of the study in which analysis overlaps with further data collection (Turner 1997:109). Sometimes the labels are revised when better fit is found for an indicator with another concept. The conceptual development of coding itself has been refined, especially by Strauss and Corbin (1990) who make a distinction between three types of coding practice, although Bryman (2001:392) makes the point that these three types are more properly considered to be different levels of coding as each relates to a different point in the elaboration of categories in grounded theory.

They distinguish between open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data" (Strauss and Corbin 1990:61) the concepts flowing from which are later grouped and assigned to categories. Axial coding is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (1990:96). Relational links are forged between codes in terms of common contexts, patterns of interaction, causes as well as consequences. Finally, selective coding was specified by them as being "the procedure of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (1990:116) A core category is the root issue from which stems all of the other categories, (although I derived two core categories from my data) what Strauss and Corbin refer to as the storyline that frames one's account (Bryman 2001:392).

The processes of description, definition and the specification of relationships constitutes a highly disciplined and indeed rigorous approach to the handling and interpretation of data (Martin & Turner 1986:143). However the reality of the iterative process by which categories are arrived at is described by Locke as "messy and ambiguity-laden" (2001:50). Certainly my experience of coding was that in retrospect the types or levels of coding described above bore a great deal of resemblance to the

process I was engaged in but it was by no means a linear process, as might be expected in the markedly iterative and oscillating approaches which are case study research and grounded theory. Codes were recorded in more than one category before a final decision was reached about what was really illustrative of that category (Martin & Turner 1986:149) but multiple placement in the early stages is not to be discouraged as it is suggestive of possible connections between the different categories. As these processes are non-linear the memo is another device which captures what has been perceived in the data. Glaser and Strauss recommend that at certain points in the coding process the analyst should stop in order to record a memo of their impressions and "tap the initial freshness of your theoretical notions and relieve conflicts in thoughts" (1967:107). This enables the researcher to carry their thinking to its most logical (but not speculative, as it is grounded in the data) conclusions. Locke describes the process as "writing our way to naming what we perceive in the data" (2001:51) and by subjecting myself to this discipline during the analysis, more or less random thoughts were captured and synthesised into a tighter framework for handling additional data.

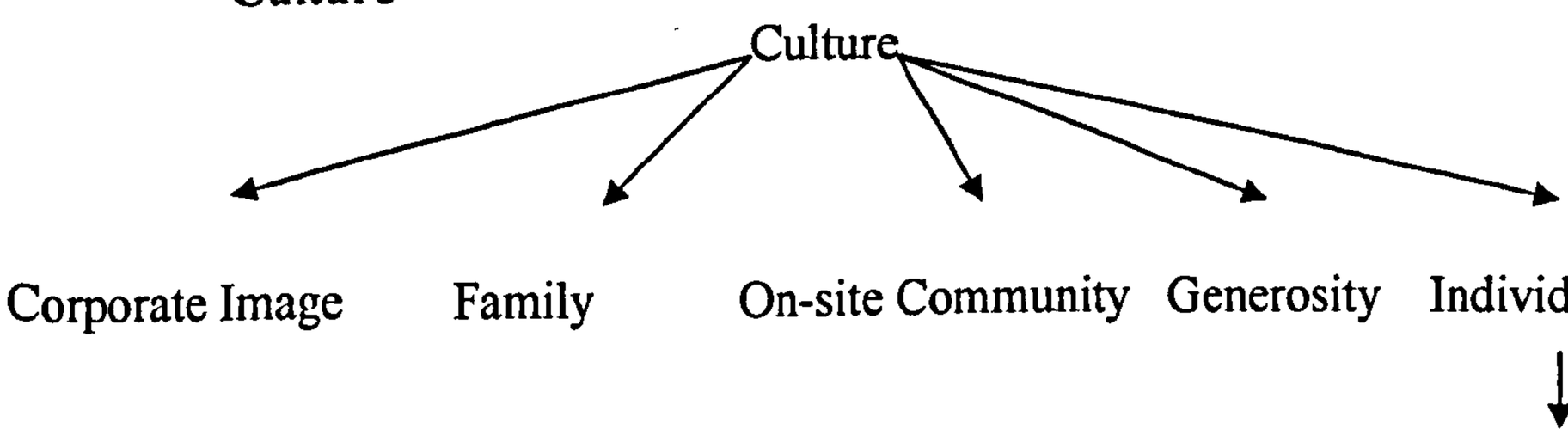
3.13.1 Categories derived from the data

Codes or concepts and categories which were derived from the PharMerger data will be presented first, and the relationships between them and their empirical foundations briefly discussed. Having allocated fragments of data from the first round interview transcripts to more than two hundred fairly narrow recurring themes or concepts, I then grouped all of these concepts under ten higher level category headings, aware that some of these would be subsumed in others. These higher level categories were, in the case of PharMerger: Culture, Flexibility and Choice, Managers, Corporate Image, Family, Individual, Team Mentality, Generosity, Ambition and Competition and On-site Community. I then placed the categories into two subsets of overarching or core categories: Culture and Managers.

It seemed to me that there were definable cultural characteristics which I grouped under the core category of Culture. This rather loosely named category included all the ways that people experienced the company as members of the organisation, unmediated by the influence of line managers. (Some concepts were placed straight into the Culture core category but once I had written about all the *categories* inside

Culture, these concepts all seemed to have been referred to in some way. It was as if I couldn't talk about what I was referring to as 'culture' without referring to these categories.) As managers are also part of the culture this could be considered an artificial construct but it was deemed necessary to tease out different influences and it clarifies the reasoning behind the designation of these two core categories. 'Culture' included the concepts contained in the following categories: Generosity (differently expressed perceptions that PharMerger was a generous organisation), Ambition and Competition (references by respondents to their own aspirations and the extent to which other people's success affected their attainment of these), On-site Community (comments describing characteristics of the working environment, the sense of belonging which many expressed and particular facets of this part of the larger global entity), Corporate Image (this included concepts referring to how members consider that the organisation is perceived by outsiders), Family (respondents described PharMerger's 'family orientation' in certain respects as well as individuals' awareness that they were managing occasionally competing priorities), and Individualism/Individuation (repeated references were made to the extent to which people perceived that they had agency within the organisation, their sense that they were treated as unique individuals and a sense of entitlement). As it was a category within another category I then subsumed Ambition and Competition under Individualism/Individuation (abbreviated) as represented in Figure 3.1 below.

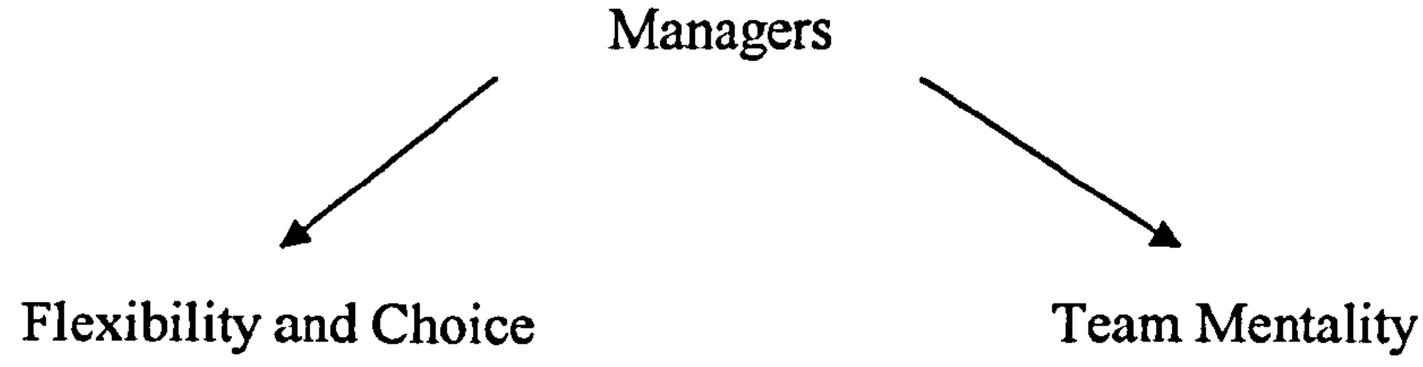
Figure 3.1 Organisation of Pharmerger categories under the core category of Culture



The other core category was Managers, which contained references to the many ways in which line managers in particular were considered to influence if not determine how employees experienced the organisation. Most notably for this study, impressions were recorded of their effect on the impact and outworking of family-friendly policies. As Figure 3.2 shows, under this core category were subsumed Team

Mentality (referring to the importance attached to teamwork and how this might be affected by the uptake of policies) and Flexibility and Choice (which includes concepts relating to the way these two aspects of organisational life are played out in employees' working conditions). They were subsumed under the category of Managers because it was clear that, in their outworking, the notion of team and the availability of flexibility and choice were mediated by managers' attitudes and values.

Figure 3.2 Organisation of PharMerger categories under core category of Managers



To reiterate, many of the elements of flexibility and choice/team mentality flowed from aspects categorised under Culture but their *effect* was mediated through the philosophy of the line manager. The overwhelming majority of respondents, at all stages of the hierarchy, stated that regardless of policies or common practice in the organisation, the attitude of the line manager was determinative.

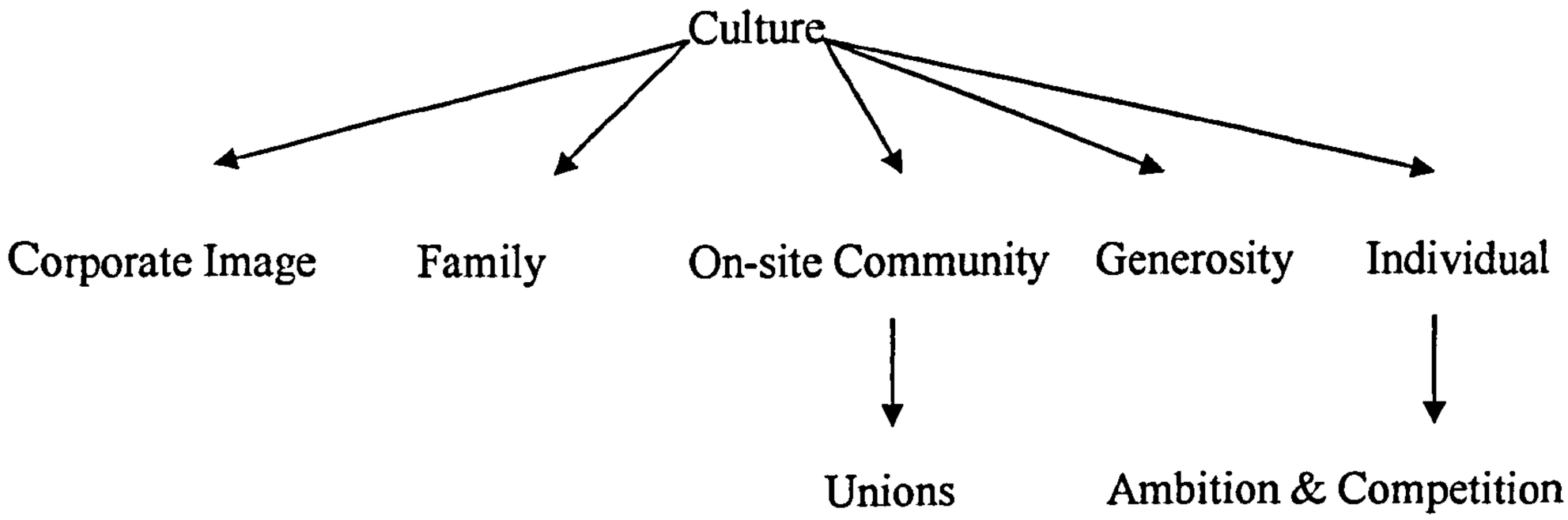
When conducting preliminary analysis of the EngCorp data, to permit comparability, similar concepts and then categories were derived where possible. It is important to point out that this case was more complex than the first because I was investigating not only two different sites (business units) but also two distinct workforces in these sites (ie. manual and non-manual). Despite complexities arising from differences between the two workforces and between the two sites many generalities applied across the sections of the organisation studied and where they did not this is made clear in Chapter Five.

Again, having allocated statements from the transcripts to fairly narrow concepts, I then grouped all the codes under the same (or very similar) broad headings which were appropriate for PharMerger, with the additional category of Unions (which included recurring themes highlighting the effect of trades unions on the working environment and the mediating role played by them in the implementation and effect of company policies). There was not the same emphasis in the data on the facets of

Individualism/Individuation described above but there were codes which related to individuals' perceptions and experiences which did not appear to apply more broadly across the sites. Therefore this category was simply named 'Individual'.

I then organised them in the same way as indicated in Figure 3.3 (almost identical to Figure 3.1 apart from the subsuming of Unions under the On-site community category). Again, the other core category was Managers, under which went Team Mentality and Flexibility and Choice, as per Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.3 Organisation of EngCorp categories under core category of Culture



3.13.2 Analysis and production of reports

Organising categories in this way was a key starting point for making sense of the relationships between them and constructing a narrative which would represent this. In the case study chapters, at the beginning of each descriptive section, I have indicated from which categories the explored concepts originated. The analysis of the data collected in the course of this multiple case study will be fully explicated in a later chapter but a few preliminary comments will be made here. Despite the necessity (Wolcott 1990:35) to "can" much of the data, a high quality analysis should show that it relied on all the available evidence, it should include all major alternative interpretations, it should address the most significant aspects of the case study and it should be informed by the researcher's prior knowledge in terms of treatment in the literature, the state of play in current debates on the subject and their familiarity with relevant real-life situations which in some way parallel the case in question (Yin 1994:102). Once categories and their properties have been integrated and the theory delimited, that theory has to be explicitly written. "Data never stand on their own, no matter how detailed and accurate the fragments of organizational life reported in our

manuscripts are, their theoretical implications are never left for readers simply to take" (Locke and Golden-Biddle 1997:57). I have attempted to produce a narrative which is seeded with illustrative quotes which indicate the range and variety of responses, including those which are in some way discrepant. (Gillham (2000b:74) suggests that quotes should make up not less than a third of the text but not more than half.) Reducing the interplay between theory and data to sufficiently detailed essentials (Gillham 2000a:96) and communicating research findings with rhythm, energy and individuality (Turner 1997:120) are significant challenges in the writing up of the organisational story that is its dynamic culture.

Grounded theory is considered to be especially appropriate for use in investigating and working with organisational cultures and other situated processes such as decision making and change (Martin and Turner 1986:144, Locke 2001:95) because it facilitates the mapping of ideas as they move on, captures members' intentions as well as their actions and provides a multifaceted account of the organisational context itself. The blend of participant observation and semi-structured interviews which are typically used to illuminate the elements of an organisational culture produce non-standardised data. The systematic way of dealing with such data which grounded theory provides, has the potential to produce accounts of the culture which are recognisable to its participants themselves. Therefore, and as it lays particular emphasis on accessing their tacit knowledge (Stake 1978), it can generate insight for these organisational members.

It is increasingly necessary to produce reports for companies in return for access (Buchanan et al 1988:55) and this requirement was placed on me by both case study companies. I found that by dealing with that data according to the procedures described, the need for a complicated 'translation process' was obviated.[4] The communication of findings developed through a rigorous academic study in a language with which managers were comfortable was fairly easily achieved.

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[4] Some of the terms which participants used were in fact treated as *in vivo* codes, that is, terms abstracted from the language of the research situation and what Glaser and Strauss refer to as "current labels in use for the actual processes and behaviours that are to be explained, while the concepts constructed by the analyst will tend to be the explanations" (1967:107). In practice I would suggest that any sharp dichotomy between these two kinds of labels should be avoided in the process of analysis because it infers that participants are not themselves making sense of their surroundings, they are uncritically and unreflexively using certain terms such as 'commitment'.

3.14 Acknowledging the criticisms of grounded theory

Grounded theory is not without its detractors (inconsistency in terminology has already been discussed) and before uncritically applying it to the kind of research context to which it is apparently so well suited, it was essential to gain an appreciation of its possible limitations. Firstly a purist approach to the methods is impractical in most research situations. Gillham (2000a:96) recommends that a period of time for what he terms the "rotting down" of the data in the mind of the researcher be included in all research programmes but the constant interplay of data collection and conceptualisation can lead to unrealistic time scales. He also (2000b:52) recommends spacing interviews out, conducting one every two days and transcribing in between. Although this would allow for the procedures of grounded theory to be carried out very precisely it would have been completely unrealistic in the organisations I entered. They wanted me to interview over as few days as possible and the pharmaceutical company insisted on 'back-to-back' scheduling, possibly so that I would not be tempted to extend the interview time.

Close attention to the detail of the interview for the purpose of coding necessitates full transcribing of tapes. This was undertaken in all of the first round interviews and most of the follow up interviews but the decision was made that partial transcribing would suffice for the final round. I was already sensitised to many of the issues and where repetition indicated that a particular category had become saturated such data fragments were treated as surplus to requirement and not systematically stored. Indeed treating data in this fragmented way has to be done with caution as some writers consider that such activity results in a loss of a sense of context and of narrative flow (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, Riessman 1993:vi). Prior to and at certain points during the coding of interviews therefore, I also attempted to 'stand back' and consider the impressions which the transcript made on me as a whole 'slice of data'.

A further caveat is associated with the explicit goal of theory generation. Substantive theorising can and must take place in the research process or findings will be reduced to descriptions which are, however elaborate and faithful to their subject matter, potentially irrelevant to the wider research community. However grounded theory rarely results in formal theory which has applicability to a broader range of social contexts than the specific phenomena which were being researched (Bryman

2001:397). Just as coding cannot be confused with analysis but is the necessary precursor to it, the elaboration of concepts should ideally give way to *explanations* (for example of the relationships between those concepts). Related to this is the final criticism which I shall discuss which is the genuine ability of researchers to 'bracket' any prior theoretical bias and suspend their awareness of relevant theories and concepts until the process of analysis has reached a fairly late stage (Bulmer 1979). As with many facets of grounded theory this is sometimes more honoured in the breach and indeed Locke advocates using a combination of a broad theoretical perspective, an "informing school of thought" (2001:105) with grounded theory's analytic procedures.

Despite the reservations expressed above, refinements are constantly made to the stipulations and procedures of the theory in order to render it useful for the reality of the research contexts which it is intended to elucidate. It is in a modified 'theory-in-use' form that grounded theory and the coding method with which it is identified has gained widespread acceptance by the research community and as such I adopted and applied the approach as a robust tool for the analysis of the two case studies which will be described in greater detail below.

3.15 Summary of the chapter

To reiterate, a comparative case study method was employed in two large organisations, both of which provide an extensive range of family-friendly policies. Data collection was largely achieved through a series of rounds of semi-structured interviews (although, as is usual in a case study, a variety of other sources of information were included in the design). All first round interviews in both organisations were conducted on-site and some respondents were included in second round interviews which took place off-site, either by telephone or email. Final round interviews were mainly conducted on-site but some, by necessity, took place by telephone. Throughout both case studies I interviewed (face to face) an 'informal track' of respondents who provided important confirming data for key findings of the study. During and after the data collection stages, grounded theory methods were used, in an iterative process, to interpret and analyse the findings.

Chapter Four

Case Study 1 – A research and development site of PharMerger, a global pharmaceutical company

4.1 Introductory Comments

In this chapter I will sketch out broad features of the organisation with reference to those facets of 'root' culture which are considered to be of greatest salience for understanding the impact of family-friendly policies and will discuss the implications for culture of the changes in ownership of the company over the last thirty years. Distinctions will be drawn between PharMerger's identity, image and culture and the importance of generosity as a guiding principle for its family-friendly provision will be made clear. A description of the present onsite community and working environment will be provided and although union influence is not significant at PharMerger, those formal mechanisms for consultation which do exist will receive attention. A detailed look will then be taken at the policies themselves and their articulation with managers' discretion. The way in which PharMerger's 'generosity' is outworked and perceived in different work contexts and at different points in the hierarchy will be explained and changes to 'root' culture, directly or indirectly provoked by policies intended *inter alia* to express that generosity will then be discussed. Theoretical insights gleaned from the data will be briefly itemised at the end of each descriptive section.

4.2 A brief description of PharMerger

PharMerger is one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, with offices, production sites and research and development facilities in 45 countries spread across six continents. The UK has fourteen office and production locations and two research and development sites, one of which is the subject of this study. There are three distinct eras in the history of this site which have shaped the culture of the current organisation. A significant proportion (40%) of the site's workforce comes from the first era of UKPharm, the starting point of which is the mid 1970s. The second era began in 1995 when UKPharm was taken over by ForeignCo and ceased to exist. In 1999 PharMerger was formed as a result of the merger between ForeignCo and the global organisation BigPharm (whereupon both of these also ceased to exist as separate corporate entities). This marked the beginning of the third and current era.

The original company UKPharm, and the incoming ForeignCo and BigPharm all had very different cultures so, in order to understand change resulting from the implementation of family-friendly policies, it was necessary to obtain a retrospective picture of the culture in the three eras. (A further longitudinal component was added to the study by conducting distinct phases of fieldwork, eighteen months apart.) As the site had such a high percentage of ex-UKPharm employees (and I had worked on another UKPharm site in the area twelve years ago), there was sufficient data from which to build this retrospective picture.

The brief typology in Table 4.1 shows the change in attitudes from one era to another which people reported. Most employees who have been on the site since the first, UKPharm era expressed nostalgia for the second era, ForeignCo days when money flowed freely and the approach to science and employee relations became more innovative. This second era under ForeignCo is often contrasted with the gloom and staleness of the last days of UKPharm, just before the takeover, when budget cuts were endemic. However, in the current, third era, the company is now perceived to be revisiting the constraints of the first era, UKPharm years. When the merger with the giant BigPharm took place the company was, for the first time in its history, part of an extremely large, truly global organisation. It also became more bureaucratic, hierarchical and fiscally restrained. The nostalgia for the second era was not, however, uniformly felt. Many interviewees described how older, ex-UKPharm employees, especially those who were managers, disliked the second era, ForeignCo management style. This was considered to be far more consensually based than the first era, UKPharm way of working where lines of authority were more strictly preserved. Managers were treated with more deference and junior staff were not expected to contribute to decisions nor to disagree with managers in public, for example in team meetings. However the corollary of that management style was that staff did not 'own' decisions to any great extent and did not necessarily work single-mindedly to pursue stated goals. Upon the merger, the incoming BigPharm management style was perceived to be similar to that of UKPharm and, once again (due to the wider business cycle) senior figures have announced budget cuts and a major reorganisation programme aimed at increasing efficiency and cost effectiveness. This has the effect of a) reminding employees of the relative austerity of UKPharm days (compared with ForeignCo days) and b) reinforcing the prejudices of some older managers who

consider that they have been proven right by such developments, that the current, third era need for tighter control in many areas of management indicate that the consensual decision making and informal management style which characterised the second era under ForeignCo were unsustainable.

In terms of the approach to family-friendly working, the most senior HR respondent said "the site's family-friendly emphasis has grown progressively, it's not as if it 'came in' at any point." UKPharm's longstanding flexitime system was renamed *trust time* when ForeignCo took over and the need to clock in and out was terminated. Policies relating to family-friendly employment conditions were introduced soon after the merger with BigPharm and are considered to be indicative of the latter's desire to control and systematise working patterns. The impression was that UKPharm employees worked in a environment with a flexible and generally relaxed attitude to time. This 'fitted', to a certain extent with the research and development work of the site, but flexitime was in fact a policy of the wider group of companies to which UKPharm belonged, the rest of which were not research-oriented. So flexibility did not just flow from the nature of the work carried out on the site. However the consensus seemed to be that UKPharm was less family-friendly than PharMerger is now, although many suggested that this could be a "time thing rather than a company thing." (7BFF) That is, it could be due to the lapse of many years between the existence of UKPharm and the more recent formation of PharMerger, rather than to divergent approaches of the two companies. Wider cultural expectations more recently have dictated that any company aspiring to attract and retain the best employees (as PharMerger certainly does) has to provide an environment which is more family-friendly than in previous decades. HR professionals admitted that competitors in the pharmaceutical industry offering more than a standard reward package and a high level of family-friendly provision are to some extent driving the continuous improvement of their policies.[1] They were involved in the design of the interview guide and wanted respondents to discuss if and how PharMerger could be more family-friendly, although they considered provision to be generous, 'above the statute' and that employees *should* be content with it.

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[1] Similarly, companies in the oil and gas industry compete with each other but also share information through tacit and formal networking in the setting of policies and development of employee packages (McKee et al 2000)

Table 4.1 Relevant changes in the organisation now known as PharMerger

Era and name of company	Characteristics of era which reflect/have implications for culture (in brief)
ERA ONE **UKPharm**	British 'Paternalistic', conservative, cautious Allowed flexitime Secretive and defensive, especially with regard to the media (partly because of it being a target of animal rights protesters) Financially constrained, especially in its later years Small scale - until the late 80s there were only 200 employees
ERA TWO **ForeignCo**	Foreign-owned company with more egalitarian and consensual working practices and philosophy Highly decentralised, adventurous "a bit maverick", when compared with UKPharm Flexitime less bureaucratic: 'clocking-in' replaced with 'trust time' and policy "free-for-all" More proactive and less defensive attitude to the media, image building rather than image protecting Empowering, especially financially: scientists allowed a lot of freedom Marked improvement in working conditions: offices and labs refurbished, extensive and aesthetically aware building programme undertaken, site staff level rising significantly
ERA THREE **PharMerger**	Merged entity of ForeignCo and BigPharm (foreign and British companies) Fairly hierarchical (reportedly due to BigPharm influence), innovative but not as adventurous Formalising (eg. a large number of family-friendly policies introduced since merger) – again, this is perceived to be due to the BigPharm influence Continued emphasis on image building but discernible defensiveness about level of family-friendly provision Financially constraining: scientists working to tighter guidelines and continually elevated targets Globally controlled, managed and oriented Staff level at more than 1000 and rising, ethos of continuous site improvement and rolling building programme

4.3 Five facets of 'root' culture in PharMerger

As indicated in Chapter Two, in order to address the research question, facets of 'root' culture or basic assumptions have to be surfaced so that the effects of change over time at the levels of artefacts and values on these deeper beliefs, can be established. As organisational discourses are indicative of values and assumptions (Lewis 1997), a thorough analysis of interview material suggested the following facets of 'root' culture.

There is a high sense of *entitlement* at PharMerger which flows from the awareness that the industry benefits from high profit margins and presents itself as an "employer of choice". The corollary of this is that employees are to a certain extent part of an elite; policies, benefits etc are theirs by right rather than privilege. This sentiment has been there since the UKPharm era and was greatly reinforced by what was termed the "policy free-for-all" and financial generosity of the ForeignCo days, when people were encouraged to work in highly autonomous ways as befitted such a skilled labour force. HR's defensiveness about the generosity of provision stems from their consciousness of this sense of entitlement and they make it very plain to applicants for flexible working arrangements that recent legislation (described below) merely entitles people to dialogue, not to the (automatic) right to proposed changes. The advent of systematic policies post-merger put an end to the "policy free-for-all" but a high level of provision has been granted by these policies, PharMerger's generosity is still a vital part of its identity, is considered to be the explicit driver of their family-friendly provision, and the sense of entitlement, heightened by ForeignCo, has not diminished.

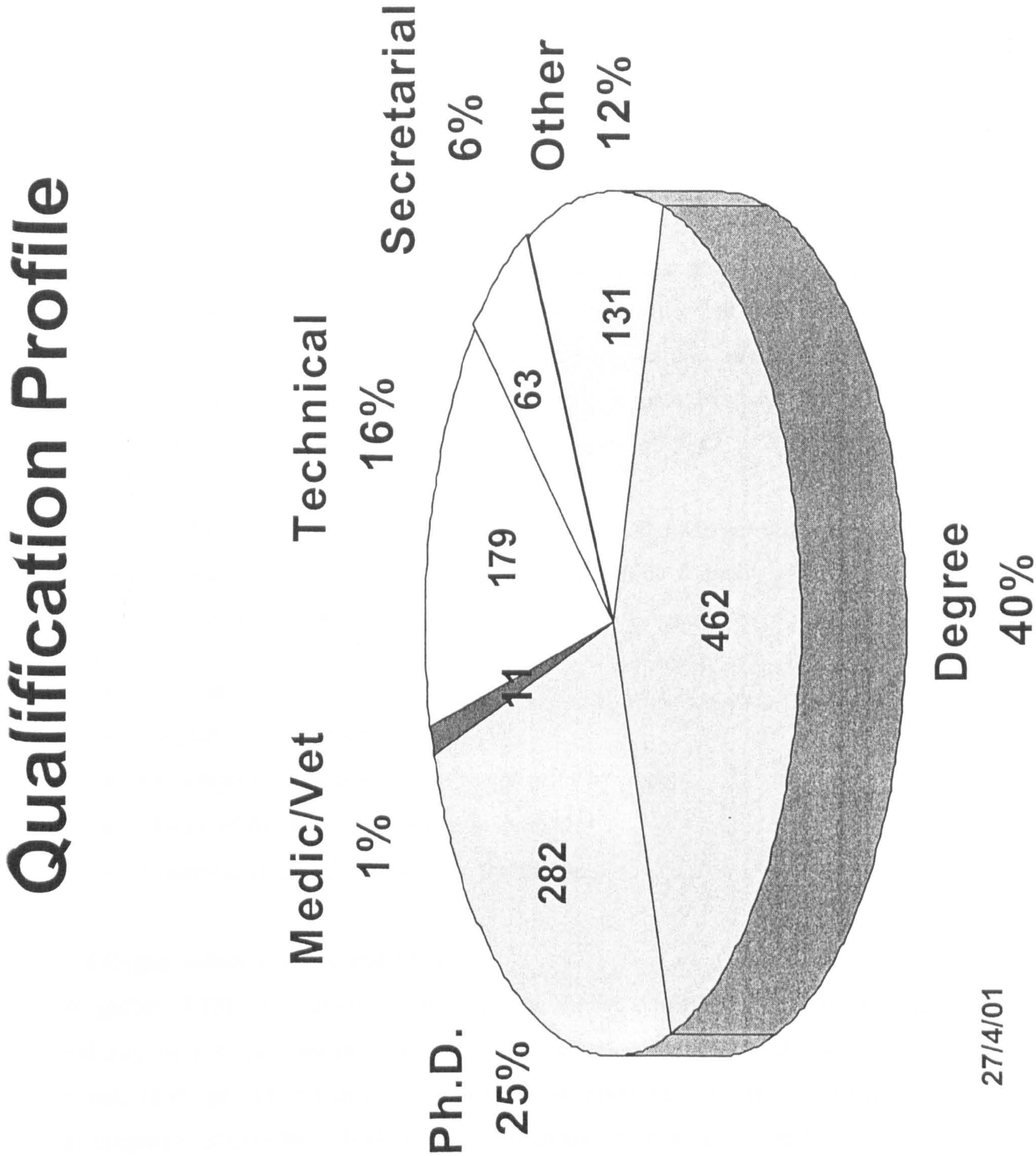
ForeignCo explicitly acknowledged that a high proportion (see Figure 4.1, Qualification Profile) of the site staff were scientists, 'blue sky' thinkers who needed maximum control over their working patterns, hence the "policy free-for-all". Culturally there is an emphasis on *autonomy* which has been facilitated to a large extent by the long history of flexitime. This linkage between autonomy and expertise is also a salient aspect of the identity of the company as described later. Long standing employees likened the working environment early in the UKPharm era to that pertaining in university research departments. Self-management was the norm and few constraints were placed on people's use of time. UKPharm's financial difficulties

restricted projects and decreased people's scope for autonomy but the takeover by ForeignCo re-established the attitude that best results would be obtained by allowing the highly skilled workforce as much control as possible over their time and other resources (targets were not even set). Post-merger, however, the assumption that autonomy is desirable is still an important part of the culture, but significant changes in the scale and operating requirements of what is now a global company have made other facets more dominant.

The company operates in an increasingly competitive market which has sharpened the cultural emphasis on the *primacy of work*. In reciprocation for generous terms and conditions, there is a willingness to subsume personal considerations to the interests of work, resulting in long hours and, occasionally, the deleterious effects of stress. Flowing from the emphasis on the primacy of work is a strong *ideal worker type* to which most employees conform. The 'ideal worker' is *seen to be* 'putting work first' often by working longer than contracted hours, and it was evident that part-time working patterns, for example, did not conform to this type. It is important to see whether or not the implementation of family-friendly policies has changed the way the ideal worker is constructed.

The nature of research, relying as it does on the specialised talent of individuals (albeit working in teams), is part of the reason behind the current culture of *individuation*, also apparent in retrospective accounts of ForeignCo and UKPharm days. The belief that people should be treated as discrete individuals has been emphasised by PharMerger's benefits package (considered to be part of their family-friendly provision), a large proportion of which can be tailored to each person's requirements, and by in-house publications which stress the uniqueness of every employee (a fingerprint motif is commonly found on page corners). It might be expected that individualised patterns of work would flow from an individuating culture, so it is somewhat paradoxical that the latter coexists with a strong ideal worker type specifying fairly traditional arrangements (including, in many areas, long hours). The effect of policies on any underlying conflict between these two cultural facets, in terms of resolution or exacerbation was of interest.

Figure 4.1 Qualification Profile (provided by PharmMerger HR department)



Whilst UKPharm was considered to have a conservative culture and was somewhat resistant to change, the ForeignCo era was marked by an enthusiasm for change. The period since the takeover has been characterised by constant and often dramatic change, such as when the merger took place. With this development the site became part of a truly global operation. ForeignCo's "maverick" tendency which urged employees to "innovate to succeed" was transformed with the advent of PharMerger into the harder taskmaster of "innovate to survive" as a world leader. The *imperative for change* in the culture is now more negatively inspired, people are growing tired of change, but cannot see an alternative. Moreover they are, by the very nature of their work, committed to the drive to advance knowledge and constantly improve processes. Policy formation itself is decidedly non-static, HR referred to certain working patterns not being available *yet*, with the implication that policies are being constantly re-evaluated to ensure relevance and fit with business and employee requirements.

It is with reference to these 'root' cultural facets that PharMerger will be described. Changes resulting from the implementation of family-friendly policies will be examined in terms of how they affect employees'

- Sense of entitlement
- Emphasis on autonomy
- Outworking of the principle of the primacy of work
- Notion of themselves as unique individuals
- Understanding of the imperative for change

4.4 Organisational Image and Identity[2]

A global, FTSE 100 company working in the sensitive and security-conscious industry of pharmaceuticals, PharMerger is extremely protective of and proactive about, its image. It consciously projects the appropriate ethical stance on issues such as corporate citizenship, which includes community engagement. PharMerger's own Annual Review 2001 states "Our products and activities touch people's lives worldwide. With a global business comes global responsibility....We do not consider

[2] This section mainly explores concepts from the Corporate Image, On-site Community and Family categories.

corporate social responsibility to be an optional activity – it is an integral part of all that we do." A distinct defensiveness about the unimpeachability of its family-friendly provision, in terms of its generosity, was evident throughout the conduct of the study, mainly on the part of senior HR personnel. PharMerger's identity, the way it perceived itself, was that as its workforce contained so many 'blue sky' thinkers, there were no constraints placed on their time sovereignty. However, the emphasis on 'looking good', on projecting the right image of an elite, progressive and highly professional company to global stock exchanges was also evident at the level of the workforce on site. Employees were highly image conscious, relying on an ideal worker type, which did not explicitly value time sovereignty, as a model for action.

Part of the company's identity is that it is a global force with a unique personality and in-house publications repeat the underlying message that "just as PharMerger is swimming in a big pond and yet is a distinct force within it, so too are you as individual employees." However the international pharmaceutical industry operates in an ever more competitive and uncertain climate. It is increasingly difficult to maintain market share and deliver new and genuinely groundbreaking drugs in the crowded field. (This is one reason why takeovers and mergers are commonplace, often leading to redundancies as sites are rationalised or even closed down.) Similarly, respondents described the very limited opportunities to 'make their mark' and progress within the company. The company projects an image to potential employees of opportunities for personal advancement which are not realised for the vast majority. Many people have no choice but to remain at the same level for long periods, but the relative flexibility (of working conditions) and generosity, which are significant aspects of the organisational identity, are strong disincentives to leaving.

These and other elements of organisational identity and image are consciously reinforced in employees' minds through events such as the annual Pharm Day which is unique to this site and part of the legacy of the ForeignCo era. These elements might be summed up in the following statement: "PharMerger cares, not only for its staff (and their families) but also for the wider community. We demonstrate that care by devoting time and resource to communicating to our employees and raising money for worthy causes." Pharm Day consists of whole-site communication events which inform employees about wider company products and progress. There is also an

emphasis on charitable fund-raising and on simply 'having fun'. One respondent described it as a day when everyone is on the same level. He was someone who thought PharMerger placed an undue emphasis on qualifications (especially higher degrees) so he appreciated the fact that on Pharm Day "there is no aloofness, they are walking around asking you how things are, it brings everyone down to a level" (ITMH) Negative feelings towards Pharm Day were occasionally voiced in the informal track interviews.

> I thought it was dire, absolutely horrendous, patronising. They did tours of the labs which were fascinating because it's part of the site I never see, but you have to wear a silly hat to qualify for a muffin on a stick... men who never usually take their suits off were walking around wearing Viking helmets looking desperately uncomfortable and trying to toe the party line. I've been traumatised by Pharm Day. (ITGB)

Although some people found the event contrived and insincere, most formal track respondents talked about Pharm Day very positively.

> It's a fun day but at the same time we felt the company was trying to get some feedback from its employees. There were certain phrases up and we had to go and vote on which phrase best summed up the company and that was quite good. I think they are actually working on that now by setting some working groups going and "what do you mean by this?" The company is not scared of new ideas from that point of view. (31C)

They treated it as a day when higher management expressed their appreciation, when people relaxed together and when meaningful, two-way communication was facilitated. When I visited Pharm Day in 2004, it was the first time it had been held on a weekend, explicitly enabling staff to bring their families to their place of work. The tone of the day and the tour of the facilities was aimed at making the whole operation accessible to all ages and levels of scientific understanding. However there were conflicting attitudes about the motivation of management for scheduling the event in non-work time. Some described it as indicative of the family-friendly nature of the site, others considered that the perq of a 'free day' had been removed and some of the people who had, in earlier interviews, been very enthusiastic about the event admitted that they would not be going as it was on Sunday. Although this event expressed for many the 'sense of family' which existed on-site, few people wanted to devote a family day to it. The company's generous identity, epitomised by Pharm Day, was

deemed by some to be undermined by it being held on a Sunday but by others to be reinforced, as it included employees' whole families.

This section implies that a company projecting a generous image which emphasises the importance of individuals' needs and aspirations in its policy provision does not necessarily foster an environment in which employees feel able to work in an individually determined way. Further, corporate events can either reinforce or undermine key facets of organisational image, depending on how they are interpreted.

4.5 On-site community and working environment[3]

It is a 'young site', demographic information provided by the company showed that the median age is thirty six. A larger proportion of employees aged under forty five will cause an increase in the need for family-friendly facilities, not only because there are more people with young children in that age group but also because the wish to combine family and work is stronger in younger-generation employees (Remery et al 2003). One manager, over 50 himself, said that his team of 8 had three others who were also over 50 "which is almost unheard of" (and only 12% of the entire site was in this age range). Childcare is a concern to the majority of people as so many have children under ten years. People generally think it is a good company to work for, are aware that the company presents itself as an 'employer of choice' and many described their workplace as being a 'friendly' site. The company projects an image to staff of being supportive, caring and concerned with the whole person partly by providing a 'wellbeing' programme which, *inter alia*, offers counselling to help people with either work-related or external issues and enables managers to do risk assessments on workplace pressures that may cause stress within departments.

When respondents described the generosity of PharMerger it was partly in terms of the level of commitment to employees in personal or family crisis. One spousal respondent stated "They have been very supportive to [partner]. No one else would put up with how he has been. He had to have six months off for depression" (ITEH) and another interviewee who had experienced a period of long term illness describe the attitude of HR and their wider team as "extremely supportive". Almost all line

[3] This section mainly explores concepts from the On-site Community, Generosity and Family categories.

managers reportedly are, and have historically been, willing to accommodate people's family emergencies (formerly by discretion, more recently through the provisions of policy). A manager of five people said "my main reason for joining PharMerger over [another local pharmaceutical company] was that I perceived that PharMerger was very involved with people, it was people that mattered, people's 'wellbeing' that matters, training that matters" (11C). Although he said that there was a "family feel" to the company he admitted that "it's probably too cheesy a thing to say and for people to take them seriously." This implies that the line between inclusiveness and insincerity may be crossed by explicitly describing an organisation as a 'family'.

The strong site identity in the ForeignCo days is considered to have been undermined by the merger with BigPharm. It used to be ForeignCo's sole UK R&D site whereas now it is one of two and articulates with several others overseas. Organising concepts such as split-sites, super-sites and global working mean that people often work in vertical teams composed of individuals from the US, Europe, Canada and the UK. Respondents expressed the view that the organisation was now a bit too big: "you can get lost, you're one tiny cog in a huge machine" (4F). Also, the wider environment in which PharMerger is operating is markedly more competitive. The speed at which the pharmaceutical market moves is such that 'relaxed' working practices are no longer considered to be appropriate to meet the challenges. Upon returning to PharMerger in the Spring of 2004 (eighteen months after the first phase of interviews) several developments confirmed the trend towards a more demanding work environment. Certain functions within the company, most notably the HR function, were going through a significant change programme which impacted the whole of the site. The complement of HR personnel on site was being reduced in a national rationalisation and cost-cutting exercise and most employees now have only telephone contact with HR on a remote site. Many considered that this change and the reorganisation more generally threatened PharMerger's identity as a caring company. The most senior respondent on site explained that reorganisation was part of the drive to cut costs through greater effectiveness and efficiency and involved ever increasing targets (in the ForeignCo era no targets were set). She was concerned that in this climate of uncertainty and increasing pressure to deliver, people were working longer hours and having to travel more but their welfare was rarely mentioned.

> The pressure is on and whether it was a fad or what I don't know, there is no one at a senior level who is heralding, blowing the trumpet, making sure that everybody's wellbeing is taken care of. [A couple of years ago] there must have been, there were so many initiatives…there was a lot of money behind it. Here we addressed some of the issues we had at the time and got a good balance of work for people but now the pressure is really building again and I guess I do have a concern that if we don't have a refocus and think about this and try to mitigate some of the potential risks we shall go back to having an unacceptable situation again. (LDFF)

These initiatives include the policies introduced and promoted two years earlier, a greater emphasis on the wellbeing programme and frequent statements from company seniors about the importance of good work-life balance. Without sustained attention at the highest level, policies by themselves did not appear to have induced changes in the culture such that the issue of family-friendly working remains prominent. This data highlights the necessity of revisiting organisations after significant lapses of time in order to determine the effect of policy on culture as mediated by wider business concerns. Despite the backdrop of flexibility that has historically pertained in the company, ensuring employees' work-life balance seems to be more the target of periodic drives rather than of an ongoing process. This leads to an important theoretical insight which is that organisations may have histories and current policies which appear to be supportive of employees' wellbeing, but the constantly changing demands of the environment in which they operate can push such priorities aside without there being a high level of consciousness that this has taken place.

4.5.1 Perceptions of generosity and 'us' and 'them' oppositions

PharMerger explicitly aims to provide an overall employment package which will attract and retain the best science and engineering graduates and doctorates available. New employees perceive that continuous improvement in training and employee development are made a priority at all levels in the hierarchy.

> They are definitely into not only giving you what training you need to the job but also background supplementary type training if you like on a developmental front...They definitely believe in giving you the tools that you feel you need to do the job and quite often a bit more besides if it can be worked in. (ITPB, after 3 months' service)

However when this same respondent was interviewed eighteen months later his perception had altered.

> For the lower grades there is training, you get the skills to do the job but in terms of development and progression, career, moving out and expanding there isn't much, there is very little opportunity even to do other things, let alone move up the ladder. This is something I have found a big surprise and a big disappointment to be honest...you end up with the golden handcuffs type situation. You might be bored out of your brain, frustrated because there is nowhere to go but let's be honest it's a fairly good package, most people can't afford to leave.

People in the middle grades with elevated but unfulfilled aspirations who cannot see any room for progression are partially compensated for this frustration by PharMerger's generosity but are also constrained by it from leaving the company. As a result their perception of PharMerger's generosity is that it is only really those people who *have* progressed who are genuinely benefiting from it. Feelings of 'us and them' exist among those who consider that the opportunities which PharMerger seems to offer are in fact illusory, *vis-à-vis* those who do appear to have accessed the success and rewards (both in material and job satisfaction terms) which are seemingly available to all.

A global survey had been carried out in the company in 2000 and repeated in 2002. One of the least favourable responses in the 2002 survey was to the statement "I receive the training and development I need to help prepare me for other roles." 47% were favourable, 33% unfavourable.[4] I asked different HR personnel for their interpretation of this result who typically replied that

> The key word is 'other roles'. The problem is that people tend not to leave, turnover is very low. There is a *big wedge of unfulfilled expectations* [my emphasis]. People can work really hard but there will not be the openings and this can make them quite bitter. (7AFU)

Aspiration levels are high and encouraged by the company's projected image of itself as an employer of choice which offers great opportunities and generous rewards to the brightest scientists. However it became obvious that for many employees these aspirations are not met and they are not being sufficiently challenged by their jobs. As the company is well-populated with very 'driven' people who are not only anxious to make their mark but also have a high sense of entitlement, many admitted to feeling frustrated and "disillusioned".

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[4] There was no comparator with results from 2000 because this question wasn't asked in that survey.

The corollary of a high calibre workforce chasing limited status positions is the competitiveness which came through clearly in interviews. This competitiveness is writ large in the wider industry. "There is an intellectual arms race between us and the other pharmaceutical companies. We have to attract the best intellects, they are offering better and better deals, people who are perfectly capable are getting left behind because they haven't got it on paper" (4FFU). The pharmaceutical industry sets great store on higher qualifications and 25% of the PharMerger site have PhDs (see Figure 4.1). However, many interviewees, including one at director level, stated that people were often overqualified for their jobs, that PharMerger want a graduate to do a job which a school leaver could do and that people in other industries with the same qualifications would probably have more responsibility. Employees considered that one reason why their promotion prospects were hampered was because there were too many well-qualified people around. Those without doctorates displayed a certain level of resentment at the preferential treatment received by people with PhDs. One ex-employee admitted that he would not have enjoyed working at PharMerger if he did not have a PhD as he would have felt in some way inferior. People who did not have academic qualifications appear to be disproportionately disadvantaged, regardless of the genuine relevance such academic indicators might have to job functions. It was implied that those employees who do not have doctorates and who want to progress will put in long hours and hope to make their mark that way.

Some people considered that their career advancement would be limited unless they undertook further education in addition to full-time employment and PharMerger sponsors employees to undertake degree courses. One non-graduate interviewee studying for a modular masters course designed for current practitioners within the pharmaceutical industry considered it a great opportunity. However, another respondent on this same course, who already had an engineering masters degree, could not see the point of gaining the qualification because of the lack of opportunities for advancement. Many considered that the 'elitist' tendency of PharMerger and the pharmaceutical industry in general is being encouraged without necessarily improving the ability of individuals to find fulfilling and challenging work. Homogeneity is eschewed in PharMerger's organisational literature and throughout the site, which is profoundly influenced by the culture of individuation epitomised by the fingerprint motif. However it is possible to discern a move towards

a certain kind of homogeneity, which began at the time of the merger and results from the heightened emphasis on recruiting at the highest level of qualification, even if actual positions do not warrant it. One respondent said,

> Increasingly even where you studied is becoming important even though from the point of view of man management such things might be irrelevant in terms of how you manage people. It is increasingly difficult to progress without such things [as doctorates]. ....This has occurred since they expanded, we didn't used to have the resource to compete in the intellectual arms race. Previously we had a far more eclectic mix, now it is more homogeneous, we don't have such a good cross section. (4FFU)

Understandably, a respondent's job function and own qualifications largely determined whether or not they thought there was undue emphasis placed on having a higher degree. One laboratory manager (who had a doctorate) stated that "our promotions are based on what individuals have actually achieved and their ongoing scientific and management responsibilities. Our Deputy Director [his manager] does not have a doctorate and neither do two of my team leaders" (4BFU). Similarly, and also from a team leader with a doctorate, "People arriving in the company with a PhD and postdoctorate experience are usually placed in positions of higher responsibility than graduates because of a higher level of scientific understanding and independence in their work. However, graduates who show the right aptitude can and do work their way up to similar levels of responsibility" (4EFU). Tangible reasons were therefore given why people with doctorates are advantaged in the application and promotion processes but there was not unanimous agreement on the necessity for higher degrees.

The high sense of entitlement within the company and the unfulfilled aspirations of many employees has generated a feeling of 'us and them' between those who are considered to be successful within the company (many of whom have doctorates) and those who consider themselves to have been 'left behind'. Staff at lower grades more commonly described the training opportunities, reward and flexible working conditions as "generous" than those in higher grades who considered themselves to have reached a plateau in their career with the company. Their high sense of entitlement and perception that the company's generosity was being accessed to a far greater extent by *other* people, exacerbated feelings of 'us and them' evident, for example, in resentment of those who appeared to have progressed because of their (perhaps unnecessary) qualifications.

This section indicates that organisations which are able to attract well-qualified (and arguably over-qualified) applicants but are not able to deliver the expected opportunities for development may be characterised by a widespread 'aspiration gap'. Furthermore, generosity can, paradoxically, lead to dissatisfaction and an unsatisfied sense of entitlement. It can encourage a 'driven' mentality towards work which will not necessarily earn the implied prize. Policies intended to mitigate the effects of high-performance working environments may not be taken up because of competition for limited advancement. They may even be abused when frustrated employees decide to take advantage of this aspect of generosity in the absence of any clear route to promotion.

4.5.2 Formal mechanisms for consultation

Communication and feedback are considered to be important by management and throughout the organisation. A 'Bring your Family to Work' day had originally been pitched at school-age children, but when employees complained that this excluded their younger children, the company changed tack.

> I know we listen to them because originally they said 'no child under the age of seven' and there was a huge hue and cry about that. Some companies would just dismiss that, but they took it on board, and said "it's going to be a pain in the neck with people pushing pushchairs around, but they want it so we'll say yes." (7A)

Findings from the global survey in 2002 confirmed this assessment. In answer to the question: "PharMerger makes adequate use of recognition other than money to encourage good performance," 46% of respondents replied favourably compared with 26% in 2000 and 34% replied unfavourably compared with 51% in 2000. They had taken note of the 2000 figure and initiated a Rewarding Achievements Scheme. In addition to these intermittent surveys, there is an ongoing consultative process which takes place under the auspices of the Site Consultative Committee (SCC). One former employee described a previous incarnation of such a body as well as the significant union membership that was on site in the 1980's.

> When I first started they had the SRC, Staff Representation Council, it was a company-created consultative system. I was in the union and we didn't think the SRC had a great deal of power... it was that much recognised by the management that union dues would be paid by check off, [directly from salary] ...eventually people just got bored with it, nothing would get done. The management could

> always stonewall because they were doing it in works time, and the union were doing it in voluntary time. Perfect war of attrition." (ITJS)

I inquired about the present level of union activity in order to gauge its influence in comparison with a body like the SCC (and in light of the strong union presence in the other case study company). No unions are recognised for collective bargaining or consultation purposes and PharMerger no longer have check-off arrangements, so they are unaware of how many union members they have on site. HR professionals stated that lower levels of unionisation made it easier to effect what they considered to be beneficial changes (for employees) and implied that unions could thwart attempts to promote flexible working. People on the SCC considered that the views of staff are genuinely considered, the company commits itself to the conclusions reached and PharMerger is fair, open and genuine in its stated intentions. Although it might seem unlikely that management-controlled consultative systems (in comparison with trades unions) will genuinely elicit and respond to employee views, this data suggests that this need not be the case.

4.5.3 Notions of reciprocity and informal expectations

The phrase "they do try to be family-friendly" recurred, with the implication that this is not always the end result. One respondent stated that the generosity of rewards, the congenial working environment and the generally advantaged position of employees, made it seem

> ...churlish to say no. I often use this analogy: you don't say no in a hospice... nothing is unreasonable to be asked to do, you stretch yourself. It's the same here with money, it's a very generous company so you would be seen as churlish to say no, so people stretch themselves and stretch themselves...some staff, the word 'no', it's never even occurred to them. That's why people end up needing to see the on-site counsellor. (11A)

This notion of reciprocity was confirmed by the following quote:

> PharMerger strikes a bargain in that it says "we give you this range of benefits and we want some work back from you, but we will do our best to enable you to deliver the best work that you can...we're going to give you a lot of freedom around when and how you do that work and support you in that" and that is a direct contrast to many other organisations. The outcome of that is that I never see anybody who lightly says "no". I think most people I know, if they possibly can, will put in the extra when necessary and really not be too worried about that. (4G)

Many interviewees did seem to have this attitude to a greater or lesser extent but the sense that they owed the company something in return for reward and flexibility was most evident in older and senior employees (for whom the primacy of work was the most dominant facet of culture) or in newcomers. Employees with experience of other companies' policies and provision do consider that overall, PharMerger's employees are in an advantaged position.

> People never see the really bad employers that are out there. I would love to say to people "go outside and see what the big bad world is like." Because people tend to come and stay for years they don't have the experience of other environments. I have had that experience and I know how good they have it. (7AFU)

The high sense of entitlement sometimes precludes an appreciation of conditions at PharMerger and one spousal respondent also described the correlative lack of resiliency. "The people who work there think they are in the real world but they are not, it's a very cosseted, cosy environment.... It's a beautiful building and the labs are excellent. They think they are working incredibly hard and you think 'put you in the outside world, mate and you would go under.'" She went on to say "There are people there who work incredibly long hours in the hope that they will get promotion to the next level or whatever, waiting for management to throw out a little titbit and they often have got young families. The company will say they don't expect people to do that but if you want promotion.....It's not family-friendly in that way but it's people's perceptions, rather than what the company expects" (ITGB). This was confirmed by other respondents.

> The individuals we employ are very success oriented and are very highly driven so individuals put a lot of pressure on themselves which may or may not be pressure directly applied by PharMerger as an organisation. They put a lot of pressure as to the quality, the intensity, the level to which they do that work, perhaps more so than is required. (31BFF)

It would seem therefore that there is an identifiable disjuncture between formal and informal expectations, at least in certain parts of the company. Where this is the case, policy and official statements which are genuinely intended to prevent the creation or perpetuation of, for example, a long hours culture, may not succeed. This section has highlighted that even in companies which are considered to be highly responsive to feedback from employees, the latter may not feel free to report excessive workloads. However, the possibility has also been raised that people may assume they are

working very hard, if there is a pervasive assumption that this is the norm in a company. Relative to people outside the company this may not actually be the case. Generous policies and an emphasis on their necessity to mitigate work pressures may fuel the perception of a high-pressure working environment and act as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Notwithstanding this, in the case of PharMerger there does appear to be certain points in the research process and levels in the hierarchy where there is intense pressure. This can be either to meet deadlines or prove that one is conforming to the ideal worker type (or both). The influence of policies in such an environment and on underlying cultural processes will be described below.

4.6 Family-friendly policies at PharMerger[5]

A key phrase for understanding the impact which family-friendly policies have had on the company is *formalisation.* Before the merger took place with BigPharm, people were allowed to work flexibly but policies which could be systematically applied are a fairly recent development. This was similar to the organisation which was the subject of my pilot study and accords with wider cultural norms. Research conducted in a wide range of organisations in Britain, the US and Europe found that one of the main reported strengths of policies was that they formalised informal practice (Lewis and Taylor 1996). Over the last four years the following benefits and policies have been formalised.

a) Maternity Leave and Adoption Leave

At the time of the study statutory maternity leave and pay entitlement was six weeks at 90% of basic pay and twelve at the lower level of statutory maternity pay, with (since April 2003) an optional additional twenty six weeks leave unpaid. Adoptive parents are now (since April 2003) entitled to twenty six weeks paid leave at £100 per week and an optional additional twenty six weeks leave unpaid. PharMerger explicitly aim to set their provision at a higher rate than the statute. Their maternity and adoption leave and pay policies are the same and the entitlement is eighteen weeks full pay, eight weeks statutory maternity/adoption pay, and an optional twenty six

[5] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Individualism/Individuation and Flexibility & Choice categories.

weeks unpaid. They also allow people to accumulate holiday whilst on maternity/ adoption leave.

b) Paternity Leave

Since April 2003 the statutory paternity leave entitlement is for two weeks (to be taken in full weeks within three months of the birth of the child) at a rate of £100 per week. PharMerger have granted one week's fully paid paternity leave since 1999. In the first phase of the study several respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this level of provision, reflecting employees' high sense of entitlement, and this was increased to two week's fully paid leave in 2003.

c) Parental Leave (and Personal Leave)

Since 15th December 1999 mothers and fathers have had the right to take a total of 13 weeks unpaid parental leave before their child's fifth birthday. At PharMerger all employees, not just parents, are allowed up to three months unpaid leave in order, for example, to travel, study and meet caring responsibilities.

d) Emergency Leave (for dependents)

A reasonable period of paid time away from work (which may be a couple of hours or a whole day, but should not exceed a maximum of two days per year) is allowed to deal with emergencies affecting a dependent. This was formerly granted at manager's discretion and not all employees are aware that such official leave exists.

e) Flexible Working

In July 2002 PharMerger implemented the equivalent of the April 2003 legislation which grants parents with children under 6 years old the right to ask for flexible working. Different patterns of flexible working (in addition to flexitime or *trust time*) became officially available and the core time hours were adjusted so that people could leave at 4pm on Fridays. These changes brought formality to *ad hoc* arrangements, and aimed to ensure consistency of process and decision making. However different departments came to different conclusions when requests were made as patterns have to be compatible with operational requirements. Team leaders are expected to be constantly available for their team which places a limit on the amount of flexibility their work function can support. HR caution that part-time managers may not be able

to develop their staff adequately and that progression is slower if working part-time as people gain less experience. Part-time workers also experience intrusion at home in the form of phone calls and often exceed their contracted hours. The flexible working proposal form includes questions like "consider your career development" and reduced hours working is not encouraged for 'professionals', although pages on PharMerger's intranet are intended to make the process as transparent and accessible as possible, and a modelling tool shows the effect on one's reward package and pensions.

Flexible working patterns covered by the policy

A system of *trust time* had been in place since the ForeignCo era, which allows one day per month to be built up and taken as additional holiday. One respondent stated that it is a common practice to work the additional hours required per week to accrue this time, suggesting that long hours are not ubiquitous. Flexibility does not always equate to reduced hours, it includes homeworking, unique working hours (enabling people to work school hours and evenings) and annualised hours (which facilitates seasonal working eg. for accountants). People can also reduce their hours on a temporary basis or take phased retirement. Business considerations rather than employees' convenience are usually the determining factor in the decision. Currently disallowed are extended hours (spreading the working week over more than five days), and term time working. Working compressed hours (fulltime over less than five days) is only permitted in exceptional circumstances.

Take-up of Flexible Working

By April 04 there had been twenty nine new requests for flexible working since the launch in July 02. Twenty eight had been approved and were then subject to trial periods; one had been rejected. Three times as many women than men had sought flexible working. Seventy three part-timers were already employed by PharMerger before the launch. Although HR reported that people were "approaching the subject with more confidence" (and in the final phase of the study, respondents reported that awareness of the availability of flexible working had risen) the financial implications of flexible working were cited as the main reason why there had not been the large volume of formal requests anticipated by them before the launch. HR expected further

requests to follow seasonal patterns, coming at points in the year when children started school or academic courses began.

e) Career breaks

Formerly available in BigPharm, the practice ceased after the merger and has been replaced with the personal leave entitlement.

f) Childcare vouchers (and the lack of on-site childcare)

Vouchers can be purchased through PharMerger's flexible benefits package but there are no on-site childcare facilities and it was clear that people across the site and in the rest of the company disagreed about the merits of having a crèche. It is argued against on the grounds of safety and appropriateness of location (the site is on the edge of an industrial estate) but others consider its lack to be "short sighted because at the moment you see this mad dash of quite a few staff racing out to get to a nursery before five o'clock to pick children up, but if the children were here then that stress and that pressure would be removed" (7A).

In comparison with other employers (and with UKPharm) PharMerger was described as being "more focused on the family and on 'wellbeing'" (7E) and single people considered that the remuneration package contained a disproportionate amount of benefits for people with families. Many employees and spousal respondents cited the extension of healthcare provision across their immediate families, the ability to purchase additional holidays through the benefits scheme and even the Christmas hamper given to all employees, as examples of PharMerger's family-friendly character. There is a recognition that wider cultural changes could have provoked a greater awareness of family within the organisation rather than this being a genuine area of improvement. However several employees stated that it is now easier to ask for the above provisions *because* they have been formally laid down although, as they had been introduced fairly recently, there was still a feeling that the system was "being tested". One respondent who was taking personal leave admitted that he had been unsure about the reception he would get from his manager and that there was an advantage to granting such leave at the managers' discretion.

> It's one thing saying, oh I can have so many weeks off but the feeling you get maybe from your management or whatever, might be that they are forced into it rather than willing to do it, which wouldn't be ideal but I have not felt like that at all. Everyone has been very supportive. But the feeling you have beforehand, you know...(31C)

He was aware that a) policies might work antagonistically against the cultural emphasis on autonomy and b) PharMerger's generosity was often viewed with a degree of ambivalence, especially by managers who are under pressure to deliver results. A key insight to be gleaned here therefore is that formalisation of provision may work both ways in organisations. Either formalisation can make policies easier to take up or, where their greater enforceability in some way 'grates' against underlying assumptions, their potential to provoke discord may discourage their take-up. Also, enhanced provision may not be perceived by employees as an intentional improvement in conditions but merely indicative of the influence of external trends.

4.6.1 Formalisation of policies as part of a site-wide trend

The formalisation of family-friendly provisions also has to be seen in the context of the increasingly bureaucratic and procedurally-oriented tendencies of PharMerger (especially when compared with ForeignCo). Respondents raised the subject of the 'fit' between the R&D environment and family-friendly/flexible working patterns, and those with experience of working in other contexts eg. production areas (even within the same company) could see that elsewhere there would be greater constraints on such non-conventional working patterns.[6] The employee taking personal leave mused,

> [I wonder]...how easy it would be for me to take 18 weeks off if I was a key person and it meant that production would be compromised because of it. It would be a much more difficult situation. Maybe you'd still be obliged to do it but the feeling you'd get in terms of "I can't believe that person is asking for that, my God...doesn't he realise". ... we all know we can do these things but we don't want to do it with bad feeling. (31C)

Many respondents considered that their job function would not permit flexible or unconventional hours. A member of the support staff who worked for teams of other people stated that "this option of working from home hasn't really been thought through for administrators...we can't do our job from home" (4J). There was also

[6] These policies are standardised across this country's PharMerger sites.

ambiguity surrounding the entitlement of team leaders to these provisions, some of whom had been explicitly told that they could not retain their status if they adopted some form of flexible working. Once team leader status is achieved there is an expectation in many departments that the incumbent will work longer hours. At least one team leader expressed scepticism at the inability of team leaders to work flexibly or part-time, especially if hours were adjusted only slightly but admitted that,

> I wouldn't want to test the system in a major way, I might test it in a more minor way, like what would happen if I did the same hours in a week but left at three on a Friday? Because they ought to have that level of flexibility as it shouldn't affect the job I'm doing. I do accept that if I only work four days a week then yeah, it probably would affect the job I'm doing. That's where they are coming from in saying that you have to work full-time. But when I came back from maternity leave I worked four days a week for a month as you're allowed to at that stage, and I can do it. I think they are being a bit too inflexible. (4E)

The impact of formalisation on practice is not straightforward. Now that policies are written down it can work either in favour of or against the employee. Team leaders may be formally precluded from taking up flexibility (whereas previously accommodations might have been made with their own managers). Requests to work part-time are now treated as requests for flexible working which necessitates writing a business case which might make it harder to obtain. Someone going through an adoption process perceived that the adoption policy did not treat her fairly in comparison with pregnant employees because no time off is granted before the adoption itself (whereas pregnant women are entitled to "a reasonable amount of paid time off" for ante-natal care.) As her manager was consciously 'following the policy,' (which allows the same amount of time off as for maternity but only after the adoption) either he had to go beyond the policy by allowing time off for pre-placement social services assessments, or she had to take days off as holiday. Without a formal policy on adoption a manager might either refuse any flexibility or might assume that maternity leave provisions were an appropriate template to follow. This latter option would have been better for this individual than a rigid application of adoption policy.

Alternatively, individuals whose managers were under no compulsion to allow flexibility when it was not covered by policy are now able to appeal to these written standards. In practice therefore, formalisation of policies can either reduce the

generosity that might have been there by manager's discretion before, or it can guarantee a certain level of provision. In terms of its effect on 'root' culture, formalisation has reinforced the sense of entitlement that employees have to benefit from the generosity of the company. By suggesting that people should be treated the same, regardless of their line managers' attitudes, it appears to challenge the culture of individuation, but as the emphasis in the policy is on taking a unique configuration of circumstances into account before making a decision, this challenge is somewhat illusory. Similarly, formalisation appears to increase the autonomy of the applying employee but their manager's autonomy (discretion) is preserved. The balance of autonomy is only slightly shifted in favour of the employee by virtue of there being a written policy. The impact of formalisation on the principle of the primacy of work shall be considered in greater detail below. Finally, the greater acceptance of the need for family-friendly working in the wider pharmaceutical industry is acknowledged in the formalisation of policies so the cultural imperative to change is satisfied but not modified in any significant way. If PharMerger had decided *not* to develop a body of policies this would have been flouting this cultural imperative and would have provoked criticism from employees, partly as a result of their strong sense of entitlement. As stated earlier, one of the most salient aspects of PharMerger's identity is their generosity. The formalisation of policy reiterates that intention to be generous but the level of actual provision has not increased for most people.

Abstracting insights from PharMerger to a higher level, formalisation of policy may be a well-publicised process which gives the impression of greater generosity and improved provision, but this can be illusory. In organisations where managers are operating under the assumption that they should, in general, be generous, policies which are tightly prescribed may act as a constraint. Where generosity is not practiced or expected, formalisation may result in genuinely enhanced and equitable provision. Additionally, this section has illustrated how certain industrial environments may 'fit' better with flexible working than others, but managers and employees will differ in their estimation of the appropriateness of certain functions within them to support non-conventional working arrangements.

4.6.2 Generalised access to family-friendly provision

Although PharMerger acknowledges that most of its staff take up their family-friendly policies in order to manage domestic, caring responsibilities alongside work, they have deliberately presented their provision in more general terms, as a means of facilitating individual lifestyle choices. One manager said "My wife [also at PharMerger] has just been approved flexible working. Because of all the discussions, there is now an assumption that everyone has the right to these policies whereas before the assumption was it only applies to people with disabled family members or people with children...People are now more aware of them, the precedent has been set, we discuss them more at teabreak." (11BFF) Personal leave, which allows short sabbaticals in order to explore other areas of life, emphasises that it is not so much parents as *individuals* whom PharMerger wishes to accommodate (albeit to ensure retention of key personnel determined to take time out for personal development). Similar considerations have been employed in the design of the company-wide rewards scheme. Each employee has an individually calculated fund from which they select the mix of cash and benefits which best suits their particular circumstances (and, as mentioned earlier, the published guide to this scheme repeats a fingerprint motif), emphasising the culturally rooted concept that each employee is a unique individual. By devolving choices about reward to each employee the reward package also reinforces the cultural emphasis on autonomy. One wider implication of this generalisation of provision to all individuals, rather than narrowly focussing on employees with families, is that it suggests that policies may be harnessed by companies in order to reinforce existing emphases. The term 'family-friendly' is considered by some HR professionals to be already passé and, even when policies are introduced under this rubric, companies will not necessarily use them to send a signal that certain categories of employee are more in need of assistance than others.

4.7 Management and their exercise of discretion[7]

As Hochschild (1997:28) states, "Middle management can be the bottleneck to the widespread take-up of family-friendly policies." None of the interviewees described their own manager in these terms but many insisted that problems did exist elsewhere.

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[7] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Individualism/Individuation and Flexibility & Choice categories.

One person's previous manager had expected him to be at his desk from 8.30am – 6pm and he estimated that a quarter of the managers had such expectations. However when this estimation was tested out in the final phase an authoritative source set the figure at between 5 and 7%. The discretion exercised by managers was a recurring theme throughout the sample when people were asked about the family-friendliness of PharMerger and was epitomised in the phrase "it depends on your manager". One of the most senior people on the site said that the company would only become more family-friendly if managers consistently applied what was already on offer.

> I don't think they can [be more family-friendly], I think the flexibility is there, it's really down to the managers, and their interpretation of what's available and how to use it. (31A)

> In some functions it's much more friendly than others. They allow much more flexible working in terms of starting hours and so on. In other functions not at all, a bit draconian. Certainly from the top they give a message of being very sort of home/work balance, addressing that issue. In reality on this site it is to some extent ignored, it does depend on the manager....In our department the whole culture, the pace, the expectation, really is down to one person. He's been here a long time, he's done a lot of good but I also feel he's doing a lot of harm. (4B)

Any employee considering taking advantage of family-friendly policies had to submit a written proposal which formed the basis of the discussion with their manager.

> I think if the proposal [to work flexibly] is well thought out, from the employee's point of view, and they talk to their manager and they allow the manager to think about it so that the manager's response is well thought out then that's where the real value of it is. (11B)

Although many considered this to be a cumbersome process, especially when it had to be gone through to establish formally what had been working informally for some time, there was recognition that this systematic and considered approach could help to ensure that requests are treated with due regard for all the parties involved. The manager exercises discretion when considering these proposals, but they could not dismiss them solely on the grounds of personal prejudice against non-traditional working patterns. Rather than teams being wholly subject to their managers' preferences, each employee's request is assessed on its own merit, which fits with the individuating tendencies in PharMerger culture. Although it might be anticipated that formalising arrangements can lead to a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, the appeal to measures of acceptability of flexible working arrangements which are *external* to the

team helps to ensure that managers are not preventing their staff from being considered as discrete individuals with personally determined needs. However, even with the policies in place, the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work, which was more pronounced in some areas than in others, acted as a disincentive to the formation of proposals.

> Perhaps they don't work hard enough [in a particular area] at trying to use that opportunity [to work flexibly]. It's easy to withdraw from that opportunity, from a management perspective they say it's too difficult. It's not too difficult it should be something that's pursuable." (4G)

The manager who maintains that flexible working is too hard to manage is reinforcing the assumption that work concerns are always of paramount importance. Where this is already a strongly held belief, this will discourage team members from challenging the primacy of work by pursuing a working pattern that is explicitly taking their personal needs into account. It is important therefore to establish whether or not policies are modifying assumptions about the primacy of work.

There are still a significant number of older managers who were described as "very much old school UKPharm", they embody the former company's conservative, cautious and traditional approach and found ForeignCo's more adventurous and consensual philosophy of management dissonant with their own. The subsequent merger with a larger and more bureaucratic partner re-established the validity of their more conservative outlook but was, in turn, dissonant for those who had embraced ForeignCo's approach, some of whom were ex-UKPharm themselves. The differing cultural emphases of the three eras in PharMerger's history have contributed to the present fragmentation among the managers. There seemed to be no 'typical management perspective' on family-friendly policies.[8] However, when one HR professional described the managers she advises on flexible working she said that "the

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[8] Several questions in the 2002 global survey were relevant (no comparators with 2000 available):
In PharMerger, management actively supports work/life balance
(percentage) Total favourable: 65 Don't Know: 17 Total unfavourable: 18
My immediate manager takes work/life balance into account when scheduling meetings and/or travel
Total favourable: 76 Don't Know: 13 Total unfavourable: 10
My immediate manager takes work/life balance into account when assigning work
Total favourable: 74 Don't Know: 14 Total unfavourable: 12
My immediate manager takes work/life balance into account when I have a work-life conflict
Total favourable: 65 Don't Know: 15 Total unfavourable: 20

vast majority, when given a flexible working request have two reactions. One is the desire to fit with the request and the other one is 'how the heck am I going to cope because I won't be able to recruit for the hours that this person isn't here?'" (7A). Policies have legitimised the desire to work flexibly, even for managers who might be described as 'conservative' and have influenced the way in which they use their discretion. Many managers appeared to be grateful for the guidance which policies have provided.

> Before we might not have wanted to lose someone but unclear about what could be done. They have established a framework and has allowed us perhaps to be a little bit more creative. We have a situation where one person works four days a week and another works shortened hours but works five days a week, whatever works best with the childcare arrangements. Possibly before the policy we might have applied the first but not the second so maybe having the policy just meant we had a better idea of what we can and can't do. (7BFF)

Such a quote suggests that managerial conservatism which results in the refusal of a request may be the result of uncertainty regarding the validity of requests for flexible working, rather than resistance to unconventional working patterns in principle. The 'root' cultural emphasis on the primacy of work makes it hard for them to allow a working pattern that may decrease the effectiveness of the department. Policies can increase managers' certainty that they are acting *legitimately* in accommodating requests and even allow them to be "creative". In such circumstances the effect of policy on 'root' culture is to modify (that is, reduce) the dominance of the primacy of work and increase the sense that the applicant is entitled to work in the way they have requested. The importance of the autonomy of both employee and manager is preserved, as is the culture of individuation.

The launch of policies has been accompanied by training for managers whose own working patterns may discourage the take-up of policies. "They may be very driven and have no problem working weekends and until 8pm and there is almost an underwritten expectation that their reports will do the same" (31BFF). They have been encouraged to lead by example by taking advantage of flexibility themselves and to use flexibility as a reward.

> I do take advantage of the flexible working to accrue hours, and if I do I will take those off and staff see that I do that. I am also quite conscious about the number of

> hours I work, as the change in cultural mentality means that it's not the number of hours you work it's the work that's needs to be done. (7F – Director)
>
> On an HR training session the managers were saying that there is an increased amount of local management flexibility in terms of reward. Someone said "you don't have to reward people with money, you can actually reward them with a day off." That's not something I've heard before, so I think there are overall policies but they are encouraging local flexibility. (ITHJ)

There is some evidence therefore to suggest that PharMerger are challenging the 'naturalness' of the link between long hours and effectiveness and that they are also extending managerial discretion so that their autonomy is not eroded by the *continued* development of policy (the policy making process is decidedly non-static and is subject to the cultural imperative for change).

In conclusion, although policies are intended to reduce the mediating effect of managers this may not happen in practice. The exercise of managerial discretion highlights the continued cultural importance of autonomy and, in places, promotes the primacy of work at the expense of the concerns of the individual. In order to conform to the ideal worker type, employees must demonstrate unequivocally their adherence to the principle of the primacy of work, often by working long hours, although there is growing recognition that this is not necessarily an indicator of effectiveness. Some managers are being trained to reward genuine effectiveness and long hours worked with time off (where work pressures permit). This could, if it became a widespread practice, affect employees' sense of entitlement in such a way that they expect achievement to be acknowledged with compensatory personal time. Currently (and conventionally) achievement is rewarded by increased responsibility and therefore less time (White et al 2003). By the end of the study no such shift had taken place but increased autonomy was evident in the greater incidence of *occasional* homeworking, that is, not a permanent change in working pattern granted on the grounds of policy. However it had become more *acceptable* to do this and it is possible that related policies have helped to legitimise the practice. Policies have been presented to managers as a way of accommodating *individuals'* needs and have accentuated the culture of individuation and entitlement. However there has been no significant change in the way the ideal worker type is constructed and the primacy of work remains largely, but not completely unchallenged.

This section has further refined the conceptualisation of formalisation in that has shown how it can act as a curb on managerial discretion, but need not replace it. Managers may even welcome limits on their discretion or guidance as to how to apply it, even in cultures where autonomy is prized.. Also, the effective launch of policies will often require raising managers' awareness of ways in which their working patterns may act as disincentives to take-up. Finally, this discussion about managers reveals how, in organisations, employees may sense that in spite of their own experiences and the company's stated intent to facilitate family-friendly working, resistance is bound to exist even if it cannot be precisely located. It is possibly a function of the coexistence of many different management styles but also a projection of the ambivalence many people feel about legitimately accommodating peoples' family responsibilities in the occupational sphere. Where genuine resistance exists, even though policies might seem intended to circumvent managerial discretion, facets of culture may impede their ability to do so.

4.8 Generosity in high pressure work environments and long hours[9]

Certain departments in PharMerger are considered, by their managers and staff, to be areas of extremely high pressure. One manager said that his section is "very driven to generate new compounds, drugs, desperate to prove its success. We haven't put a new drug on the market in the 12 years that I have been here so the department is desperate to prove itself" (4B). In these areas there was an acknowledgement of the organisation's generosity (in terms of reward and policy) however there was also an awareness of the implied reciprocity, that they are being given all that was necessary in order to guarantee a commitment to the urgent tasks in hand. One employee who found them to be very supportive when he had been off work for several months with stress said,

> It's an excellent company to work for but they want their pound of flesh. In terms of culture, attitude and pay they are very good but in return for that they will work you very hard. It was work that caused my breakdown. It depends very much on the manager but if you let it the company will flog the willing horse. There is a lot of words put on paper about work-life balance and in reality it doesn't happen. (7AFF)

[9] This section mainly explores concepts from the Generosity and Flexibility & Choice categories.

This respondent described how in high pressure working environments where substantial remuneration is offered, this had led in his case to a sense of 'open-endedness', that as he was paid to do everything necessary to get the right result, this implied that there should be a willingness to work evenings, weekends and travel extensively. In such areas the primacy of work is a very pronounced facet of culture and the impact of policies on it needs to be established.

Some managers from high pressure areas who were interviewed, considered that the company had 'gone too far', that PharMerger is *too* generous and its policies inhibited the successful running of departments. One particular manager focussed on two areas of policy, one of which is explicitly family-friendly. The generosity of maternity provision is such that people will take off large amounts of leave during which they still accumulate holiday. They are therefore absent from the department for significant periods of time and he criticised one section manager who took a new job even though she knew she would shortly be taking maternity leave. The effect of such extended absence is the same as PharMerger's 'wellbeing' policy which is generous in giving 'stressed' people on-site counselling and time off work. Their benevolence in both areas adds stress to the rest of the department and "gets in the way of the work which had to be done within people's job functions" (4B). The high sense of entitlement to the benefits of being a PharMerger employee often clashed with the principle of the primacy of work. This manager was by no means opposed to family-friendly working. He and his wife both worked for PharMerger, both had to manage childcare responsibilities and paradoxically he considered that PharMerger was "a bit of a dinosaur" when it came to family-friendliness. They are not "leading the field" in providing innovative solutions to the problems of managing work and family which offended *his* high sense of entitlement and militated against the cultural imperative for change. He disliked a) the fact that his working environment was so pressured that many of his colleagues would consider themselves too busy to stop for a coffee and, partly as a result of this, people working in fairly close proximity do not really connect with each other and b) resources were being directed into on-site counselling and the wellbeing facility, thus professionalising the kind of care that a closer working community might have been able to provide in the past. He was one of the many respondents who, in the final phase, commented that "now that HR is a [telephone] number this does not fit with its identity as a caring company" (4BFF).

A definite ambivalence was being expressed here, possibly because of the age of this manager. He could remember more relaxed days before the pace of working began to speed up but if the company was requiring a faster pace then he would deliver it and considered it his duty to do so. His ideal environment would be one where all employees upheld the principle of the primacy of work but were entitled to and given the flexibility to determine how they would outwork that principle. Where people's high sense of entitlement was given greater emphasis (by them) than the primacy of work principle, he considered that flexibility and generosity had been abused. This was of concern to other managers who explicitly wanted to retain the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work but his interview data suggests that this need not preclude the development of a genuinely family-friendly environment. If PharMerger were more *innovative*, though not necessarily more generous, in their provision (although he did not specify ways in which this might be the case) the work could get done in a way that was more family-friendly. However, at present, those who take full advantage of what are considered to be excessively generous policies, are not perceived to conform to the ideal worker type.

This data has indicated how disjunctures between rhetoric and reality are perceived to exist in organisations, that is, between statements of intent regarding work-life balance and the actual demands placed on employees. This data has also highlighted how notions of reciprocity affect employees' perceptions of the generosity of policies. For staff whose own performance measures depend on the volume of work carried out by subordinates, policies may tip the balance dangerously in the overly generous direction. Although generosity is intended to mitigate stress, it can have the opposite effect as people differentially take advantage of it (some may even abuse it) adding to the pressure on others. The sense that balanced reciprocity is no longer being maintained may be a source of resentment in organisations and engender resistance to the further development of policies.

4.9 The availability of flexibility in different work environments[10]

Many respondents regarded greater flexibility (eg. homeworking) to be incompatible with their role, for example if they are lab-based or have a high level of interaction

[10] This section mainly explores concepts from the Flexibility & Choice and Team Mentality categories.

with other people. Long hours as a result of heavy workloads or under-staffing were both cited as problematic for flexible working and part-time workers reported the intrusion of work into weekends, evenings and days off. Hidden labour is frequently carried out by managers who want to set a good example to their team by leaving not long after 5pm and then starting work again at home (remotely accessing the company intranet). Seldom was resentment expressed at the need to do this by the managers who saw it as a form of flexibility in itself. One manager said that when emails are sent with late evening times on them, "I am accused of setting a bad example....but I'd rather work late at night than miss time with my family." Again this suggests that managers are fairly regularly reminded of the need to avoid presenting long hours as exemplary. It also indicates differences in perception about what constitutes family-friendly working. Family life is a dynamic process and domestic demands are constantly changing. Working at home late into the evening (after a break to spend time with children) may fit well with certain stages of family life but not with others. Similarly, seemingly inflexible working patterns may fit well with the demands of people's domestic arrangements. An example of this was found in one of the two different shift systems which operate on the site (and affect a very small minority of employees). To combat the excessive fatigue induced by their previous 8-hour shift system, security officers have adopted a system of twelve hour shifts, in an eleven week cycle over which people work thirty six hours per week and spend one hundred and thirty five days per year on site. At interview they described how this system allowed them to spend more time with their families as there were longer breaks between sets of shifts.

> You'll have five days off for example and you come back and work four. With my son now I do a lot, lot more. I can pick him up, take him to the dentist. He needs a lot more attention and we do lots of things together. (FFSO1)

This system has resulted in a more family-friendly way of working but the change was not the result of policy. Officers described how the system is the envy of the plant operations engineers who worked eight hour shifts. They were also required to provide twenty four hour cover. One engineer described his daily pressures.

> We end up coming in poorly because if we do go sick there is no standby cover, it means an extra load is going onto those guys here so we try not to compound the problem. Over the last couple of years we have had one guy off for ten months with stress, another guy resigned so we ended up doing afternoons and nights all

> the time for those ten months. If someone put in a request for flexible working we would all roll about laughing. [FPPO]

This is an area which becomes under-resourced if any one member is off sick or has to deal with a family situation, and this was considered to be a major deterrent to the take-up of policies. These engineers perform tasks critical to the whole site as they are responsible for keeping all the environmental conditions stable. In such a context the primacy of work is clearly the dominant facet of culture. Without an increase in staffing levels, respondents could not see how policies could be implemented without negatively impacting the rest of the team. Policies have increased the sense of entitlement only marginally

Respondents considered that part-time working was an area in which PharMerger could be more family-friendly. Part-timers themselves considered that they were treated very well in PharMerger (in comparison with other companies) as their terms and conditions were almost identical to those working full-time. However many respondents knew of others who wanted to work part-time and considered that their functions could accommodate that but were not allowed to do so. The HR department did not appear to be particularly supportive of part-time working (see also Remery et al 2003). According to one of the HR managers "Many jobs can't be done part-time. It depends on the function, they will need to prove that it can be done part-time" (HR2FU). Even where the line manager appears to be supportive there may still be a penalty in career terms if one chooses to work part-time. When interviewed in the final phase of the study one team leader described how, since we first talked, "there has been more emphasis on the flexible working and taking due consideration of that and as managers the message has come through, 'there are more guidelines, you have to look at that fairly for individuals'....I still think we are relatively good at looking at individual needs" (4EFF). When she approached her own manager to ask to work four days a week for the year before her child started school, she was told that if that was what she wanted to do for the wellbeing of her family, they would be supportive of that. However despite the "supportiveness" of her head of department she would have to move onto the non-managerial scale if she worked part-time. This non-managerial (scientific) scale is widely considered to be the scale for 'failed managers' so according to native criteria of success, working flexibly (ie. not working full-time hours, in the lab, in the core time period) may be a career limiting move. In this case it

appears that policies are generating more support for the concept of taking individual circumstances into account and taking each case on its own merits, so they are reinforcing the individuating culture. Some respondents in full-time clerical functions are able to work school hours and then start work again in the evenings and in other job functions fairly idiosyncratic patterns have been adopted within the guidelines of the flexible working policy. However, further up the hierarchy the principle of the primacy of work makes this policy hard to implement. The team leader mentioned earlier will be unwilling to give up her managerial status and responsibilities in order to work one day less per week, especially as she considers that she could fulfil that function despite reducing her hours. The flexible working policy is making part-time working more *acceptable* to managers but the applicant still has to pay a penalty for infringing the primacy of work principle and not conforming to the ideal worker type. These aspects of the culture do not appear to have been modified by policy and employees' high sense of entitlement is generating resentment as a result.

Employees on the higher, middle management grades have more to lose by taking up policies as this may result in loss of status unless the construction of the ideal worker type changes. Promotion prospects appear to be jeopardised but, in any case, team leaders and managers described the travel associated with promotion as inconsistent with family-friendly working, commonly saying "I wouldn't be interested in working the hours my boss puts in, he has to travel a phenomenal amount but his children have left home" (4B). Global working, especially in senior management, is considered to be unsustainable with family life (and more so where children were involved) because of the necessary travel. However once a degree of seniority is reached, travel becomes more discretionary.

> I've reduced the amount of travel over the last couple of years because I've been more choosy in when I've felt it has been necessary to travel. I've done a lot more by telecon and by net meetings....I had a situation where I declined to go to a very high profile meeting in Paris. I explained to my boss and the organiser of the meeting that it was my son's tenth birthday and they were very supportive. I was allowed to send a deputy which was nice for him. (LDFU)

This comment was made by my most senior respondent whose place in the hierarchy was just under board level. There was less of a need for her to demonstrate the traits of the ideal worker because her current position indicated that this was already

proven. She routinely travelled and was away from home for long periods but occasionally refused to miss family occasions and was senior enough to delegate where necessary. Her discretion to choose when she travelled and the "support" she was shown was not a result of policy nor typical at *middle* management levels in PharMerger, where individuals still perceive the need to prove that they conform to the ideal worker type (however this has to be seen in the context of all the other 'high profile' meetings she *had* travelled for and this manager considered that further promotion would require unsustainable and non-negotiable levels of travel).

A key implication to be drawn from this section is that the appropriateness of policies as a means of enabling employees to work in a family-friendly manner is highly dependent on many situational variables. Moreover, the *effect* of taking up policies, for example, on other team members or on career prospects, may differ greatly across a single organisation regardless of its rhetoric or the genuinely supportive intent of these policies.

4.10 The organisation of work and the take-up of policy[11]

Employees' consciousness of other colleagues' workloads and their awareness of team can restrain them from taking their own, non-work commitments into account by accessing policies. One person said that it would be easier for his department if he just left his job rather than taking several weeks of personal leave, because his responsibilities couldn't easily be shared out to others for a short period. When making a formal request for flexible working the applicant must make it clear that they have considered the impact the new working pattern will have on their larger team. Despite the culture of individuation, (and the concern was expressed that "the individual did not get lost" (4E) with the emphasis on team) the importance of teamwork was referred to by almost all respondents.[12] Being a 'good team player' is part of the ideal worker type which is the implicit guide to the best outworking of the primacy of work assumption. "[The importance of] teamwork is implicit, it is part of our culture, it is what we do. It is the foundation for everything we do" (4GFU). The emphasis on team is also part of PharMerger's identity, the widely held perception is

[11] This section mainly explores concepts from the Team Mentality and Individualism/Individuation categories.
[12] In the Global Survey 2002, 92% responded favourably to the statement "In PharMerger teamwork is encouraged".

that organisational success is achieved as a result of the contributions of the whole PharMerger team which itself is composed of smaller workgroups or teams. In terms of its image, their Annual Review 2001 is interspersed with inspiring statements which act as captions for photographs of model employees, one of which states "It's not just about me, it's about teamwork". However *individuating* tendencies are inherent in the organisation of work in many parts of the site. Many respondents described how globalisation has affected the way teams are organised, as members are drawn from different sites often in different countries. The colleagues with whom people work in close proximity will often be engaged in completely different projects.

> I think there is a strong sense of team, some of that has got diluted by globalisation. You've lost that site sense and there is team but it's slightly more isolatory, you've lost that sort of working together, you're working [with external PharMerger employees] rather than across the site and that's what makes the difference. There are different priorities, different reporting lines etc. Like me, I've got seven managers. (31A)

This organisation of work has implications for the family-friendliness of the working environment, as one team leader explained.

> We are a true global organisation, in the case of my department we have a split site, we have a site here and one which is 140 miles away... it's ignoring geography to have that kind of arrangement. It means if you have to travel down to the other site it's difficult to make that really family-friendly as if you go there for a day you have to go very early in the morning and get back late at night...as the organisation has gone on and become a lot more global, if anything that's got worse. (7C)

The way in which teams are organised in PharMerger can make the management of work and non-work responsibilities problematic. Not only can employees' consciousness of team restrict the take-up of policy but geographical dispersal necessitates travel and availability across different time zones. However people described other instances where the reality of working arrangements is somewhat different to the stated ideal of team orientation and where people will actually work very individualistically. This emerged through comments such as "It is rare to see true teamwork in my area, a situation of supportive, cooperative, synergistic help" (4AFU). The phrase 'job function doesn't permit' sums up some respondents attitude to the idea of a strong team. In certain support services, such as HR, the professional staff work more as individuals. A picture of heterogeneity with respect to teamworking begins to emerge. Where team members do work in close proximity,

interdependently and synergistically with each other, the 'good team player' component to the ideal worker type appears to constrain people from using policies which make it easier for them to manage their own work and family responsibilities but make it harder for the team to function optimally.

I was interested to discover in what ways the optimal functioning of any team might be considered to be harder to achieve if policies *were* implemented, whether the team would find it harder to a) deliver against its targets or b) function harmoniously together. Managers perceived that tangible deliverables could be delayed, for example if the team leader was not present to answer queries five days a week, although there was not always a consensus on the subject. However, harmonious functioning did not seem to be harder to achieve if certain members work more flexibly than others, as long as other people's working arrangements do not impinge on the rest of the team. In such circumstances there is a lack of antagonism towards those who took advantage of family-friendly policies which was largely due to the workforce's high sense of entitlement. This lack of resentment is evident in other teams which are more 'virtual' and do not work so interdependently. Global working can increase the distance between team members such that take-up of policy will not appear to impinge on other team members or affect target delivery. As long as the cultural imperative of the primacy of work is satisfied, the generalised (to the whole workforce) and high sense of entitlement is enhanced by the explicit provisions of policy and resentment of those implementing them is not manifest. Once the heterogeneity of actual teamworking is appreciated, it becomes clear that even on a site where teamwork is explicitly and ubiquitously valued, individualised application of policy will not be discouraged in all cases.

Generalising what has been said in this section to other organisational contexts, it seems clear that teamworking and global working are markedly heterogeneous concepts in their outworking. As such they may be more or less compatible with flexible working and the implementation of policies and employers may find it hard to anticipate how well new working practices will dovetail with them.

4.11 The effect of generosity on a competitive workforce[13]

Much of the workforce was described as 'driven' and highly self motivated whose aspirations (and sense of entitlement) have been raised by the company's own self-projected image. The company itself was described as "Generous, driven, expects high quality and quantity - and it rewards. It's a bit like a parent, a parent who expects a lot" (11A). In reality however there are many people chasing few positions of genuine high status. Bailyn (1994) described the position of academics and others who suffer from the "unboundedness of expectations". They may have flexible working conditions but there is a sense in which their work is never truly completed, there is always more to be done and "those few signs of achievement that do exist in the system...affect only the exceptional few, the great majority are doomed, to some degree, to feelings of inadequacy and a lack of appreciation....it is the very lack of formal signals of achievement that contributes to the frenetic quality of working life" (Bailyn 1994:50). A significant proportion of employees said that it would be difficult to use policies, because taking up eg. personal leave would mean they were 'left behind' and not actively advancing their careers during this time.

Similarly, people expressed reluctance to use the services of the wellbeing centre because their perception of the ideal worker is that he or she manages their own pressure without recourse to external assistance. No one acknowledged that they had used the counsellor's services (although it became evident that one respondent had) and they all talked in terms of "other people" needing counselling and help to handle stress. In the first stage of interviewing, those staffing the wellbeing programme (which includes a gym and counselling) wanted to change the negative attitudes of staff and management towards counselling (which limited and marginalised its take-up). By the final phase, counselling did not seem to be more acceptable but wellbeing centre personnel reported unofficial flexible working in the form of gym usage during core hours. They had been encouraging members to do this for some time and considered it to be a) an indicator of changing attitudes and b) a direct result of policy.

> We have seen a definite change due to flexible working... it is used a lot in evening, morning, lunchtime, but even during core times there is always someone

[13] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Individualism/Individuation,, Ambition & Competition and Generosity categories.

> in there. When we first started no one used it in core time, they were petrified to do so. I definitely think it's a change in culture because previously they would not have used it in core time, that is a big deal to get over ..we don't get the feedback that they feel the managers are frowning. (4H)

It would appear therefore that the flexible working policy is, perhaps very gradually, altering the ideal worker type so that workers who break off from work during core hours are no longer considered to be insufficiently committed.

PharMerger's willingness to fund and accommodate the gaining of further academic qualifications has already been described. An emphasis on personal and continual improvement may have an impact on the compatibility of work and family life, as courses such as the MSc require significant periods of study time outside of working hours. There is a strongly voluntary aspect to further study. One person said "it's up to you to show an interest, start mentioning it. There's no pressure to do it," (ABFU) but he, by his own admission, had been on the same grade for several years and was not ambitious. As PharMerger values and facilitates the gaining of qualifications, competitive employees will be under a certain amount of pressure to take advantage of this aspect of the company's generosity. The flexible working policy has been used by staff who want to work part-time and undertake a doctorate. PharMerger's ideal worker belongs to the academic elite, so such use of policy has reinforced this facet of culture. People's sense of entitlement and autonomy has also been enhanced, in that a policy is now making it easier for them to do something for which they might previously have had to argue their case. Even with a strong argument a case stood a greater chance of being rejected without the legitimising effect of policy. By the same argument, as the policy is broadly interpreted to accommodate a spectrum of individual needs, it reinforces the culture of individuation. This outworking of the flexible working policy in a competitive workforce has therefore accentuated but not greatly modifed these facets of culture.

This section reinforces a similar point made earlier, that policies may be harnessed by employees in order to reinforce existing emphases, rather than to facilitate less stressful working arrangements. Where policies are explicitly generalised to all individuals, rather than more narrowly focused on helping people to manage work and family responsibilities, employees may be in a stronger position to gain employers'

enabling them, in many cases, to seek better employment elsewhere. Although this is implicitly recognised in the new 'psychological contract' allegedly governing employer/employee relations (Guest and Conway 2001), this may still provoke ambivalent feelings towards policies, especially on the part of managers inconvenienced by their take-up and then subsequently by the lower retention which can result.

4.12 Perceptions of generosity with regard to family-friendly policies[14]

The degree to which employees are content with PharMerger's family-friendly provision varies greatly and depends on people's job function, the level of pressure in their area, their ambition and their perception of the extent to which PharMerger was furthering this. Some considered it to be very good but others had the attitude that PharMerger was only just keeping pace with the rest of the industry and that family-friendly provision could be more innovative. PharMerger were not considered to offer "extra stuff", especially an on-site crèche. They were not viewed as industry leaders and, in the area of childcare, admitted that if other large employers in the vicinity provided a facility they would follow their lead but not seek to pioneer (Remery et al 2003, McKee et al 2000). However most people greatly appreciated the backdrop of flexibility which 'trust time' afforded them. [15]

In many areas there is, as noted earlier, a surprising lack of antagonism towards those who took advantage of family-friendly policies. Some people who do not use or need the policies are not convinced that parents received adequate assistance. One respondent, personally content with the flexibility that PharMerger offered, made it clear that he was in full sympathy with "other people", especially mothers, who did not think PharMerger went far enough. However ambivalence was often expressed by some respondents who thought the company could do more, but also considered that many people didn't realise "how good they had it". The idea that going part-time will restrict career progression coexists with the perception that part-timers are well treated compared with those in other companies. The company talks about "hiring the best" and many employees might consider that, in consequence "only the best is good

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[14] This section mainly explores concepts from the Generosity, Individualism/Individuation and Flexibility & Choice categories.

[15] Results from the Global Survey indicate that 77% of people on this site agree with the statement "I have enough flexibility in my job to be able to balance my work and personal life" and 15% disagree. However, when looking for signs of change it must be noted that this is only an increase of 5% from the 2000 survey which took place before new patterns of flexible working were made available.

enough for them" so they are in a sense guarding themselves against being too impressed with what is on offer. People who had come fairly recently to the company (within the last 5 years) perceived a marked improvement in their employment conditions as a result of changing jobs. Where people had fairly recent experience of other employers, there was a much stronger sense of PharMerger being a generous company. Spousal respondents used phrases like "I wish I worked there, I don't think they know they are born" (ITEH).

Many longstanding employees, especially those who were ambitious, appeared to consider that PharMerger was not particularly generous in its level of family-friendly provision, that they were doing a lot but not necessarily all that they might. In some cases this was partly due to the overall *awareness* of policy which seemed fairly rudimentary, despite people's unrestricted access to such information through the company intranet. Until employees have children themselves, they are often fairly unaware of policy detail, for example about emergency leave for dependents. One senior respondent from information services described how their department has to work very hard to get people to pay attention to their 'product' because the volume of written and electronic information crossing most people's desks is very high. HR encountered similar difficulties in communicating their policies. Many people operated on a 'need to know' basis with such information, only vaguely knowing that policies were available but readily accessing relevant information when there was a possibility of take-up. However, the rudimentary awareness that people *did* have meant that actual take-up was not usually hindered by a lack of information although one father who only knew about emergency leave because he had looked it up said that "Some people's managers are very picky about having a day off and if you don't know where that [policy] document is or you can't quote it, if your child had say chicken pox, then you could feel under a lot of pressure to come back to work straightaway" (4FFF). Employees have always been allowed to leave work to deal with a family crisis but do not always realise that policy could cover them for more time than their manager might otherwise be willing to give them.

Perceptions of PharMerger's generosity in the area of family-friendly provision are partially determined by people's ability to access policies. Those in the lower grades, working in lower pressure functions, have almost unlimited access. Where there is no

concern about career progression there is relatively higher take-up and satisfaction with PharMerger's family-friendly provision although some longstanding employees in this category still considered they could do more. However for individuals with unfulfilled aspirations, who cannot see any room for progression, the flexibility which may have attracted them to PharMerger, like the level of reward, partially compensates for this frustration but also constrains them from leaving the company. They almost grudgingly acknowledge the company's generosity and use the policies because they are less concerned with conforming to the ideal worker type as this has no perceived instrumentality for them. It is this kind of employee with a high sense of entitlement which is unrestrained by the need to conform to the ideal worker type, who can antagonise the manager who emphasises the primacy of work.

Those who have unfulfilled ambitions who *do* have opportunities for progression and anticipate greater rewards further up the company hierarchy perceive that these will only be realised if they present themselves as ideal workers for example by working longer than contracted hours and by avoiding the use of policies where possible. Both male and female senior respondents with families had succeeded in the company by conforming to this type, by being willing and able to work long, full-time hours and to travel if necessary. However, men and women who were not willing or able to conform, considered that their career prospects were hampered as a result and that policies had done nothing to alter that prognosis. As a result their perception of PharMerger's family-friendly provision was that it was not generous enough, as its enabling of their management of work and family responsibilities was at too great a cost in career terms. They felt they should be able to take up policies which would allow them to work in individualised and autonomous ways, which are consonant with the image of a progressive company which believes in the need to move with the times. This sense of entitlement is encouraged by the company's generous identity but then thwarted because the company's generosity is only wholly available to employees who conform to the ideal worker type and unambiguously outwork the assumption of the primacy of work. The opportunity cost of not working in a full-time, fully available pattern, is high in such a generous company. Not only are pay and pension reduced *pro rata* but the possibilities of a much higher future salary and career success in a prestigious industry appear to be greatly diminished. When I asked the team leader who wanted to work four days per week, just for one year, if she

thought this might prejudice her career she said "I am not certain. If I said I want to come back full-time obviously it would depend on an opportunity to take on a team leader role again but I wonder whether the higher management would say well, she's blown it now. I don't know it is really hard to say." (4EFF) Such uncertainty was expressed by an employee with a doctorate, who had recently been presented with PharMerger's 'Scientific and Technical Achievement Award' and who conformed in many ways to the 'ideal worker' type. However a minor and temporary deviation from the full-time, fully available work pattern appeared to offset these other indicators of her adherence to the primacy of work assumption and policies appear to have had little impact on this facet of culture.

Implications from this section might usefully be summed up in the phrase "generosity is in the eye of the beholder". Employees' perceptions of their organisations' generosity appears to depend on their awareness both of wider industrial conditions, and the specifics of policy as it applies to them, as well as on the extent to which their ambitions are realised as a result of it. Generous provision may even be seen as 'golden handcuffs' in some organisations and, paradoxically, provoke resentment. Accurate measures of generosity of provision are therefore somewhat elusive, as they are dependent on highly subjective criteria.

4.13 Discussion of the research question with regard to PharMerger[16]

Interview data indicates that some change has taken place as a result of the implementation of family-friendly policies although the company has historically demonstrated its intent to be generous and flexible in the way it enables people to manage their work and domestic responsibilities and a high sense of entitlement inheres in the culture as a result. The effect of policies on this and other aspects of 'root' culture has been considered above, will be summarised here and discussed comparatively with the other case study company in a later chapter. To reiterate, PharMerger's intent is to attract and retain a highly specialised workforce and what they consider to be the generous provision of policies is part of their strategy to achieve this. Interview data indicates that the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work, which sustains an ideal worker type to which ambitious employees must

[16] This section explores relationships between all of the different categories.

conform, restricts the extent to which the company is considered to be family-friendly and generous in its provision. Similarly, respondents made it clear that the cultural imperative for change generates highly stressful working conditions. Therefore it was especially important to determine a) the extent to which policies have changed these facets of culture and b) why change has or has not taken place.

Firstly however changes in the other facets of culture will be discussed. The emphasis on autonomy has not diminished as the formalisation of policies appears to increase employees' access to less conventional working patterns without necessarily restricting managers' use of discretion. Formerly managers might have wanted to allow reduced hours or less conventional arrangements such as homeworking but did not have the confidence that this would be considered legitimate by their superiors. However systematic policies which allow broad interpretation have enabled them to be "creative" in handling requests for flexible working. As proposals have to constitute a business case for changing patterns, managers have discretion to reject those which genuinely hinder departmental effectiveness but not those which are merely inconvenient or unconventional. Greater employee autonomy, for example to work part-time in order to study, is facilitated by policy and is evident in the increased acceptance of informal homeworking. The latter is not arranged through policy but is legitimised by it. The formalisation of emergency leave has legitimised time off for dependents and has, in a minor way, granted the employee a greater degree of autonomy, by making them less reliant on their manager's (occasionally grudging) exercise of discretion. I would hypothesise that the culture of autonomy will continue to be reinforced and become more evident as awareness of flexible working policies and arrangements increases and legitimises individually determined work and family accommodations.

The culture of individuation is closely linked to the valuing of autonomy. The formalisation of policy appears to advocate treating all employees the same but in practice policies are designed to be applied in an individuating way and to take account of the cluster of factors surrounding each applicant's case. Occasionally they do constrain a manager's ability to treat each applicant as an individual. Adoption policy, which is very rarely used, allows no time off before the placement. A manager who is willing to use his discretion to allow pre-placement leave might be unable to

treat someone as a special case because their circumstance has been formally anticipated in a policy. Similarly, the site-wide importance of teamwork has the potential to hinder the take-up of policies which allow employees to customise their working patterns if this hinders effective team functioning or impinges on colleagues. Employees in some areas found that considerations of team had hampered their ability to work customised patterns, but global working and vertical teams often necessitate more isolatory work situations which can accommodate individualised arrangements. As policy in most situations legitimises treating the employee as a unique individual I would hypothesise that the net effect of policies on the culture of individuation, is to reinforce it. Influences which might undermine the sense of the uniqueness of each employee have been described. These include the shift towards an elite, more highly qualified workforce and the presence of a strong ideal worker type. Policies can help to facilitate the former and their effect on the latter is described below.

PharMerger's culturally rooted imperative for change is reflected in the dynamic policy making process. HR are aware that their benefits package requires constant improvement in order to attract and retain the best employees but staff were not in agreement about the extent to which they achieved this and many did not consider that policies were breaking new ground. In childcare provision it was felt that they have explicitly followed local trends rather than sought to pioneer. However there was unanimity regarding the deleterious effects of constant change. The introduction of policies was part of a series of initiatives which raised awareness of the need to work in a family-friendly way. Although there have been points in fairly recent history where people have relished change because of the opportunities in the industry which could be exploited by being highly adaptive, a weariness with change has become evident across the site. Major change programmes imply significant investments of time and great uncertainty. Both compel people to work long hours either to manage current as well as change-related responsibilities or to prove their worth in anticipation of the rationalisation of organisation charts. Policies were introduced around the time when pressure from the latest large-scale reorganisation began to mount. They have mitigated its effects to a certain extent by formally stating PharMerger's intention to discourage working patterns which heighten stress and reduce family time and to this extent have begun to modify the cultural imperative to change by highlighting its cost in terms of its hindrance of these other organisational

goals. However, although initiatives to encourage family-friendly working were well-publicised at their inception, they have not been the subject of sustained attention from key influencers within the company, a point to which I will return in Chapter Six. The change process has become the focus and the work-life balance initiatives which could mitigate its worst effects are rarely mentioned. I would hypothesise that for policies to modify further the cultural imperative to change such that its effect on employees' quality of life is acknowledged, statements of organisational support for their implementation, *especially* at times of greater duress, need to be made more frequently and forcibly.

Employees' high sense of entitlement has been reinforced but not affected to a great extent by the content of policies. The formalisation of policy constitutes an official validation of the rights of staff to work in a way which allows them to manage their home and work responsibilities. Although flexible working was formally introduced fairly recently, *ad hoc* arrangements had been negotiated in the past at managers' discretion. Policy sanctioned as an entitlement that which was formerly granted as a privilege. However many employees considered that the company's image as a brand *leader* in the global pharmaceutical industry was not reflected in their policies. Moreover once the opportunity cost of taking up policies was calculated in terms of lost salary and career opportunities, people could feel that this was too high and that they had to a certain extent been 'short-changed' by the company. I would hypothesise that in such a competitive industry the need to provide 'leading edge' policies has to be balanced with the requirement to work in the most efficient and cost-effective ways and will constantly clash with the principle of the primacy of work.

To summarise and bring together certain key points, the assumption that work should 'come first' is most clearly expressed by conforming to the strong ideal worker type. The effect of policies on the construction of this type, which has been identified as an influential aspect of culture elsewhere (Lewis 1997, Bailyn 1993, Rapoport et al), was one of the most important concerns of this study. The ideal worker type is not, however, uniformly upheld by line managers who are the effective gatekeepers to policy. It seemed to be associated more closely with managers who were in what might be termed the UKPharm/BigPharm (BP) mode than with those in the

ForeignCo (FC) mode. This is a major dimension of heterogeneity within the company, through the lens of which other differences in cultural emphasis can be seen. A further and no less important dimension of heterogeneity, according to whether or not managers are in BP or FC mode, concerns the level of pressure that pertains either in the department or at the point in the hierarchy occupied by each individual. These two dimensions of heterogeneity are mapped out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Differing management modes and their effect on the ideal worker type

		Relative Strength of Cultural Facets	
		'BP mode' Strong Ideal Worker Type (IWT), Weaker Sense of Entitlement, Weaker Individuation and Autonomy	'FC mode' Strong Sense of Entitlement, Strong Individuation and Autonomy Weaker Ideal Worker Type (IWT)
Relative Pressure (either due to position in the hierarchy* or to the nature of work in the department/area)	High Pressure	Perception that company is overly generous in its provision of policy & stress in area/function is exacerbated by full implementation. "We are here to work" and tight control over employees is the ideal. Employees who take up policies do not conform to the IWT so employees who want to conform to IWT are discouraged from take-up **Minimal effect of policy on IWT**	Policies are considered to be essential precisely because of level of pressure under which staff are working Policies allow individuals to balance work and non-work responsibilities Policies strengthen cultural emphasis on individuation, autonomy and high entitlement **Further weakening of the IWT**
	Low or Medium Pressure	Perception that company is overly generous in its provision of policy, that work organisation is impaired by full implementation. "We are here to work" and tight control over employees is the ideal. Employees who take up policies do not conform to the IWT so employees who want to conform to IWT are discouraged from take-up **Minimal effect of policy on IWT**	Policies are essential to satisfy high sense of entitlement and to further legitimise autonomous and individualised patterns of work Policies allow individuals to balance work and non-work responsibilities Policies strengthen cultural emphasis on individuation, autonomy and high entitlement **Further weakening of the IWT**

* This typology does not hold for senior management who do not make use of policies

What becomes clear through reading Table 4.2 is that whilst there is marked difference between the different modes of management, *within* each mode there is marked similarity in response regardless of the relative pressure applying within the department. In areas of high pressure, where the ideal worker type is upheld and is considered to be more important than entitlement or individuation and the managers are in the 'BP mode', policies are considered to be excessively generous because they transfer stress to other people. Even in areas of lower pressure, policy provision threatens efficiency, and the perceived need for tighter managerial control discourages the take-up of policies, especially those, like homeworking which permit a high degree of autonomy. Policies did not appear to have changed the ideal worker type to any great extent in such areas and have not, therefore, changed the way the 'root' cultural assumption of the primacy of work is expressed.

However those managers in the 'FC mode' have a high sense of entitlement for themselves and their staff, a greater desire to accommodate their reports' individually determined needs and a lower attachment to the ideal worker type. They consider that policies are there to mitigate the worst effects of high pressure and to satisfy their sense of entitlement to excellent working conditions even where pressure is not an issue. Whatever the level of pressure in the working environment they will encourage take-up of policies, the presence and promotion of which further strengthens the cultural emphases on individuation, autonomy and entitlement, and weakens the notion of the ideal worker image. I would hypothesise that where individualised working patterns are *not* perceived to put people at a disadvantage (in terms of career success) then any stereotypic model of how to be an 'ideal employee' begins to be discredited. In these circumstances policies which legitimise such patterns therefore change the way in which the assumption of the primacy of work is expressed. However this does not yet appear to have happened to a great extent in PharMerger.

The reasons why policies have not legitimised these patterns will be considered by comparing the two case study companies in Chapter Six, as will the other hypotheses concerning facets of 'root' culture and changes therein which have been formulated in this final section.

Chapter Five

Case Study 2 – Two business units of EngCorp, a multinational engineering company

5.1 Introductory Comments

As in the preceding chapter, broad features of this organisation will be described with reference to those facets of 'root' culture which are considered to be most relevant for understanding the impact of family-friendly policies and distinctions are drawn between EngCorp's identity, image and culture. The composition of the sample and the groupings they represent within the wider organisation will be made clear and the outworking of union presence at the company described. A detailed look will then be taken at the policies and the complementary lever of managers' discretion before the mechanics of flexibility and choice are unpacked in the context of the mediating influence of line managers' jurisdiction. Changes to 'root' culture, directly or indirectly provoked by policies, are then discussed. As in the preceding chapter, theoretical insights gleaned from the data will be briefly itemised, usually at the end of each descriptive section.

5.2 Introduction to EngCorp

This engineering company has a global presence with offices and production sites in five continents. Across the UK there are six bases of operations and the two business units in the study are located in the town (Engville) considered to be the global epicentre of the company. There are six sites in Engville and a workforce of between ten and twelve thousand. The current and historical influence of the company on the local economy is enormous. It has a reputation in the area of being a 'caring' company which 'puts people first', and many respondents described their jobs as the best they had ever had because of their employment conditions.

The company is divided into four discrete operating units but there are many company-wide policies and, over the period of the case study, the standardisation of family-friendly policies across the Engville sites of the company was largely achieved. The phrase 'family-friendly' was not one with which all respondents were familiar, however all employees grasped the flexibility which was an integral part of working for EngCorp, and the understanding which the company had repeatedly

shown for their family considerations. Different workforces experienced and described that flexibility and understanding in different ways but it was widely acknowledged. The company recognises that it is male-dominated and is trying to attract women into the industry at all levels. There is a manual workforce of significant size which is even more proportionately male than is the company as a whole. The applicability of family-friendly provision in such a workforce was of particular interest to the senior HR managers who secured my access to EngCorp. They were also interested in policies which would encourage retention of skilled personnel, especially female engineers. (The salience of this issue is borne out in the literature. In her study of women and men's careers in engineering Ranson (2003) found that where men and women were most clearly differentiated was in terms of the proportions having left engineering after a twenty year period. Only 4% of the men, compared to 19% of the women were no longer in engineering-related work.) The overall level of awareness of policy in the company was a further area of concern to them and was an important dimension of the study.

The company was keen to draw all of the Engville businesses into the study and HR seniors were enthusiastic about its aims. Although some respondents talked about a 'secrecy culture' and one of the business units (BU2) operated, of necessity, in an environment of high security, this company was easier to deal with in terms of its openness and candour than the other case study company. The door of access opened very quickly and unequivocally whereas the door of access to the first company opened very slowly and almost reluctantly partly because the request to conduct research in this second company came at a time when they were wanting to understand the effect of corporate policy on different business units. Respondents described a strong sense of company identity and talked about there being a definable and pervasive culture as a result of shared and recognised values. The company has consciously sought to develop this for example by holding across-the-board training courses for managers which stressed the importance of all leaders working to the same values and behaviours.

The decision was made to focus on two of the business units in Engville (referred to here as BU1 and BU2), both of which had a sizeable manual workforce and significant numbers of non-manual staff. Unlike the first case study which was of one

fairly discrete site, this second case study had four distinct loci of inquiry. These were the BU1 manual and the BU1 non-manual workforces and similarly the BU2 manual and the BU2 non-manual workforces. Although differences between these large groupings were identifiable there were also marked similarities in the way individuals experienced their working conditions. The average length of service across all four groupings is high and Table 3.2.1 shows that length of service ranges from three to thirty eight years. Two of the sample have had a break of service with the company and chose to come back either after employment elsewhere or after a prolonged period of childrearing.

Unlike the first case study company, EngCorp has not been involved in recent mergers. However both business units under investigation have experienced significant changes over the last two to three years. BU1 was particularly caught up in the global ramifications of 9/11 and affected by a large number of redundancies. A company which used to provide a 'job for life' has become a far less secure working environment. Coincidentally in September 2001 the manual workforce switched over to a system of team based working, the effects of which are still being adjusted to (although attitudes to this method of working were largely positive). The other business has also experienced significant change but for some, especially in the manual workforce, it is possibly more significant in their perception than in reality. One senior manager explained that "There was a change two to three years ago but it wasn't a huge change. It's just that what has changed took place where there had not been a lot of change in the past...people who had very long service were used to a stable organisational situation." (MPM1) The non-manual section of this business had also undergone substantial and somewhat controversial reorganisation. A climate survey was conducted in the wake of these changes and was incorporated in an MSc thesis written by one of my respondents and submitted three months after the first round of interviews. As the focus of the thesis was on the need for cultural change in successful reorganisation, it informed my thinking and provided a rich seam of secondary data. Its author has been with EngCorp for sixteen years and has been through many reorganisations, but this last one left him feeling extremely disgruntled to the extent that he was on the point of leaving the company. His presence among the sample indicated that the company did not try to shield me from its most disaffected employees. It is possible that he was included because he had just taken paternity

leave and the way this had been administered by the company was one of the main causes of his discontentment.

5.3 Five facets of 'root' culture in EngCorp

The introduction to this section in the preceding chapter provides the rationale for looking at 'root' culture or underlying assumptions when determining the effects of the implementation of policy.

The emphasis on *equality* was a taken-for-granted, basic assumption throughout the sample which manifested itself in different ways, for example in BU2's historical decision to remove the distinction between 'staff' (non-manual) and 'works' (manual). Systematisation of policy governing many aspects of organisational life, not just that of family-friendly working, is seen as a means for ensuring consistency and fairness. Training and development (beyond that required to fulfil day-to-day job functions) is available to all employees and people at every level of the hierarchy are sponsored on degree courses. Discrepant study leave entitlements were a source of resentment, indicating that equal access in itself was not sufficient. Respondents felt that there should be clear guidelines for managers to follow so that everyone was treated the same and given the same assistance in terms of time off for study.

The company has built its reputation on product safety and quality, doing things "right first time" to an established standard of excellence. Underlying these values is the assumption of the *primacy of work*, that work comes first (ie. before personal responsibilities such as family) which was expressed in certain groupings (especially the engineering and managerial) in terms of professionalism. Being 'professional' has become the *leitmotif* of the present age and there has been a blurring of the boundaries between professionalism and managerialism (Dent and Whitehead 2002) such that being 'professional' has becoming increasingly coterminous with 'managerial' and therefore increasingly associated with success. Kerfoot (2002) states that being 'professional' may, for masculine subjects, entail paying the price of elevating one's work identity above all other aspects of selfhood. People's sense of 'professionalism' can often therefore cut against their willingness to make use of policies in order to work reduced or flexible hours and to actively seek better work-life integration. Their identity is bound up with their desire to be professional, so they will to a certain extent

suffer identity crisis if their self-projection doesn't match up with ideals of professionalism.[1]

Although the *in vivo* code of paternalism was used by a minority of respondents it is more accurate to talk about an underlying culture of 'care in a crisis' which has been in EngCorp since the most longstanding employee joined and which has served to mitigate the effects of the 'primacy of work' motif. It has always been completely acceptable for people throughout the organisation to leave, often at short notice, to "sort out family issues". This has to be distinguished from care in 'business as usual'.[2] Facilitating the balance of routine work and family activities was not considered to be the responsibility of the company to any great extent (see Holt and Thaulow 1996:85). Interview data indicated a low sense of entitlement in this area, that children were one's own responsibility, not the company's. One spousal respondent considered it completely natural that her husband, who had "quite a lot of responsibility....he's got to be there, available all of the time" (ITRM) would only stay at home to look after sick children if she was too ill to do it herself, as a last resort and not as a routine solution. Policies which governed 'care in a crisis' have always been in place, so recent and explicitly family-friendly provision, more recently introduced, was not deemed to have made a great impact.

The implicit importance of *autonomy*, being allowed to do the job for which one had been (often) highly trained with a minimum of supervision was strongly evident and occasionally took the form of various 'us and them' oppositions eg. between manual workers and management. Where this was the case, interview data suggested that arrangements meeting operational requirements (which have no family-friendly rationale) such as shift working and time off in lieu, allow employees to self-manage their work and non-work responsibilities without recourse to policy. These were far more popular mechanisms as they obviate the need to approach management to ask for something which could be construed as a favour, even though it was in reality an official company policy.

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[1] Private conversation with Professor Suzan Lewis.
[2] This phrase was generated in an *in vivo* way, is commonly used in industry and seemed the most succinct and appropriate way to express the concept.

EngCorp operates in a global business environment which has been undergoing revolutionary changes, for example in the way relationships are managed between clients, manufacturers and suppliers (Humphreys 2001). Despite acknowledging the reality of these shifts and the need to stay abreast of them, EngCorp is strongly conservative, favouring *gradualism with respect to change.* The preference of most people within the company is for change to take place as a result of "evolution not revolution" in one person's succinct phrase. This preference for gradualism is associated again, by many respondents, with the image EngCorp projects to all its stakeholders and with the reputation it has to protect. "It tends to do things very cautiously, carefully, and in a considered fashion, it's the EngCorp way. They didn't invent much but they made an awful lot of other inventions better" (ALFF22). This company prides itself on its reliability and predictability but it is also committed to constant improvement.

It is with reference to these 'root' cultural facets that EngCorp will be described. Changes resulting from the implementation of family-friendly policies will be examined in the light of how they affect EngCorp employees' emphasis on

- Equality
- Primacy of work
- Care in a crisis
- The importance of autonomy
- Gradualism with respect to change

5.4 Organisational Image and identity[3]

EngCorp has an exceptionally strong brand name. Most respondents were acutely aware of this and were explicitly proud to be associated with such a famous name. Organisational identity across the workforce was expressed in terms of working for a company that *projects an image* to the outside world of reliability, excellence, professionalism and quality. Some employees who have recently undergone unpopular change talked about this image as being under threat, a thing of the past and it was clear that these changes have affected their own sense of organisational

[3] This section mainly explores concepts from the Corporate Image category.

identity. Across the sample there was sharp awareness that EngCorp had made its name in a very different, less competitive world and there was now no room for arrogance or complacency. The EngCorp name would not necessarily attract the most talented job candidates in the way it had done previously and a good package would be expected to contain the benefits which flow from progressive HR policies. The prevalence of men within the workforce, the 'engineering culture' which flows naturally from its product range and the conservatism which is one aspect of its reliability were all described as countervailing tendencies to EngCorp becoming a by-word for 'family-friendliness.' Several managers who admitted that polices are not on the "cutting edge" and that EngCorp is inclined to "play it safe" in this as in the rest of the business, balanced their comments by emphasising the genuinely caring attitude of the company towards its employees. This caring attitude was another salient aspect of organisational identity, and was referred to across the sample. There was at the same time an acknowledgement that this was less evident than in the past because of the more rigorous demands of its commercial operating environment.

Like almost all large organisations EngCorp was described as bureaucratic and having an audit culture, facets of identity which can restrict autonomy and flexibility. One accountant noted the ever-increasing amount of reporting and analysing of figures which he was forced to do which did not leave him much time to "develop the business," one of his key objectives, unless he worked very long hours. On the other hand, the desire to quantify can help a company move beyond what was described as their "very good corporate intent" towards employees and put into place tangible mechanisms for ensuring that their treatment of staff is imbued with the same sense of 'quality' as their customer relations and after-sales service. One of these tangible mechanisms was accreditation as Investors in People, a national scheme which EngCorp have adopted and publicised extensively. Scepticism was expressed about the true motivation for adopting this scheme and despite a majority describing EngCorp as a caring company, some saw a disparity between their core value of 'quality' and the way staff were handled. "With IiP you feel that they just tend to feel they should do these things and don't really believe in it. You are never really sure if they really believe in these things or whether it is something that a company like EngCorp should be involved in because it helps their name" (M2). A recurrent theme throughout the sample was the perceived need of the company not only to look good

at what it did but also to *be* good. People's lives depend on the safety of their products and on the quality of after-sales service in terms of continued maintenance. The image of the company has to be protected but it also has to be *lived up to*. In a similar way management initiatives which promised much but delivered little were treated with little respect. People have not seen a great difference as a result of the scheme because a lot of its directives (such as regular debriefs and communication opportunities) had already been in place at EngCorp. As can happen in a similar way with the systematisation or formalisation of family-friendly policies, EngCorp were gaining accreditation for something they were already doing rather than implementing radical changes to their mode of operation. The implication of this is that the introduction of policies is not always seen as primarily serving the interests of the employee. They may consider that certain intrinsic properties of their organisations are formidable and enduring obstacles to significant change as a result of policies and employees may be inclined towards cynicism as a result.

5.5 On-site communities and working environment[4]

Unlike the first case study which was bounded by a single site, respondents work in several different locations. In BU1 the manual and non-manual workforces are located on two different sites and although in BU2 all the interviewees are on the same site, this also houses employees from other EngCorp businesses and the site was reportedly "very fragmented". Social events which cultivate a sense of wider company identity take place very rarely if at all. "When I was a child when my dad was working for them there used to be a sports day, that used to be brilliant. They had flat bed lorries and all the children used to ride to the sports ground on them and they don't do that any more, there's not really a lot that they do, not just for us the employees." (AL3) Several employees described the clubs that were available in the past. "A lot more events used to go on. There used to be darts tournaments every year and things like that but they seem to have stopped. A lot of the clubs seem to have dwindled. But then I think the culture has changed and it isn't so family-orientated now" (M3). Similarly there has been a decline in the amount of socialising among colleagues outside working hours which was investigated in the study as a possible result of people

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[4] This section mainly explores concepts from the On-site Community, Team Mentality, Unions, Flexibility & Choice and Family categories.

working longer hours or more intensively. It was sometimes, but not always, the case that such changes acted as a disincentive in this area.

> For me I get in as early as possible, 7.30am and leave as soon as possible to be home by 5.30pm, 6pm to get home for the children. I don't want to have to make up time at the end of the day by having a long lunch. I suppose my focus is just on the children. People do feel that there is more work, less people... we tend to have to spend more time at work. (MFU7)

> The whole atmosphere has changed dramatically. Just over a year ago there was not the same [bad] feeling towards the management. The attitude has changed so vastly, we didn't bother to go to our Christmas dinner this year or last year, it's more to do with the managers. (MFU22)

> There is a general trend linked to lunchtime clubs that I have read about in other organisations. There used to be card clubs, bridge clubs, etc at lunch and after work. They dried up when the lunch break was shortened and this rubbed off on evening socialising. There wasn't a conscious intention on the company or employees, my impression is that this is a nationwide thing. (MFU12)

The relevance of these comments lies in what it says about the identity of the organisation and how it has changed. Historically there was a 'family feel' to the organisation and a sense of inclusion that was recognised in the local community.

> When I was a child my father worked for EngCorp for almost fifty years. I always thought you had to be someone special to join EngCorp and it was just somewhere I always wanted to be, it took me a long time to get here but I got here in the end. My [deceased] brother, he used to be a manager where I work and I've got a nephew who is a director, so it runs in the family. (AL3)

People from both manual and non-manual workforces described EngCorp as a relaxed or easy going environment although this was not the case across the whole sample. This was also alluded to in terms of how EngCorp reacted when people needed time off for family. "It's very sort of relaxed on the family side of things, they're very helpful I think, its never been a point of problem at all," (AL8) At the same time certain functions were characterised by a great deal of pressure, people working in them would not have described their employment as "relaxed" and cited this as one of the ways in which EngCorp has had to change over the years.[5] The cultural emphasis on the primacy of work has become more apparent in such departments.

[5] According to the Business Energy Survey conducted by the Chartered Management Institute and Adecco, one in five engineering managers work an extra fourteen hours per week more than they are paid for (IEE 2004).

Redundancies, manpower reductions and recruitment bans have not affected all of the areas from which the sample was drawn but where they have had an impact, people are often having to work harder and under more stressful conditions as a result. One person described the contradictions they encountered in a 'caring' company which has had to downsize, "I think there are concerns about stress, people working long hours and developing stress. I think the company is trying to be very watchful on this, and one side of the company is looking at it, then on the other hand we have a problem because there is the head count issue, people being under-resourced causing over-work. They are not seeing the two sides." (M5) A recurring theme in the climate survey was that people were having to "produce more work with less resource" in a context of time pressure generated by the fact that the company is operating in an increasingly competitive industry.

Such data reveals that a 'family-orientation' is by no means an innovative development for many organisations but rather something they are considered to have lost and which may be incompatible with present and future operating conditions. Policies' potential to alter that perception may therefore be somewhat limited. When policies and management initiatives intended to alleviate stress coexist with working arrangements most likely to induce it, they may not necessarily be perceived as mitigating mechanisms. Rather they may be seen as examples of either a lack of 'joined up thinking' or even as an artificial substitute for something genuine which was experienced in the past but has been swept away with the advent of a harsher business climate.

5.5.1 Trust within the organisation and 'us and them' oppositions

The issue of trust also recurred throughout the sample and the climate survey. One BU2 manager described the very high degree of trust which he considered to be present in the company (especially in comparison with other organisations) although he acknowledged that there would be exceptions to that. There was by no means a consensus on this subject and 15% of respondents described low or very low levels of trust. This is relevant when considering how willing managers would be to allow people flexibility if an element of trust was necessary eg. if homeworking were to be permitted "I had experience with one manager where I think he had a couple of people who abused [flexibility] and he went completely the opposite" (M3). The implication

of this is that managers who consider that their trust has been abused in the past may be less willing to extend it further, even to conscientious employees, to cover less controllable situations like homeworking.

For both manual workforces the issue of autonomy was closely bound up with that of trust. They wanted to be trusted to get the job done with a minimum of supervision. In BU1 the manual workforce had, within the last three years, adopted a system of team based working where teams are self-supervised to a far greater extent than before. Although there were negative comments about the way it was introduced (specifically a deficit in pre-launch communication) the consensus is that this system has produced a more motivated and satisfied workforce. A key contributor to this development is the increased trust which they perceive is now being shown eg. to achieve targets.

> They do seem to, yes, trust us. Because I mean they do let us get on with it now they're not watching you all the time....they've sort of encouraged us to take on more supervisor, well we're not going to supervise each other but we've kind of just encompassed the supervisory bit into the job. (AL4)

Not only has trust been extended but also the desire for team and personal autonomy has been met. Trust is of similar concern to the Manual workforce in BU2 but they considered that changes which have taken place in a similar time period have reduced it. Responses indicated the exacerbation of conflictive feelings of 'us and them' between management and staff (not at all uncommon in industry) by an implicit lack of trust.

> There is more a feeling of 'us and them' now with the managers definitely. Eighteen months ago it was brilliant but we all feel now that you can't go and talk to them. The manager and team leader have brought over some strange things. Trust has been taken away. It's small things. We used to have to sign in and out in one room, now it has to be in the manager's office, it's a bit demeaning. Very small petty things affect people more than the big things, it gets people down, we are not trusted to get the job done without supervision. We know the job inside out...(MFU22)

Having to be *seen* to 'clock in' implied that a greater degree of surveillance of their activities was necessary which sharply affected employees' perceptions of their manager's trust in them. Within this workforce there is a definite sense that the company had 'gone downhill' in other ways. People from across the company

described how it had become more financially driven, but this workforce emphasised the negative impact which this has had on the "core values and the culture of the company". Again the underlying narrative is of a decrease in autonomy. Many of the BU2 Manual workforce I interviewed have been with the company for nearly twenty years. This was the workforce which has not been subject to a significant amount of change until the last three years. Arguably they are reacting against the change itself but as it has brought with it certain restrictions and a perceived decrease in management *respect* (lack of trust) then there has been a definite, adverse impact on morale.

Although the BU1 workforce felt *more* trusted than previously, there were still elements of an 'us and them' relationship with management. In fact the advent of team based working has increased the distance between the team and managers because there is no longer the bridge in the form of a supervisor. This increased distance was referred to by one person who described how there is no understanding within the management of how shift workers feel (in this case when it came to asking for overtime). However there is not a sense of latent conflict simmering beneath the surface of industrial relations though it must be borne in mind that EngCorp is, in places, a very heavily unionised company.

Another 'us and them' opposition evident within the company exists between BU1 and, in this case, BU2, in terms of their relative status and importance in EngCorp. (It is possible that it exists between BU1 and the other business units but they were not part of the enquiry). It is evident within both the manual and non-manual workforces of BU2, and people in BU1 themselves referred to it. BU2 employees perceive that BU2 is considered to be less prominent and even perhaps less critical to the company as a whole and therefore those who work for it are in some ways disadvantaged. Respondents in the climate survey compared their working conditions (ie. offices and equipment) unfavourably with those in BU1, relatively senior managers in BU2 consider themselves at a disadvantage when competing with BU1 colleagues for promotion and there is a perception that BU1 have more progressive employment terms and conditions and its employees have earlier access to policies. One respondent said that "HR issues and initiatives start in BU1. In terms of dealing with people and being aware of their requirements BU1 does seem to be further on but it is

a gut feeling" (ALFU21). This suggests one reason why, in large organisations, family-friendly policies may not be uniformly implemented as problems of scale may appear to necessitate gradual roll-out.

In such a large and varied company it is perhaps inevitable that these oppositions will exist and be perpetuated in people's minds. One respondent described how staff situated close to the factory floor were strongly discouraged from taking long lunch breaks on flexitime because of the impression it gave to the shop floor workers that they didn't need to work very hard. This implies that, in other contexts, one grouping's awareness of another grouping's sensibilities could be a serious impediment to flexibility. The operational requirements of the first grouping might permit a high level of flexibility but if they work in close proximity to a second which is shift-working, shop-floor bound and unable to take advantage of policies concerned with flexible working then the former could be similarly curtailed. This section also illustrates the dependence of flexible working and autonomy on the variable of trust, which may itself be differently perceived across an organisation. Where 'us and them' oppositions endure, these may be accompanied by lower degrees of trust, thus affecting the take-up of policies and the adoption of different working arrangements to better reconcile the demands of work and family.

5.5.2 Union influence at EngCorp

I spoke with several Union reps who helped to clarify the issues which are of concern to them and most of the workforce at EngCorp. A recent study (Houston and Waumsley 2003) describes the potential ambiguities of flexible working and how the attitudes of shop stewards and members can differ markedly on the subject of access to this and family-friendly policies. In terms of the influence which unions have in the lives of people at EngCorp, it is necessary to look beyond the statistics. Almost all (more than 90%) of the manual workforce in both businesses belong to a union, but the figures are lower for non-manual staff (around 70%) and vary from area to area. The annual pay settlement is a major preoccupation for the unions but they are not greatly exercised on the subject of family-friendly policies or on obtaining a better work-life balance for their members. Union reps talked in terms of the need to maintain favourable terms and conditions.

> The company is trying to drive through a flat salary, overtime will be at no extra cost and they say that that is for pushing down the hours. But some people will feel duty bound to do the vast number of hours. If nobody does them then you fail to deliver what the customer expects.....Where they are coming from is that if they minimise hours this will drive up efficiency. But only the minority will feel the benefit, the majority will do the extra time. They are minimising the number of staff for maximum output. It's a continual battle. (MFU11)

The concern is that removing overtime, albeit in order to prevent people working long hours unnecessarily, will not facilitate shorter hours for conscientious people. They will continue to work in a way that meets customer requirements and may end up being penalised by the changes, especially if they are forced to compensate for the lost labour of those employees who refuse to work longer hours without overtime.

In some areas of BU2, reorganisation is challenging the level of flexibility already available. In the manual workforce their apparent flexibility has increased as they have been taken off shifts due to a reduction in workloads. The shift premium (worth 20% of their salary) coupled with the flexibility which is inherent in shift work (because people work different hours week by week and do not work the whole of the typical working day) are more advantageous to the respondents I interviewed than the flexitime that they are now doing. This is an important consideration when assessing the level of flexibility available to manual workforces. Moreover when looking again at the manual workforce of BU1, the union rep there described flexibility from a completely different perspective. One of the main issues facing his members was the working practices for a new facility. "Flexibility would be included as would all inclusive pay deals. From the union point of view overtime is bargaining power, if you lose overtime you lose that. Flexible working happens now, we already do work flexibly. If production is busy then people move from shop to shop already. They might want flexibility to mean that people stay behind to meet the quota, come in at weekends" (ALFU1b). He saw flexibility as a threat as well as an opportunity and was concerned that his members would be expected to work more flexibly under all-inclusive pay deals. Of fundamental concern again is the issue of autonomy. Their overtime would be bought out, the unions would lose another lever for negotiation and flexible working might involve longer hours for less money in real terms.

The phrase "it's a continual battle" sums up the union reps' attitude towards the management of EngCorp. They readily acknowledged that the company are 'understanding' (especially in a crisis) about people's families and provide a backdrop of flexibility but they feel they have to prevent a tide from coming in which will *further erode* the company's caring identity. On certain issues the unions are clearly representing key concerns of their members. "We have always tried to get more flexibility, like Friday afternoon taken out of core time so that people have a longer weekend" (MFU11). This is an issue which surfaced repeatedly throughout the organisation but especially among the non-manual staff. The management of the company disagree with the oft-repeated assertion that the business would not suffer if people have the opportunity to take Friday afternoon off or leave before the core time period has elapsed because teams would provide coverage. There seemed to be widespread indignation that on this issue the staff are not being trusted to protect business interests, that they would not 'put work first' and that the necessary flexibility or autonomy which they consider to be reasonable is not forthcoming. Here is an example of where the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work appears to have prevented a policy from being made available. Many employees resent this restriction on their flexibility because a) EngCorp have stated that they are concerned about employee stress and longer weekends would tangibly address that concern, b) it contravenes the cultural emphasis on autonomy and c) management's evaluation that the request contravenes the 'primacy of work' cultural imperative appears to be deeply critical of their own position. It suggests that they are not committed to the EngCorp way of excellence and dedication. At its most profound level it disenfranchises them from the culture of the company. By this argument, if it was allowed under policy it would not *change* the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work, but would formally acknowledge that it was not only managers who embraced this aspect of culture and might therefore strengthen it.

Finally manpower reductions have been a recurring feature in certain areas of the company and the unions have been prominent in discussions. EngCorp used to be considered 'a job for life'. When the first round of interviews was conducted one respondent described the company as "a fur-lined rut, you can tend to just keep going along in a straight line and that's it and it's cosy, it might seem extremely boring because you're going along in a straight line, you don't seem to divert anywhere but

it's cosy, it's safe" (M14). She appreciated the security that EngCorp offered but acknowledged the predictability that implied. However six months later when reminded of the phrase she said "It is becoming less of a certain place, especially here. We don't have any contracts which isn't great, the fur is wearing a bit thin. Morale is really low" (MFU14). Manpower reductions have taken place in the non-manual areas of both businesses and people are having to work harder to cover for reduced headcount. One union rep described how (what he termed) the paternalism of the past has had to evolve into a more "hardnosed" attitude. The consensus was that changes over the last three to five years have eroded that sense of the company's identity being *unusually* caring although one senior manager described how impressed he had been with high-level discussions on how to handle manpower reductions.

> The debate that we have in management development meetings about people's futures and careers and the concern expressed by the people round the table...I'd actually think yes, this is a company I would want to work for, because it was some of the highest quality, best debate I'd been involved in, on any subject, whether it was a commercial deal or anything. There's a real concern for getting the things right for the people. (AL11)

EngCorp operates in a highly uncertain world but is still shielding its employees from the worst effects of the economic cycle. The cultural emphasis on care in a crisis is exemplified in this quote and was referred to in similar terms in many interviews. It has also become clear that, because it is often qualified, there is a high level of ambiguity surrounding EngCorp's caring identity.

In terms of the theoretical implications of this data, firstly it is clear that flexibility cannot be treated as inherently or ubiquitously advantageous. Also, particular interest groups within an organisation may define improvement in working conditions in terms other than those concerned with the advancement of a family-friendly agenda. Finally, management, unions and employees will all differ in terms of which areas for adjustment in organisational life they prioritise to improve its 'family-friendliness'. This agenda, like any other, is seen through the lens of their particular interests.

5.6 Family-friendly policies at EngCorp[6]

In this section I will look at actual policies which EngCorp have either implemented recently or have had in place for the majority of people's careers with the company. Although EngCorp's family-friendly provision is extensive, senior HR personnel acknowledge that it is not at the forefront in the country. This section is divided into the historical context of policy and recent additions to its bank of provision.

Historical context

To reiterate there is and has been over most people's entire history with the company this backdrop of flexibility and recognised 'understanding' on family matters. In the many areas where it operates, only the longest serving employees can remember the actual introduction of flexitime. Historically (and currently) managers have used their discretion to allow a variety of working practices which would not be covered under policies. However reference was made to certain longstanding policies. In addition, EngCorp management and other respondents mentioned that employees received higher than average levels of holiday. The actual number of days varies slightly between business units and grades but most people are entitled to around forty days once lieu days and statutory holidays are included.

a) Time off for dependents

Third party leave and compassionate leave (eg. in the case of family bereavement) have always been available. Although the policy now states that up to five days paid third party absence may be granted at manager's discretion there was a lack of clarity among respondents as to how much leave they were entitled to, managerial discretion was also applied and "Only sad union types are aware that this policy exists." (MFU1) The consensus was that such leave is never refused but *people aren't necessarily* consciously taking up a policy. They see the process in terms of asking their manager if they can go home to sort out some (usually urgent) family matter.

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[6] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers and Flexibility & Choice categories.

b) Maternity Leave and Adoption Leave

Their maternity leave provisions have historically exceeded statutory requirements (see this section in first case study) and continue to do so. They have provided eighteen weeks full pay as well as eight remaining weeks on statutory maternity pay for the last seven years. Many employees described the maternity policy as "excellent". When this rate of maternity pay was negotiated the same level was set for adoption leave, many years before such leave became obligatory.

c) Miscellaneous entitlements

EngCorp also allows a certain number of days off when people get married or move house. BU2 changed this leave arrangement and allowed people to build up additional holiday instead. However these entitlements are still in place in BU1.

d) Part-time working

In certain (non-manual) areas it has for many years been fairly commonplace to work part-time. Historically there was a drive to encourage secretaries back on a part-time basis after maternity leave. After a few years the company became uncertain that it was giving them the cover they needed and each application became subject to the manager's discretion. Although it is now more common to find part-time workers in other areas of the business, the majority of the requests that had been granted in the sample had been successful before legislation changed. EngCorp did not accede to these requests because of a legislative imperative but as a result of negotiations between the requesting party, line managers and HR. Again, managers have had the freedom to exercise discretion before policies were introduced.

Recent additions

The following policies have been adopted or improved since December 1999, the point at which Maternity and Parental Leave legislation was introduced.

a) Maternity Leave and Adoption leave

Maternity and adoption pay/leave entitlements exceed the statute and are as generous as those in the first case study (see relevant section in previous chapter). They too will consider phased returns and allow people to accumulate holiday whilst on maternity/adoption leave (but not during additional maternity/adoption leave).

b) Paternity leave

This is paid at the rate of statutory paternity pay. Prior to April 2003 EngCorp gave no official paternity leave. The reason I was given for this was that EngCorp's holiday provision is considered to be higher than average and 'flex days'/time off in lieu can also be accrued and taken off at the time of a birth. In light of the generosity of maternity leave, employees considered that EngCorp was being highly conservative by going no further than statutory requirements. Many considered that they had missed the opportunity to send out a signal that they were very serious about making EngCorp a distinctly family-friendly place to work and that this would have been a very powerful symbolic gesture. However, senior management were clear that it would, in such a male-dominated company, have been a very expensive 'symbolic gesture' and that with high levels of holiday entitlement it could have seriously compromised business interests to have contributors to projects absent for, potentially, a total of ten weeks in the year.

c) Parental leave

EngCorp have complied with the statutory requirement to allow parents up to thirteen weeks unpaid leave before their child's fifth birthday, and there have been instances where parents have, for example used this entitlement to negotiate nine-day fortnight working arrangements ie. rather than to cover emergencies.

d) Flexible Working

In addition to existing flexitime, staggered hours and other individualised arrangements which have been set up at individual managers' discretion, EngCorp have complied with the April 2003 legislation which grants parents with children under six years old the right to ask for flexible working. All of the options available under the PharmCo policy will be considered by EngCorp although HR personnel reported that there have not been many requests since this date. For example, from one area comprising six hundred and fifty employees only twelve requests were made. Nobody was refused their request but only three people have adopted a flexible working pattern since finding out exactly what it would entail in terms of lost benefits/salary.

e) Career breaks

When conducting the first round of interviews BU2 did not have access to the EngCorp Career Breaks policy. The 'time lag' in the implementation of policies across the company validates the claim made by some individuals that such benefits "start in BU1" and eventually filter through to the rest of the organisation. There are three forms of career break obtainable under this policy. A full-time break can last up to three years during which period training is still available and the company will make a special payment to the pension fund to maintain accrual rights. A part-time break allows the employee to work for sixteen hours or more per week for up to three years. Again whilst the employee is paying reduced pension contributions the company will make up this level to a full-time salary contribution. Finally there is the option of going on the special reserve list for up to five years from the date of resignation which gives certain privileges in subsequent EngCorp recruitment processes and the possibility of inclusion in any of the company's training programmes. Pension contributions are another area of consideration for people who are making a decision not to work full-time hours. Unless people are taking a time-limited part-time career break, reducing their hours will have an impact on their pension. EngCorp have a very good standard pension scheme so the real cost of reducing hours will be greater than just a loss of basic pay.

f) Childcare vouchers (and the lack of on-site childcare)

Like PharmCo, EngCorp have a childcare voucher scheme but do not provide a crèche, which a large proportion of interviewees considered to be a deficiency in their family-friendly provision. Interviewees were very unclear about why EngCorp did not provide childcare. Some thought that the demand might be overwhelming in such a large company, others cited insurance implications, the lack of an appropriate location and one HR senior explained the lack in terms of its conservative culture. When the decision was made EngCorp was "reflecting the mood of society at the time but also saying 'it is not really our job, we don't run crèches we make engines'" (AL22). However although several people mentioned that there was not a crèche only one person (a male engineer) cited it as a source of discontentment.

To conclude this section, the historical context presented here suggests that the expression of 'understanding' of family matters in organisations has not always come

through policy and need not do so in the future. Perceived generosity in one area of policy, such as in maternity leave, can elevate expectations when future policies are introduced and it may be very hard to fulfil these expectations. Similarly, the tendency of employees' to look beyond the period over which they will most benefit from family-friendly policies becomes apparent through this data. In companies which offer generous pensions, such opportunity costs to the take-up of certain policies have to be treated as significant variables.

5.7 Managers and their exercise of "discretion"[7]

The phrase "it's at managers' discretion" repeatedly cropped up when people described access to policies and the 'backdrop of flexibility' against which the majority of employees work. All people in the sample could leave work straightaway to sort out family situations. One manual worker who was disgruntled about recent management changes stressed that "If you had to go to this manager and say 'could I go home straightaway' without a doubt you wouldn't have a problem, I can't be unfair to him" (M18). Even though he was highly critical of the way his manager treated his staff he considered it important to emphasise that this was one area in which the manager did the (culturally) right thing.

The point was frequently made that the level of support eg. when women wanted to return to work after maternity leave was quite "dependent on your manager" (AL13) One manager described how he was allowed to work from home one day per week (to offset the travel that was part of his job) but that this was directly attributable to *his* manager's influence. "Unfortunately you are not allowed to work from home, but I think their attitude to working from home is probably not sufficiently mature, so that's one way I think they could be more family-friendly." (MITPM) The way EngCorp perceives homeworking is indicative of its conservative culture, as it was not widely encouraged or permitted, but some individuals have agreed an individualised arrangement with their manager. In the final phase of interviews it was evident that homeworking is very gradually becoming more accepted but another person who occasionally works from home said "it's not something that they would willingly

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[7] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Individual, Family and Flexibility & Choice categories.

offer you, it is not widely advertised, I feel as though they don't want to set precedents to others" (ALFF20). In this as in other interviews it was stressed that in such cases it is discretion rather than policy which is being exercised. Indeed in instances among the manual workforce on one of the sites where greater flexibility has been granted, the person reporting the change that had taken place said "Five years ago we would have struggled to see it happen. It is more visible over the last two years, it's done very quietly, not advertised too much. There is the concern that if it is advertised the ball will start rolling, too many will ask for it. It's not granted on the grounds of policy, if they ever tried to make it a policy it might not be allowed to be effected" (ALFU17). Here as in other areas there was an attitude that formalisation of policy can hinder its intended effect. Another respondent whose partner had died and who had received a lot of time off and been allowed to come in late and work at home in the evenings had done so at his manager's discretion. However since the April 2003 flexible working policy has become more established, his manager began to implement it, became more constrained by it and is not now allowing him so much autonomy. The employee subsequently reported more of a feeling of someone "looking over his shoulder" and the policy has served to decrease his own ability to work flexibly. In the absence of a policy the manager had exercised his own form of autonomy (discretion) to grant a high level of flexibility to a trusted employee. However once firm guidelines were in place the cultural emphasis on equality was reinforced, rather than weakened which prevented him from continuing to treat this employee as a special case.

In the light of this it is paradoxical that the introduction of flexible working policies (post-April 2003) had led to some situations which were considered inequitable. One person's request to work a nine-day fortnight was initially turned down by her manager on the grounds that she did not have children. Requesting to work in a flexible way in order to gain a better work-life balance did not in itself exert sufficient leverage on certain managers, (and it was clear that the problem rested with them and not with HR) "I get on fantastically with my manager and it really shocked me. And he said to me, "you've shocked me". If I had three children, it probably wouldn't have shocked him so much!" (M8) By the final phase this employee had managed to change her working arrangement. A policy which privileges parents had the short term effect of segregating people but in the medium term the cultural emphasis on

equality seems to have reasserted itself, although once again it is only through manager's discretion, not the provisions of policy, that non-parents are treated the same way as parents.

This manager is much older than the member of staff who wanted to change her hours and the question of whether age was a significant variable in managers' attitudes towards flexible working was indirectly posed in the study. Responses indicated that older managers might in fact be highly receptive to requests for flexibility (as in the past) because they knew their staff, had a very good relationship with them and "would still work that way regardless of company policies" (AL15). In fact employees in both manual and non-manual jobs described how younger managers or even those with young families could be *more* insensitive to employees' needs.

> It *is* a male dominated company, but it's not as though you're working for fifty five, sixty year old men and the woman's place is in the home...in the areas where I work to be quite frank nobody wants to go home and they're all there to prove themselves, they're either married with families and their tea's on the table when they get home or they're young graduates coming through and we've all been there and I've done it, where I am quite happy to stay here until 7pm but sometimes your family commitments or your circumstances change and I don't think the company recognises that. (AL7)

One of the union reps made a similar comment to the effect that it was the young thrusting managers who, in 'putting work first' were keen to reduce overall flexibility, "their attitude is 'I need people here at specific times'" (MFU1). The implication that can be drawn here is that older, more established managers in organisations, who know and trust their staff, may be better at *interpreting* policy and using it in a more 'elastic' way than younger ones who can be very constrained by it.

However there were other views expressed which could be summed up in the phrase 'policy is a lever' to obtain more consistency across the workforce in terms of flexibility.

> What various managers allow does vary quite a lot. This new [flexible working] policy that's coming in seems to give you a right to have that discussion as opposed to just the individual manager being willing to take it forward." (M11)

The need for managers to be trained or educated about these policies was expressed. A contented respondent, who has always been granted the necessary flexibility to take his child to regular hospital appointments, admitted that, "Managers don't seem to have very clear guidelines about what is allowed whether it's down to manager discretion normally or whether it's a case of taking holidays" (AL8). So the introduction of policies will not in itself guarantee consistency unless managers are brought to the same level of awareness a) of the detail of the policy and b) of the acceptable elasticity they can apply to the policy so that it produces a genuinely good 'fit' with employees' requirements.

To conclude, in the majority of cases the introduction of policies over the last two to five years has not made a significant difference to employees' ability to manage home and work responsibilities. They have for a far longer period had access to varying degrees of flexibility but flexibility is a function of the relationship that exists between an individual employee and the gatekeeper either to policy or (and especially where awareness of actual policy is low) to the backdrop of flexibility against which the majority of employees work. As yet policies do not seem to have shifted the cultural emphasis on 'care in a crisis' towards 'care in business as usual' and the culture of equality also appears to have reasserted itself which can auger well or badly for the beneficial effect of policies. A related implication of this data is that the formalisation of policies may work against their stated intent, if that is to *improve* people's ability to manage their work and family commitments. Managers will often require assistance in interpreting policies, especially if they are less experienced because they do not obviate the need for discretion but provide a different frame in which it is to be exercised.

5.8 Flexibility and awareness of policies[8]

To what extent do these policies permit people to exercise choice and work flexibly, bearing in mind the importance of managers' discretion either in implementing or exceeding them? When considering the ease of access which people have to policies, some people are benefiting from policies like that covering third party leave without being aware that there are written guidelines, so access is not necessarily dependent

[8] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Flexibility & Choice, Individual and Ambition & Competition categories.

on awareness. However some people use their holidays when they could legitimately ask for third party leave, either because they are not aware of the policy or because they have always had enough holiday to do this. This also happens when people do not feel entitled to use this policy. When asked "If you suddenly have to leave work because of a family situation, do you have to make up the hours or do you consciously think 'I am taking third party leave'," one part-time non-manual employee said, "I have always just wanted to make up the hours, not through pressure of work. I just alter my day if a child is sick. I have never taken third party leave because I am part-time. I can work other days because I am part-time. They are the vibes that have been given off" (ALFU9).

Although this person knows that leave is available she feels that it would reflect badly on her ability to 'put work first' if she didn't make the time up. Throughout the sample the impression was given that the norm is that you take holiday. One manual worker described what happened when his wife's father died. "I wasn't aware of any policy. I would have booked holiday but I was told 'don't rush back you're allowed three days'" (M18). This lack of awareness of policies was commented on repeatedly. People said that EngCorp do not go out of their way to 'advertise' what is on offer, that they heard about the April 2003 policies through the media and not from the company. An extreme example of this lack of awareness emerged in an interview with a spousal respondent whose husband had been working for the company for fifteen years. She described how it would be useful if there *was* such a thing as third party leave because she had the impression that it was very hard for her husband to have unplanned days off, which emphasises the inconsistency with which this longstanding policy is applied. One interviewee considered that inconsistency was a cause of discontentment but inevitable to a certain extent.

> I think wherever you get inconsistency that's when you get problems appearing and people are, you know, not as motivated or not as happy... you can have a million policies but at the end of the day it's always at the discretion of the manager on top of that policy because of the workload and that shouldn't go away because it is the manager's responsibility to make sure he's got enough people in to do the work that needs to be done. (AL17)

The culture of equality dictates that all employees should be treated the same but this occasionally battles with the other basic assumption that 'work comes first'. As

managers are in control of different operating conditions there is a strong belief that they should always have the last word on whether or not a policy is implemented since they will have to manage any necessary redistribution of work and responsibility. Reiterating what was said earlier, policies can provide a benchmark against which managers work, but are contingent on other factors and not determinative of outcomes.

Throughout the course of the study the awareness of policy and the consistency with which it was applied was not such that a company-wide challenge to the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work had been mounted. However there are evidently areas in the company where the emphasis on equality is beginning to break down, simply because policies have a higher degree of relevance to certain groups of employees than to others and there is growing appreciation that a more diverse workforce will necessitate more diverse working arrangements. For example, the company is actively seeking to recruit and retain female engineers, some of whom have pioneered part-time working in their departments. One (male) engineer described the flippant remarks and the mild resentment that part-time female engineers provoked historically but considered that this is changing. Finally, and related to this, inconsistency and lack of awareness of policies often occur because people only became aware of them when they are in a position to use them. In this male-dominated company, HR's policy is to distribute information on these policies on a 'need to know' basis, when it was requested (although it was constantly available on their intranet website).

A lack of awareness of policies might imply a corresponding lack of awareness of the extent to which a company has become more flexible and accommodating of family concerns. If policies represent organisational intent and are expressive of values then where awareness of these is high, a greater effect on culture should be apparent. Apart from the reorganisations and manpower reductions which have already been described, many respondents did not consider that there had been any tangible changes in their working conditions over the last five years in terms of increased flexibility or the introduction and implementation of new policies. However the majority considered that EngCorp had either become more or less family-friendly (once it was completely clear what the phrase meant).

The awareness of the need for work-life balance was very apparent among managers and others who were under pressure and all aspired to having a good work-life balance. One senior manager pointed to changes over the last two to three years:

> I think there is a more general recognition that, people want to have for their own sanity, for the health and welfare of their own relationships want to maintain some level of work-life balance whereas before it felt a little more like you were wedded to EngCorp, you were loyal to EngCorp and you would do whatever EngCorp says to do, and there is still that pride in most people in terms of working for EngCorp, people want to do a professional job, but they also recognise that there is a life out there, a balance to be struck. I can't tangibly give you anything other than it feels to me that there is a better recognition. (AL19)

When probed for tangible reasons for such a shift, he (and others) considered wider changes in society to be influential but did not cite policies.

> I don't think it is necessarily the climate just within the company I think it's a bit within the country more...I think that in the Thatcher era it was led from the top, Margaret Thatcher only slept for four hours a night and worked a hundred hours and I think that percolated through the country and I think that's changed. (M12)

Several other people described EngCorp as "a changing culture" which was "trying to modernise a lot of not modern working practices". "The size of EngCorp, it takes time to transcend the whole organisation but I think the company is trying, and an example of that is my wife's [also in BU1] working hours, they've been flexible to give her that. I think it's changed quite a lot in the last five years, as recently as that" (ALIT2). This was around the time when the first round of legislation for Maternity and Parental Leave was introduced but the respondent described none of these changes as a result of the implementation of policies. Despite having a working wife and two school age children he had never heard of 'family-friendly policies', although it is likely that they were being implemented in the case of his wife.

The implication of this section is that a detailed awareness of policies may have very little to do with the impression organisational members have of the family-friendliness of organisations. There may be assumptions that certain areas or functions would not support flexible working patterns so a well-publicised 'roll-out' of policies may generate cynicism rather than engender a perception that conditions are genuinely improving. However, if there was any sense that information on policies was being

was being withheld that would have a similar effect. Finally, organisational members may tend to attribute internal change to external cultural influences. Policies themselves may not be considered as agents of change so much as almost passive reflections of shifting priorities on the wider industrial scene.

5.9 Changing levels of flexibility[9]

There has been a noticeable change in the amount of people who are working part-time. One female engineer described how it is "more accepted now" to come back part-time. This has only partly been as a result of the introduction of policies. In her department five out of twenty engineers are women and of these, three have had babies. Two have come back part-time and the third is still full-time but works a nine day fortnight using parental leave and holiday. She described her managers as being very supportive of her part-time (three days) working pattern but another female part-time manager considered that there is still a stigma to working part-time, that it is tolerated rather than promoted. Seven years ago when she started her family and came back to work part-time it was very unusual and she described how *her* manager had played a decisive role. Her arrangement was approved six years before the April 2003 flexible working policy was introduced. Once this policy became available she used it to *formalise* and therefore protect her individualised arrangement, should she have a change in management. The effect of policy was to legitimise informally agreed working patterns.

Information flows for projects within this industry are described by Graham (1999) as rigid, with high levels of standardisation. In such a working environment, policies which appear to standardise diverse working patterns can produce a higher degree of cultural 'fit' and therefore acceptability, especially where they legitimise gradual rather than extensive change. Both of these women admitted that they work longer hours than they are paid for. The female engineer talked about there being a "bit of a long hours culture in the company" and the part-time manager effectively works (or exceeds) a full-time working week when informal homeworking is included. Although she would like to be paid full-time she does not want to lose the flexibility

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[9] This section mainly explores concepts from the Ambition & Competition, Managers, Team Mentality, Generosity and Flexibility & Choice categories.

she has to come and go which being part-time gives her. Of greater relevance for culture, she said that it would put her manager in a difficult position because she would be pushing the boundaries further than anyone else had. For her working week to be recognised full-time this would have meant that her homeworking and her 'overtime' (ie. the extra hours she worked beyond her part-time contract) are included.

Other full-time people at her level work longer than contracted hours and she didn't feel the conservative culture was "ready for that yet. Any sort of change in EngCorp happens too slowly." She described "meetings that run on late at night which you're frowned upon if you have to leave, you feel uncomfortable because everyone else thinks you should stay till 10pm at night... the team I work with are happy now they have seen it work but given a choice I don't think they would have had a part-time member in the team" (M9). The policy could allow all of her hours to be included but to implement it fully would conflict with cultural beliefs about the primacy of work and the preference for gradual change.

She has been taken off the 'high potential list' and there is still a feeling in her area that working part-time, because it does not express the primacy of work, imposes career limits. However she did not feel that this would have been different outside EngCorp, it is the wider cultural attitudes in industry to part-time working which imposes these limits. The engineer also described how she had lost her team leader position when she returned to work part-time.

HR personnel cited the financial implications of reduced hours working as a strong disincentive. Once people realise the implications in terms of basic pay, holidays and decreased pension contribution, the opportunity cost is too great for most. Another returner after maternity leave, a manager in a commercial function, would have preferred to work four days a week but the financial loss seemed disproportionate. She would have lost full-time entitlements such as the lieu days which build up over the year and holidays would have been reduced pro-rata. However, her main concern were that she would still be working full-time hours and expected to do all of her job in four days.

> Whilst I was actually pregnant and in HR to discuss it, it's like "well I'll be expected to do overtime in my role so if I cut down to four days and I'm doing all that overtime, I would probably be making that day up"... because there's that expectation that people do [additional hours] within their role, so some of the things that are happening they're actually contradicting company policies.... my line management at the time is "oh come on, you can do five days in four" so none of my work would be carried over to somebody else... I could lose a percentage of my pay and I would just do a full time job for them in four days, here until 8pm getting all the work done. HR puts its policies into place but actually applying them into the various areas of workplace is where there is a little bit of a fall down. I can do a full time job but I don't want a fifty hour a week job. (AL7)

In an area characterised by what was termed a "long hours culture" the policy is ineffective in tackling this expression of the primacy of work and the emphasis on equality. The expectation that all people would come in early and leave late *to get the job done* was a pressure on this employee. She knew she would be expected to work very long hours and that no concession would be made for her working four days a week. The net result would be that she worked the equivalent of compressed full-time hours but was only paid part-time.

A shift in attitudes to part-time working is taking place within the organisation but it is proceeding at different rates in different working environments. One woman who works part-time expressed a desire to go back to being full-time as soon as possible because she didn't feel that she was treated in the same way as others in the organisation. Performance related pay is not available for example. She had been full-time before having her children, was accustomed to feeling on a par with others and she felt a loss of status. She works exclusively with managers, whose strong work ethic embodied the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work (throughout the organisation there were very few part-time managers) and no other people worked part-time. Awareness of policy (and its legitimising effect) is very low in her area and she did not consider that she lived up to the culturally constructed ideal worker image.

In this part of EngCorp policy has made very little impact on culture, partly because of a lack of awareness and applicability for more than a small minority of the workforce.

The above data suggests that policies may confer legitimacy on alternative working arrangements but they do not fully bridge what might be termed the legitimacy 'gap'

that exists between conventional full-time hours and flexible patterns. In organisations or departments where this gap is wider, policies might be anticipated to have less perceptible effect, especially where awareness of their detail or even existence is low. This data also shows how enabling people to work part-time can exacerbate stress if they are expected to do the same job in reduced hours. Some limited job redesign may be necessary in teams with part-time workers. Finally, adopting (and being paid for) a reduced-hours pattern may be the only way some employees can legitimately work a standard 37 hour week, if overtime is expected.

5.10 'Presenteeism', long hours and high pressure work environments[10]

The existence of a 'long hours culture' in EngCorp was acknowledged in certain subcultures but is not uniformly present. When respondents were asked how many hours they worked per week, 60% said they did their contracted hours (although some of the manual workers included in this figure did overtime when they could). All of those working part-time did more (sometimes significantly more) than their contracted hours. Some areas work long hours because they are covering different time zones and have to be in very early or stay very late or travel extensively. The professionalism and dedication of EngCorp staff was cited as a driver for long hours especially where these were considered absolutely necessary to win a contract or service a customer. Managers of these functions admitted that they sometimes work late out of habit but also talked about the very high level of flexibility which they allowed staff, used themselves and which offset the high workload.

> I always work on the basis that someone's been putting the time in the rest of the time so you have to be flexible. We make big demands on people's time in my region so I think when you can be flexible you have to reciprocate. I think [in the wider company] there could be a greater understanding of the need to balance the family life with work life. I think there is a bit of a macho image generally where you know, not quite the last car in the car park type approach it's not that bad, but I think in some areas there is something towards that. (AL11)

This flexibility is not granted on the grounds of policy as someone else in his team confirmed, "...the flexibility I have at the moment, that's driven by the culture in the team, which has always been one of delivering the work that you are required to deliver rather than doing the hours which you are supposed to do" (AL13). He, like

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[10] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Individual, Team Mentality, Ambition & Competition and Flexibility & Choice categories.

many, suggested that seniority brings increased access to flexibility as well as greater calls on time. As people rise within the company (to positions where they were no longer subject to policies) they feel a greater degree of freedom to go to school events and leave early to spend time with family, but this is perceived to mitigate significant periods of travel away from home.

There was also the recognition that camaraderie can build up within a department where people are routinely working long hours and a link was made between long hours and a 'fun culture' or a sense of 'buzz' but this becomes a thing of the past when people have families. Some expressed a sense of nostalgia for the days when it was possible to 'work all the hours' but others described it as 'been there, done that' when other people's long hours are contrasted with parents' curtailed working practices. However one senior manager who has been with the company for twenty years considered that there was more of an emphasis now on "working smart, not long", and when asked if there was previously a degree of presenteeism he said "In some ways yes, it was expected of people that they should put long hours in, whereas now I think it is expected that they should delegate more, and look for more efficient ways of working rather than just getting the hours in....there is a lot of pressure to get a lot of work done and now we are encouraging people to 'smarten up' and delegate" (M12). Policies and undergirding family-friendly values had not driven this change so much as the increasingly competitive external business environment.

In the finance sections there are regular and inflexible deadlines which necessitate working long hours and access to policies under these working conditions, even in crisis situations, is hampered by the fear of letting colleagues down. In this environment the primacy of work is most strongly evident and does not seem to be mitigated by the 'care in a crisis' assumption. One respondent said "It's an uncomfortable position to be in to take time off for family, leaving a crisis at work by solving a crisis at home. On quiet days I would take holiday if one of the children were ill." When asked if he would take third party leave, or if that was not consistent with the culture, he said "I think culture does have a part to play. I would have a sense of guilt, it's your child, you know. It's a combination of you are letting people down and you are made to feel that you are letting people down, indirectly. Everyone is under pressure, you're leaving the pressure for everyone else to mop up. It is a

Finance thing. We have tiny windows to get things done, so many deadlines. People do feel that there is more work, less people. That isn't just EngCorp, that's generally, across all businesses" (MFU7). The sense of entitlement to policies and subsequent take-up is low in this environment and there was no sign of a shift in culture.

This data reiterates the importance of notions of reciprocity, how they can govern the availability of flexibility, especially on an occasional basis. It also reveals how, under certain circumstances, people may actually have a preference for working long hours. Finally, although policies could act as a necessary counterbalance in many organisational settings where long hours are expected but undesirable, structural constraints on their applicability may render them fairly meaningless. This is concerning because it is arguably in settings such as these that policies are most necessary.

5.11 Flexibility in the manual workforces[11]

It might be expected that the issue of long hours will play out differently in a manual workforce where overtime is paid for and as such might be actively sought. Paradoxically overtime is a means by which flexibility or family-friendly working can be obtained in specific ways within such a workforce. Under the time off in lieu system (TOIL) one man was building up enough hours to be able to take at least a fortnight off when his second child was born. However to generate that volume of extra hours he was having to work overtime shifts. This is a good example of the way in which manual workers are taking responsibility for family-friendly working into their own hands, rather than by relying on policies. This man had been given a lot of time off when his first child was born "but now I can do something about it. I don't want to have to go cap in hand, 'please can I have this time off again?' It's enabling me to sort it out myself rather than asking for favours or special leave" (AL6). With team based working there is no longer a requirement to ask a foreman before switching shifts and people knew that if they suddenly have to leave to take care of a family situation they have a bank of TOIL hours from which to draw so they will not have to ask for time off. The importance of autonomy and control over working hours

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[11] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Team Mentality and Flexibility & Choice categories.

came through very strongly here. (Paternity leave was a less attractive option because it was only paid at £100 per week.) Arguably TOIL could be described as a family-friendly policy but in no way could it be considered a 'handout'. However the operation of TOIL is almost wholly dependent on there being available overtime.

Some of the senior managers described a reduction in access to overtime as one way to combat a long hours culture. Where it is unpaid, part of an all-inclusive salary as was the case for many of the staff, it is easy to see that this would be popular at higher levels in the company and resonate with a stated aim of helping to reduce stress and taking steps to facilitate a better work-life balance. However in the manual workforces this would have somewhat contrary implications and 'flexibility' can play out in a very different way in a manual workforce because of the importance of autonomy. Flexibility is a word with negative connotations for some people. It can mean the loss of overtime (which gives them significantly less leverage with the employer) and the loss of shift premia. Even the women, one of whom had young children, were not pushing for different contracts and were not aware of anybody working flexibly. Little interest has been shown so far in the flexible working and paternity leave policies introduced since April 2003.

Both manual workforces have experienced changes in management practices over the last two to three years. In BU1 previous flexibility a) to cope with family emergencies and b) to swap working arrangements in order to meet external requirements (whether to do with family or not) was there upon request to a foreman but under team based working these requests are dealt with at peer level. Now it seems easier to deal with such requests because people in teams "take the responsibility to shuffle around" but such flexibility was already available. Significantly it was a result of managers' discretion rather than policy *per se*.

The BU2 manual workforce have experienced changes in management and working patterns that have resulted in discontentment. As well as a loss of 'mutual respect', there was no longer enough work to justify shifts and they have been involuntarily moved to flexitime days which meant a loss of shift premium (20% of basic pay). One man made it clear that he preferred to have the kind of relationship of mutual respect with his manager where discretion was exercised. In the absence of such respect he

eventually but a recognised drawback to that (apart from the initial reduction in wages) is that they might not be able to leave their job at work to the same extent. After the reorganisation in the BU2 manual workforce, one man had taken on a lot more responsibility and he said "I think about work more at home now than I used to, I would never have believed I would have done that. I never used to think about my responsibilities" (MFU21). This was the only manual worker who mentioned intrusion. Similarly none of the manual workforce talked about being under work pressure whereas this is a significant issue for many non-manual staff.

Firstly it must be stated that some people are able to fulfil the requirements of their job within the time available and they find that the backdrop of flexibility which EngCorp provides takes away the pressure of managing a family as well as working. So for people who are happy to come in and do their hours and feel no peer or career pressure to be working late, this flexibility makes the difference between feeling pressured by work and not. However there are many job functions where this was not the case. Flexibility was something which makes work-life management possible but only just. It was a necessary but not sufficient condition for family-friendly working. There are other pressures from work which are causing stress. Working long and hard to meet deadlines in a financial function has already been mentioned. Others described the self-imposed pressure which they are under. One manager working full-time with children said that having to pick up her child from the nursery is a good discipline on her because otherwise she would be inclined to stay at work.

> If I didn't have to pick her up, in fact I know I'd be here longer hours and that makes me feel uncomfortable because sometimes I feel I should be doing more, but sometimes I feel I should be spending more time with her so I do struggle with that. (AL10)

She could do her job in the time available but was no longer able to work long hours and admitted to "feeling somewhat behind the game sometimes." No degree of flexibility or autonomy will reduce such pressure if it is self-imposed.

One key implication to be drawn from this section is that flexibility is necessary for family-friendly working but in no way guarantees it. This might be either because a

significant degree of pressure may be self-imposed or because work-related stress cannot be mitigated by allowing flexibility.

5.13 Perceptions of entitlement and generosity in the context of policy and flexibility[13]

Perceptions of generosity depend on employees' sense of entitlement which has been enhanced by changes in legislation, especially the right to ask for flexible working. However it was rare for people to mention policies specifically when asked if and in what way EngCorp had become more family-friendly. Most managers or people with an informed opinion on their level of policy did not consider EngCorp to be at the forefront of policy. Many respondents had a very low awareness of policy detail and remarked upon the reticence with which EngCorp disclosed their existence. Isolated respondents were aware of individuals who had negotiated bespoke arrangements under the flexible working policy. One man working very short weeks in the summer when his children were off school and much longer weeks in the winter said that the new legislation had helped a lot, "It gave me more leverage, I think they felt it was my right and had to consider it seriously" (M2). However these are occasional examples rather than trends in the workforce.

One particular policy which is not 'leading edge' is EngCorp's paternity leave policy. Although maternity pay is well over the statute, EngCorp did not have any formal paternity leave provision until they were obliged to grant fathers two weeks at the statutory paternity pay level under the April 2003 legislation. Take-up of this policy was rare within the sample because of the low level at which it was paid (currently £100 per week). Paternity cover is, in the words of the father of a two-month old baby "something we don't seem to have handled very well here. Most of the organisations in the Midlands took the view that we would give a week to men within the organisation. I mean maternity cover is excellent, it is the best in the Midlands, but in terms of paternity it was 'take your own leave' which seemed a bit ruthless" (M7). He has not taken up any policies, requested additional flexibility or "asked for any help" firstly because he didn't think he would receive a favourable response and secondly

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[13] This section mainly explores concepts from the Managers, Individual, and Flexibility & Choice categories.

because he considered it to be his responsibility. "I don't know if they can do a lot [for men], I don't think there is a lot an organisation can do." (MFU7)

Three important points can be drawn from comments like this. Firstly, legislation can strengthen an applicant's case and possibly act as a decisive factor even if it does not provide an automatic right to flexible working. Secondly, there may, in organisations, be a perception that women will be assisted to a far greater extent than men, evidence for which is provided by the common disparity between maternity and paternity provision. Thirdly, as I concluded at the end of section 5.11, a desire to manage one's own work-family reconciliation without recourse to policy if at all possible reflects a concern to preserve autonomy to a greater extent. This is an important factor to bear in mind when looking at reasons for the lack of take-up of policy. It is not necessarily an unattractive option because of peer pressure, the fear of damaging career prospects, or a lack of a sense of entitlement (it will be evident later that in this company there was a high sense of entitlement to certain benefits). Recourse to policy might be seen as in some way an abdication of responsibility, especially for men, who prefer to 'sort themselves out'. They may not wish to be seen to contravene the primacy of work principle or to be dependent on their managers' discretion as I explain below.

However if informal assistance is given in the form of flexibility where that flexibility can be seen as a 'two way street' where no favours have been given and none requested or expected, then autonomy has been preserved to a greater extent. In the context of a good relationship between managers and staff, this flexibility may more commonly be granted at manager's discretion than as the implementation of any policy. This reiterates what has been said before about notions of reciprocity.

Returning to the data, one manager's comments suggested the concept of a *flexibility debt* which the firm owed to a worker who was taking very informal paternity leave. "We make big demands on people's time in my region so when you can be flexible you have to reciprocate." (AL7) An engineer described how flexibility always works both ways for him "you think, 'the company's been flexible with me' if there is something needs doing with your customer you'd stay later, it's like building that relationship onto a professional level and that's where the company benefits because

they get that commitment back" (AL8). Abuses of the trust implied by this routine and accepted flexibility were considered to be very rare.

A small minority of people in manual positions stated that they preferred set hours, they knew their start and finish times and that suited them. One non-manual employee who was a mother (working school hours) made the same point. It is clear therefore that flexibility is not synonymous with flexitime or flexible working (in the sense of being able to reduce hours or determine bespoke patterns of working). It is closely connected with the cultural and personally determined issue of autonomy. The diligent and successful execution of some job functions precluded many forms of flexible working. This might be the case for manual workers in a production environment or team leaders who had to be available to large numbers of people throughout the day.

In the manual workforce a sense of entitlement showed itself in slightly different ways. One man openly admitted that if he wasn't given time off to deal with a family situation, he would just go 'on the sick' but he would like a policy which granted holiday with no notice, either for family or other personal reasons. This indicated the level of entitlement to autonomy that was considered reasonable. However with regard to this workforce it was often stated that "if one person got a better arrangement then everyone would want it, any special deals then people would want the same" (ALFU1). If a bespoke arrangement provokes such a response then this will be a deterrent to allowing the development of unusual patterns of work within this workforce. To turn the research question around, the cultural emphasis on equality of treatment, regardless of circumstance, has discouraged the formalisation of policies.

> My husband works on the shop floor and one of his colleagues is divorced. In the school holidays his manager lets him work days instead of three shifts so that he can help to provide childcare and just spend time with his kids. This is not a policy set down, the manager has the flexibility to do that within his own area. It's traditional in staff, but on the shop floor it's unusual. There are now pockets in the manual workforce who are allowed flexibility. Five years ago we would have struggled to see it happen. It is more visible over the last two years, it's done very quietly, not advertised too much. There is the concern that if it is advertised the ball will start rolling, too many will ask for it. It's not granted on the grounds of policy, if they ever tried to make it a policy it might not be allowed to be effected. (ALFU17)

So, despite the fact that family-friendly policies are intended to facilitate a diversity of working patterns and thus might be expected to change the cultural emphasis on equality, it does not appear that this has come about.

In the final phase of interviewing, one HR respondent was very definite that EngCorp had become more family-friendly over the last year because a company-wide booklet had been produced which systematically described the policies. "It's just a document, but it's a booklet that covers everything. Whereas before it was a bit hit and miss between different parts of EngCorp now it has all come into line." (MFF15) She considered that EngCorp was more family-friendly because everyone had equality of awareness and access to the policies, that they only really 'worked' if this was the case, so policies have reinforced but not changed this dimension of culture. Similarly, when employees evaluated EngCorp's generosity of provision, a key consideration was the extent to which equality was satisfied. Men's disgruntlement with paternity provision was expressed with reference to maternity leave which was well above the statute, again indicating that equality is still an important issue. In terms of the culture of gradualism with respect to change, this too was reinforced by the level of paternity provision granted. EngCorp had refused to provide it in the past but when forced to comply with legislation they did not exceed the statutory requirement, effecting the least change possible in this area. Comments from several respondents indicated that if the paternity leave policy had been a lot more generous, this would have been a potent symbol (the fourth bidirectional influence in Hatch's (1993) treatment of culture as mentioned in Chapter Two) which could have changed EngCorp's conservative culture. I would hypothesise therefore that for policy to change this aspect of culture it needs to be more generous in its provision than is currently the case.

In terms of the theoretical insights gleaned from this section, in addition to the three points mentioned earlier, what emerges is the need to be cognisant of the strong link between flexibility and the culturally and personally determined issue of autonomy. Also, where the maintenance of equality is unconsciously assumed to be an organisational priority, this affects the perceived 'riskiness' of policies. If it was proposed that they be introduced to legitimise informal arrangements, in such cultures there would be a greater concern that they could "set a ball rolling" and by their very

existence, encourage take-up by other employees. This is a risk of policies in all contexts, but its perceived scale may differ markedly according to culturally determined criteria.

5.14 Discussion of the research question with regard to EngCorp[14]

Respondents indicated that some change has taken place as a result of the implementation of family-friendly policies although the company's intent to accommodate people's family responsibilities was already there as the manifestation of the 'root' cultural emphasis on 'care in a crisis'. The effect of policies on this and other aspects of the culture has been considered above and will be summarised here but receive fuller treatment in the next chapter. To reiterate, EngCorp's intent is to retain its highly skilled workforce (especially its female engineers) and make it easier for them to manage work and home responsibilities, in the ordinary routines of life not merely in crisis situations, through the implementation of policies. Given this intent and interview data which indicated that the conservative culture and the cultural emphases on the primacy of work and equality were hampering the development of a genuinely family-friendly working environment, it was especially important to determine a) whether or not policies had changed these facets of culture and b) the reasons for the impact or lack of it. Similarly, interview data revealed that the culture of 'care in a crisis' did not always extend to 'care in business as usual'. Respondents made it clear that such a shift in this facet of culture was necessary and policies' ability and effectiveness to produce such a shift must also be considered.

Change in the other facets of culture will be considered first. The importance for autonomy has not diminished. Both of the manual workforces were characterised by 'wanting to sort themselves out'. In the main they did not talk about resorting to policy in order to obtain leave or flexibility to deal with family issues. They preferred to use the more structural aspects of their terms and conditions such as shift working, time off in lieu and the informal arrangements which could be negotiated within team-based working. They described how important it was to them to be self-supervising, "trusted to get on with it". Taking up policies was synonymous to them with going "cap in hand" to the management and asking for favours. This is possibly due to the

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[14] This section explores relationships between all of the different categories.

feelings of 'us and them' which also characterise these groupings. Team based working has increased the distance between the shop floor and managers and the social distance that had to be crossed to ask for the provisions of policy. It must be borne in mind that gatekeepers to policies still have the right to exercise discretion in their implementation and manual employees' perceptions might be that provision will therefore be unpredictable and individualised, flouting the culture of equality and another reason why it is disliked. In practice, managers expect that policies will require equality of treatment and, as stated earlier, this is occasionally a disincentive to their formalisation. I would hypothesise that these discrepant attitudes are associated with this workforce's historical and contemporary unfamiliarity with policies *per se* and with its traditional and homogeneous working conditions. They are unaccustomed to *requiring*, let alone asking for the kind of working patterns that were covered by policies. Even where people are *benefiting* from policy eg. covering third party leave, awareness that such a thing as a policy existed is often restricted to union representatives and HR.

There is a far greater degree of familiarity with the concept of policies in the non-manual staff who have, historically, been either using the limited ones which existed or requiring the kind of provision that was formally given at manager's discretion but which more latterly has been granted by policy. This workforce is far more heterogeneous and had a far larger minority of female staff. Many had used the maternity leave policy and some had been allowed to return to work part-time. This same underlying desire for autonomy is evident in the non-manual workforce. Those managing family commitments who found their typical working week to be of onerous duration or not as flexible as they would have liked, had a strong sense that they knew how they could get their work done in the pattern that they would adopt if allowed complete time sovereignty. If managers want discretion (their own particular form of autonomy) then so to a certain extent do employees. Paradoxically this desire for self-determination coexists with a desire for all workers to be treated the same. Previous reliance on manager's discretion (in the absence of policies) had led to inconsistency in the extent to which people were granted flexibility. The introduction of policies has been interpreted more as an acknowledgement of people's desire to be treated consistently (and as a partial replacement for manager's discretion) and less as an acknowledgment of diversity of circumstance. The emphasis on equality does not

appear to have changed and it is possible that this is partly a result of the way these policies were presented to employees. If their stated aim was to help an increasingly heterogeneous workforce to reconcile their diverse work and family responsibilities then this might have affected the culture of equality in a way which would make it more *culturally* acceptable for people to work individualised and less conventional patterns without provoking attitudes of resentment. I would hypothesise therefore that a presentation of policy which makes explicit the high level of recognition that EngCorp gives to diversity and plays down the consistency or equality of treatment which policies can achieve (which is in any case questionable as they still depend on manager's discretion) will be effective in changing the culture of equality. Currently the latter is preventing valid though unconventional working patterns from being culturally acceptable, especially in areas of long working hours and presenteeism.

Such patterns are being worked by EngCorp employees who need fairly personalised working patterns in 'business as usual' and there is further heterogeneity within the company in regard to its culture of 'care in a crisis'. There is uniformity in terms of the widespread agreement that the company is a good employer whose *intent* (though not always outworked) is to be genuinely caring and to value employees but two main areas of heterogeneity were identified:

1. the functional heterogeneity generated by the manual and non-manual divide within such a diverse organisation
2. the attitudinal heterogeneity of managers on the subject of appropriate levels of flexibility and understanding to be shown to employees to facilitate work and family reconciliation

The first of these became clear when managers were asked if they should be given tighter family-friendly policies to work from or if they should be allowed to exercise a greater degree of discretion.

> It would depend upon what I was a manager of. I am a manager of a team who are dedicated professionals who love to do the job so the best thing for those people in terms of me getting the best out of them and them feeling that they have the right work-life balance is to give that flexibility. There are other part of EngCorp, production or manufacturing environments, where that flexibility wouldn't necessarily work, you have to enforce more of a watertight policy. Some managers would say the engine has to go out tomorrow, or this month I have to hit this

> deadline, I couldn't do it. In a diverse organisation like EngCorp it is hard to answer. Where it *is* difficult we would have to default to "we have to have it watertight" to cover everybody. (ALFU19)

For this manager functional heterogeneity dictated that some areas were able to accommodate far higher degrees of flexible working, such as might happen as a matter of routine rather than in crisis situations. Table 5.1 summarises the broad differences and similarities between the four workforces in the case study which have been sketched out in this chapter.

A further quote highlights the diversity of attitudes currently present in the organisation.

> There needs to be push and there needs to be pull. I think people inevitably rail against imposed [ie. policy driven] change. They are more passionate about changes they feel they are championing and generating the initiative themselves. But in any organisation, particularly a large one, self-generated combustion doesn't happen. With a thousand managers in an organisation there will be a thousand points on the continuum, on how you view such a thing as a family-friendly policy. You definitely need some central benchmark of desired output. [However] That in isolation will not achieve anything because the higher up an organisation you go the more, irrespective of a policy statement, people will feel they have the discretion to do more, or less, or nothing. You need to win the hearts and the minds. The minds will come through a policy, an intellectual understanding of what we do and why we do it but the fact that their hearts are in it, they believe that it's appropriate, the correct way to operate, it's good business, has to come from some form of personal engagement and discretion. (ALFU22)

Policies in themselves are insufficient unless managers can 'take ownership' of the underlying intent but they can serve to legitimise that intent. However if managers believe that policies merely formalise provision for 'care in a crisis' which was previously granted at their discretion they may either assume that the company's intent has not changed or that their autonomy to manage in a business effective way has to some extent been eroded. Respondents considered that many managers needed to be trained to deal with a) requests for flexible working and b) employees working unconventional patterns so that policies were implemented to greatest effect.

Some of this heterogeneity resides at a deep, cultural level. A straightforward integration perspective is inappropriate for understanding the culture of EngCorp especially with regard to the concept of 'care in a crisis' where there is a significant

Table 5.1 Summary of salient aspects of workforce heterogeneity

	Non-Manual	Manual
BU1	Pockets of high work pressure/intensity Pockets of presenteeism and "super-flexibility," possibly in same departments More progressive compared with other business units of EngCorp (self- and external perception) Champions of work-life balance within management Mid-level awareness of policies and wider issue of work-life balance High sense of entitlement to provision Unbounded working day	Popular/ameliorative change within last three yrs (ie. to team based working and TOIL system) Increased distance between shop floor and management Increased sense of autonomy Desire to have same terms and conditions (despite differences in age and circumstance) Low awareness of policies and wider issue of work-life balance Low sense of relevance of/entitlement to policies Bounded working day
BU2	Unpopular change Decreased security of job tenure Resentment of BU1's dominance in EngCorp and of greater emphasis on corporate EngCorp than on BU2's contribution Threat of reduced flexibility Pockets of high work pressure/intensity Low-level awareness of policies but higher awareness of issue of work-life balance High sense of entitlement to provision Unbounded working day	Unpopular (and unfamiliar) levels of change – "good days are over" Decreased security of job tenure Increased flexibility (but loss of shift premium) Decreased sense of autonomy Increased distance between shop floor and management Low awareness of policies and wider issue of work-life balance Low sense of relevance of/entitlement to policies Bounded working day

degree of ambiguity. For the majority of people the underlying assumption was that EngCorp's ethos of care was expressed during times of minor or major personal crisis, such as illness, childcare emergencies or bereavement. However it became clear that a minority were working with the basic assumption that a caring company with a higher proportion of employees in dual earner families and an increasingly feminised workforce has to help people in 'business as usual'. The key question is whether or not it was the implementation of policies which extended the assumption that 'care in a crisis' is available and acceptable, to include the demonstration of 'care in business as usual'. That shift has taken place in areas which have either a) been involved in the development of policy, ie. HR or b) which have had a high proportionate take up of policy, for example where several female engineers have all needed flexible working patterns in order to be able to continue with the company. These were agreed before policies were introduced to formalise such arrangements but they did legitimise them and contribute to their becoming more acceptable. I would hypothesise therefore that for policies to effect a cultural shift towards accepting the validity of 'care in business as usual', there must be a) high awareness of policies' intent to do that and b) a critical mass of well-managed take-up.

In departments which work long hours there are still disincentives to the take-up of policy and the demands of the business are deemed to supersede individual requirements for 'care' of either type. The cultural imperative that 'work comes first' seems to have remained unaffected by the implementation of family-friendly policies. This is perhaps the hardest facet in which to see a shift because a) organisational survival appears to depend on it to a large extent and b) it is most closely associated with the ideal worker image and has the greatest personal implications in terms of people's identity. It is an area that will be most fruitfully analysed alongside the other case study company and will be covered more fully in the next chapter.

There has also been little shift in the emphasis on gradualism with respect to change. During the final phase one respondent reported that she had finally been allowed to reduce her hours after an eighteen month period of waiting. The part-time manager who worked many unpaid hours at home described how she didn't feel the 'culture' was ready for her informal working hours to be recognised, that she didn't want to put her manager in a difficult position because he had already allowed her to pioneer. As

stated earlier, a full implementation of the policy would have allowed those informal hours to be counted, it was generous enough in its provision for that to be the case. The discussion about paternity leave generated the hypothesis that policies need to be more generous than the minimum necessary in order to change the conservative culture. This hypothesis can be further refined to suggest that policies need to be generous and implemented to their fullest extent in order to change the conservative culture.

Several tentative hypotheses have been formulated here and at the end of Chapter Four regarding the impact of family-friendly policies on relevant aspects of organisational culture in the case study organisations. The following chapter will subject these emerging hypotheses and the findings which generated them to a analysis which will be partly comparative in nature and informed by other research as recounted in the literature.

Chapter Six

Analysis of findings and hypotheses from the two case studies

6.1 Overview of the chapter

The last two chapters described the data collected throughout the conduct of the two case studies, began to conceptualise emerging patterns (what Kaplan, quoted in Spencer et al 2003:204, called "repeatable regularities") and ended with several tentative hypotheses about the impact of family-friendly policies on salient aspects of organisational culture in both contexts. This chapter will consider how the findings and emerging hypotheses from the case studies compare with each other and with the literature. Introductory comments will be made on the process of analysis and on the grounds for comparability of the two cases. Although the organisations are in very different industries it is important to appreciate the discernible similarities evident in the descriptive accounts presented. Summarising tables have been provided which revisit the facets of 'root' culture in each company and restate the emerging hypotheses. I will then consider how changes in each facet of culture in one case compare with either analogous or related facets in the other case. This will culminate in a thorough treatment of the extent to which the construction of the ideal worker type has changed, how this has affected the way the primacy of work is manifested and the likely factors which, if present, may provoke further change.

6.2 Introduction to the analysis

My intention in what follows is to refine the conceptualisation by analysing similarities and differences between the two case studies in the light of the literature. As stated in Chapter Three, a single case can indicate a general conceptual category or property. Subsequent cases can confirm this indication through a strategy for generating theory of comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967:30). Following the tenets of grounded theory requires constantly returning to the data while a) carrying out the process of analysis (Spencer et al 2003) and b) developing the theoretical story (Pidgeon and Henwood 2004). Spencer et al (2003) posit the importance of building a structure of evidence (a form of conceptual scaffolding) within which the building blocks of analysis can be seen. This analytic structure, referred to as the analytic hierarchy, is made up of a

series of 'viewing' platforms between which both upwards and downwards movement takes place in iterative fashion. They follow Miles and Huberman (1994) in describing qualitative analysis as a process of "moving up a step on the abstraction ladder". Data is sorted and synthesised at the lower levels of the hierarchy to enable interpretative work, which makes sense of the findings through the production of descriptive and explanatory accounts. The distinction between these two forms of accounts is not clear cut as interpretation and the assignment of meaning take place throughout the essentially iterative analytic process (Ritchie et al 2003). Kvale (1996) identifies three different contexts of interpretation in qualitative analysis. Self understanding takes place as the researcher produces a distillation of what the participants *themselves* mean and understand. Critical common sense understanding is gained as they use general knowledge about the context of statements to place them in a wider arena and theoretical understanding emerges as interpretation is placed in a broader theoretical perspective. The last two chapters constitute a distillation of how employees in PharMerger and EngCorp experience their organisations and this chapter draws on the general knowledge contained in the literature as well as on the comparabilities of the two contexts. Just as coding or indexing at the data management stage is the process of looking at what is similar and different in data incidents (Locke 2001), further up the analytic hierarchy more abstract concepts are refined and distilled by examining cases alongside each other. (Yin 1994, Eisenhardt 1989). Data from both settings is assigned to these refined concepts in order to portray meaning, as explanations for dynamism and stasis in culture are developed with a view to seeking applications to wider theories.

This chapter will revisit typologies on which the study populations divided (Spencer et al 2003), consider outliers or people whose circumstances appeared to be exceptional and make distinctions between explanations based on explicit reasons (from participants themselves) and implicit reasons inferred from the process of analysis (Ritchie et al 2003). Patterns within the data generate and support implicit accounts. The heuristic device for data management, Framework (see Ritchie et al 2003) involves the comprehensive mapping of data and thematic sorting so that material with similar content and properties is located together in one chart. The juxtaposition or interweaving of

apparently unrelated matters in one setting which is visible on such a chart may hint at explanations in that context which will generate insights for another. Such patterns were looked for within the data. For example, one manager who considered that policies were too generous in that they impeded the efficient running of the department, also maintained that the company was not innovative enough in its provision. He and his wife both worked for PharMerger and she used the flexible working policy to start work very early so that she could collect their children from school. In the final phase he reported that his wife now occasionally homeworked and that this had become more acceptable. In a completely different part of his final phase transcript he described how he had asked one of his staff to take work home when the latter asked to leave at lunchtime because of inclement weather, but the employee had considered homeworking to be such an anathema that he had decided to stay at work for the rest of the day. This anecdote illustrated the high sense of entitlement which led him to consider that he should be allowed paid leave because of the weather, and appeared at first sight to be a spurious grumble on the part of his manager. However, in the light of other comments it explained why the manager thought PharMerger was "a bit of a dinosaur". He strongly believed in the primacy of work but did not conform to the ideal worker type which was so evident in PharMerger. He considered that if work, and not the receipt of benefits, was made the highest priority by employees then that could be compatible with highly personalised working arrangements. In this he was an 'outlier' and he necessitated a further refining of this facet of culture such that the primacy of work was no longer considered to be always expressed by the ideal worker type. Such a type was far less evident in EngCorp, and this was one of the clearest differences between the two cases.

6.3 The comparability of the two case study companies

Pharmaceutical research and engineering appear to be such different occupations that doubt might be cast on the validity of comparability. However, there are many important similarities, not least of which is the size of the organisations. Both are employers of many tens of thousands of employees worldwide and in both locations the global nature of the businesses forcefully impacts many employees. Furthermore, to be successful in pharmaceuticals and engineering, employees need to be competitive, have high goals and

have invested a lot in their career (Farmer 1997, Reddin 1997). Farmer's (1997) research on career development found that men and women who pursue engineering careers commonly desire to be the best in all they do and women who do well possess a strong need for achievement and challenge. In both industries successful people are driven by the search for answers and they find great satisfaction and fulfilment when they obtain them (Reddin 1997); people are interested in the work itself and have a personal stake in seeing that it is done. PharMerger and EngCorp could both be classified as achievement oriented organisations (Pheysey 1993) which make high demands on their people's energy and time and can do so partly because of assumptions that people enjoy their work and their tasks are intrinsically satisfying. An implicit collusion takes place between employees and the organisations such that the latter facilitate satisfaction for the former. People in both companies are *self*-motivated and may work long hours to satisfy internal drivers as well as external ones and this has been confirmed by various studies. In her research in an American company that has low take-up of their bundle of family-friendly policies, Hochschild (1997) encountered many employees whose working lives were more fulfilling than their domestic ones which decreased their motivation to reduce hours. Reddin (1997) found that women often identify themselves by their careers, prioritise activities around them, view work as a way of expressing themselves and as a source of a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment and Fagan (2001) argues that large proportions of both men and women have a strong non-financial work orientation.

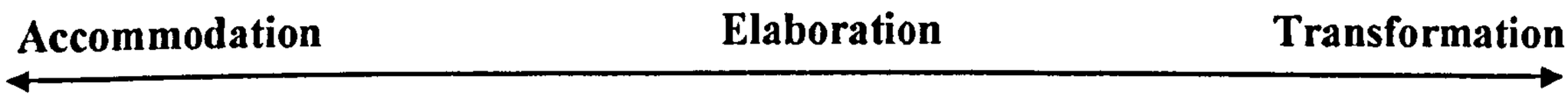
The introduction of policies in each company was for similar and different reasons. Both companies are, in common with most other UK businesses, concerned with recruitment and retention. The 2004 British Energy Survey (IEE 2004) reported that 23% of the 1500 managers interviewed cited difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff and Grover and Crooker (1995) found that both parents and non-parents are more attached to organisations that offer family-friendly policies. In PharMerger, a 'young' site with a high proportion of parents of dependent children, policies formalised existing, discretionary arrangements for managing work and home responsibilities about which many employees were already aware and were intended to enhance the company's generous identity (and image). However, employees' perception of the male-dominated

EngCorp was that it was "not doing enough" to accommodate atypical working patterns, and policies were introduced to address this lack. EngCorp's 'caring' identity, once carefully examined, flows from the culture of 'care in a crisis' rather than 'care in 'business as usual'. Employees can always leave to deal with family emergencies but everyday working patterns which explicitly accommodate family were not *considered* to be available, before policies were introduced although informal arrangements have, as in PharMerger, historically been negotiated on a case-by-case basis. (PharMerger does provide similar 'care in a crisis' although perhaps not as universally as EngCorp.) In both cases there was a sense that as large organisations they should be offering a bundle of policies and both have had to deal with repeated requests for on-site childcare.

Nationally the popularity of workplace nurseries as the childcare arrangement of choice is in stark contrast to their availability (Thomson 1995). Although studies show that users of on-site childcare facilities in the private sector were more likely to work overtime and were more satisfied with their jobs than those who did not use on-site childcare (Ezra and Deckman 1996) and large organisations with more financial and personnel resources than small organisations can more easily bear the cost of such facilities (Remery et al 2003), neither PharMerger or EngCorp are planning to do so. Neither company is aspiring to be a leader in the field, something which employees resent to a certain extent, especially in PharMerger who consider that this is incompatible with its image as a leader both in the industry and in the geographical area. In their study of nearly nine hundred organisations in Holland, Remery et al (2003) found that few organisations are using work-family provisions to enhance their image, there are no leaders in the field and employers' strategy is to follow broader industrial trends (McKee et al (2000) report similar findings in their study of the oil and gas industry). It is important to be aware of this general lack of leadership when interpreting the explicit reason given by employees for policies' low impact. Many considered that providing a crèche would have been a potent symbolic gesture of PharMerger's intent to lead and to be innovative but family-friendly provision is perhaps an area in which many if not most employers are considering it wise to be risk-averse. Both companies aspired to being on a par with other large local firms and industrial competitors, but this appears to conform to wider trends and is not necessarily

an indication of what Lee et al (2000:1216) described as an accommodation paradigm (see Chapter Two). In their study of forty professional and managerial firms they identified three organisational paradigms which they treat as a spectrum along which firms are arrayed (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1 Lee et al's (2000) spectrum of organisational paradigms



These represented firms' proclivity to engage in organisational learning by using requests for reduced and flexible hours as opportunities for learning new ways of working and new possibilities for core business priorities. Where the employer tries to contain or limit the spread of flexible and reduced-hours working, makes minimal adjustments in response to requests and treats them as random, non-standard events which do not merit the development of new routines, they classified the firm as operating within an accommodation paradigm. They contrasted such firms with those operating with elaboration and transformation paradigms. Companies which worked with the assumption that full-time workers would be at an advantage but had gone further in investigating and developing new routines in response to the requirement to provide a family-friendly working environment, clustered into the group exhibiting the elaboration paradigm. They had not changed their status quo in terms of the way they organised and structured work and career unlike companies who were working with a transformation paradigm. Such firms had been willing to move away from the status quo, to actively use the stimulus which requests for flexible working provided as an opportunity to find new ways of working because of their underlying assumption that an organisation must adapt and realign itself continuously. The relationship between organisational learning and cultural change has already been discussed in Chapters One and Two. Lee et al's work implies that companies which treat the need to make the workplace more family-friendly and conducive to better work-life balance as an exercise in organisational learning are more likely to see cultural change take place than those which do not. Both EngCorp and PharMerger are aware of the need for constant change although EngCorp is the more inherently conservative organisation. The extent to which either organisation treated

flexible working as an opportunity to harness the change imperative is an important analytic issue to which I shall return.

Both companies serve global markets and employees routinely work with colleagues in other countries. La Valle et al (2002) describe the increasingly deregulated and flexible labour market that is required to service the globalisation of the economy and in both case studies people reported the need to be willing to work at atypical times (early morning or late evening) in order to deal with issues in different time zones. Finally, respondents in both companies told nostalgia stories of a more beneficial age for employees. EngCorp in the past was described as unusually caring which was one dimension of the uniqueness that was part of its identity (see Martin et al 1983 for a treatment of the uniqueness paradox in organisational stories) and PharMerger's ForeignCo era was characterised by its willingness to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of an elite workforce (the policy "free for all"). The effect of global working and the competitive environment in which both companies now work are considered to be such that caring is more costly for the employer and many longstanding EngCorp employees considered that the company was "more hard-nosed" with people as a result.

Length of tenure was an area in which the two companies differed. Many of the people I interviewed in EngCorp had more than fifteen years' service. In her study of Canadian engineers, Ranson (2003) found that the benefits of long tenure are one of the main reasons why people in organisational careers tend to stay rather than move. These benefits include longer holiday entitlement and better access to flexibility. Most EngCorp interviewees who have negotiated flexible working did so after at least ten years of service. Policies are genuinely open to all employees (a female engineer with five years' service secured a part-time contract after maternity leave) but it is possible that people's sense of entitlement grows with length of tenure as does their sense that their promotion prospects should not be affected if they have many years of a more conventional working pattern in their history. The female engineer with shorter tenure had stepped down from her team leader position but did not seem to be unduly concerned. However, she was pregnant again, planning to come back to work but glad not to have the strain of

management responsibility at this early stage in her children's lives. In contrast, the other part-time female manager who considered that her career was on hold until she was able to go back to official full-time hours (even though she often worked them unofficially anyway) was highly frustrated by this fact. She had gone part-time when her children were born seven years earlier and, as a manager, was considered to be anomalous. She perceived that as she did not appear to be putting work first, because she worked part-time, this dominated people's perceptions of her. It appeared to me that although she had proven her worth and commitment to the company during her ten year period of service prior to starting a family, she *currently* does not conform to the ideal worker type and it is on this that her merit for promotion will be judged.

Policies therefore facilitate the keeping of people in holding positions until they can return to more conventional patterns, although their take- up does not appear to penalise people in the way it did for one team leader in an analogous position in PharMerger. By reducing her hours to four days a week she would have been placed on a non-managerial scale with no guarantee of a return to the team leader role a) because it might have been 'held against her' and b) because of the fierce competition within the department to progress. In PharMerger the "big wedge of unfulfilled aspirations" means that there are always plenty of people to take one's place if one jumps off the more honoured scale, even if the intention is to do this only briefly. Bailyn identifies the inflexible assumptions on which available career paths are based as a critical organisational constraint on the ability of workers to contribute fully to their companies without jeopardising their personal needs (1993:27) and exposes the inadequacy of the dual scale model in which the people who are on what might be considered the non-hierarchical scale are considered to have failed in some way. Some professions are much more forgiving of interruptions in advancement than others (Hewlett 2002) and science seems to be particularly demanding. Not only is it easy to 'fall behind' in the latest knowledge, for example, when taking maternity leave but peer-level recognition from other scientists does not just depend on ability but also on how late you stay and how many years you have worked (Guardian 21st April 2004). Moreover, one reason for PharMerger's shorter average length of tenure may be the expectation of mobility that pertains in science generally

(Ackers 2003) and the few genuine opportunities for advancement in comparison with the number of aspirants for promotion. Currently there are strong disincentives to the casting of oneself as a non-ideal worker. This may be even more the case in an industry in which an organisational career is less pursuable. Long tenure may allow one to build up a reputation as an ideal worker before taking time off and working flexibly so that career is less jeopardised by the practice, but long tenure may in itself be career-limiting. So although there is a recognised gender imbalance in science, engineering and technology (Greenfield 2002), such that a far smaller proportion of women than men progress to the upper echelons, the more competitive nature of PharMerger and the construction of the ideal scientist, superimposed on the more typical ideal worker, may make the task of policy in changing this facet of culture even more problematic.

6.4 Revisiting the 'root' cultural facets in each company

Before looking in detail at how the ideal worker is constructed in both these companies, findings from each of the case studies are summarised below in terms of their relevance to this and other cultural facets as Tables 6.1 and 6.2. By tabulating these different facets of 'root' culture the way they articulate and clash with each other becomes apparent. As Martin (1992:43) states, "Cultural research, unlike any other tradition of organisational inquiry, offers an unprecedented understanding of the interplay of homogeneity, conflict and ambiguity in organisations." In the case of PharMerger (Table 6.1) the sense of entitlement conflicts with the primacy of work and the individuating culture sits uneasily with the homogenising tendencies implicit in the co-construction of the ideal worker type. Employees are confronted with the ideal worker type in their earliest days with the organisation and in order for them to reap the benefits of status and reward which flow from success in the company they have to make themselves conform to the type, thus reinforcing its validity in a positive feedback mechanism. The emphasis on autonomy 'fits' with the individuating culture and the high sense of entitlement unlike the imperative for change. At this juncture in the organisational lifespan, when change has been sustained for nearly a decade, this facet has begun to place unpopular and high demands on employees and clashes with their sense of entitlement to congenial working conditions.

Table 6.1 Facets of PharMerger culture and hypotheses regarding likely change

PharMerger		
Facet of Culture	**Where the facet comes from, ways it is manifest and effect of policies on it**	**Hypotheses to be discussed in terms of the other company and the literature**
Sense of entitlement	Industry benefits from high profit margins, company represents itself as "employer of choice". Generosity is part of its identity and an explicit driver of family-friendly policies Many employees do not perceive policies to be innovative and consider them to be theirs by right High sense of entitlement reinforced by policies but thwarted when opportunity cost of take-up is too high	In such a competitive industry the need to provide 'leading edge' policies has to be balanced with the requirement to work in the most efficient and cost-effective ways and will constantly clash with the principle of the primacy of work.
Emphasis on autonomy	Time sovereignty offers best working conditions for high proportion of site who are 'blue sky' thinkers but globalisation and need for greater accountability tempers outworking of this Long history of flexitime Policies legitimise requests and allow broad interpretation so employees' range of choice is widened but manager's discretion is also preserved.	Autonomy will continue to be reinforced and become more evident as awareness of flexible working policies and arrangements increases and legitimises individually determined work and family accommodations.
Primacy of work	Highly competitive industry and generous terms and conditions require a willingness to subsume personal considerations to the interests of work. Perceived need of many employees to conform to the strong *ideal worker type* who is ***seen to be*** 'putting work first' often by working longer than contracted hours. Part-time working patterns did not conform to this type. Key area of heterogeneity. Where it was strong, the ideal worker type does not appear to be constructed any differently as a result of policies. Where it was weak (ie. was not such a determinative model) it has been further weakened	Where individualised working patterns are not perceived to put people at a disadvantage (in terms of career success) then any stereotypic model of how to be an 'ideal employee' begins to be discredited. Under these circumstances, policies which legitimise such patterns therefore change the way in which the assumption of the primacy of work is expressed. The corollary of this is that policies will not change the way in which the primacy of work is expressed if individualised working patterns are considered to be symbolic of lower commitment ie where the ideal worker type remains unchanged.

(Table 6.1 cont'd)	**PharMerger**	
Facet of Culture	**Where the facet comes from, ways it is manifest and effect of policies on it**	**Hypotheses to be discussed in terms of the other company and the literature**
Notion of themselves as unique individuals	Research relies on the specialised talent of individuals (albeit working in teams) and their benefits package emphasises employees' uniqueness. Competitive work environment, policies designed to be applied in an individuating way and to take account of the cluster of factors surrounding each applicant's case Policy in most situations legitimises treating the employee as a unique individual.	The net effect of policies on the culture of individuation, is to reinforce it and to act as a counterweight to one driver of homogeneity, the promotion of the ideal worker type. However this will only occur in environments where the ideal worker type is *not* strong relative to the culture of individuation. Where it is strong it will be harder and take longer for policies to strengthen the culture of individuation such that it acts as a counterweight to it.
Imperative for change	Recent history of constant and often dramatic change, ForeignCo's "innovate to succeed" was transformed in PharMerger into "innovate to survive" as a world leader. Research itself is committed to the advance of knowledge and to the constant improvement of processes. Reorganisation and restructuring of work is common and employees are expected to welcome it. Policy formation itself is decidedly non-static. Policies have not been the subject of sustained attention from key influencers within the company. The change process has become the focus and the work-life balance initiatives which could mitigate its worst effects are rarely mentioned.	For policies to modify further the cultural imperative to change such that its effect on employees' quality of life is acknowledged, statements of organisational support for their implementation, *especially* at times of greater duress, need to be made more frequently and forcibly.

Moreover, the individual is repeatedly caught up in the impersonal machine of organisational transformation which limits their autonomy, so conflict is also apparent in the way these facets find expression. The commonsense understanding is that the imperative for change serves business objectives and thus facilitates the primacy of work. If work comes first then optimal organisational conditions must at all times be generated. However constantly shifting external influences will require the constant redefinition of 'optimal conditions'. While people generally resist change, the literature suggests that people will support change efforts if they can understand the need for them (Buono et al 1985) and if the need for change has been grasped at a deep cultural level. At the same time this commonsense understanding of the need for constant change is considered by many to be flawed (Sennett 1998, Coutu 2002). Sennett (1998:46) questions whether the managerial ideology which presents the drive for institutional change as a matter of achieving increased efficiency has succeeded. He points to the decline in morale and productivity that can result from the tyranny of having to prove that one is capable of constant change and his theories will be revisited later in this chapter.

Although EngCorp (Table 6.2) compete in a global market, have had numerous reorganisations and are also aware of the need for constant change, they are, at a cultural level, a far more conservative organisation. Resistance to change is evident throughout the organisation, and sometimes it is this facet rather than the primacy of work which has made implementation of policies problematic. Managers have occasionally been unwilling to let people change their working patterns until a significant period of time has elapsed since the first request. Neither of these two facets conflicts with the cultural expectation that care will be extended by the company in family crisis. The main site of cultural clash appears to be between the emphasis on autonomy and the importance of equality. Policies have been interpreted as a means of guaranteeing greater equality but have, in isolated cases, resulted in a decrease in autonomy which has generated resentment. In what follows I will analyse the extent to which policies (artefacts, according to Schein's typology of culture) have changed not only isolated facets of 'root' culture but also the way these facets articulate with each other and how further change might be achieved in the future such that their explicit intent might be more fully outworked.

Table 6.2 Facets of EngCorp culture and hypotheses regarding likely change

EngCorp		
Facet of Culture	**Where the facet comes from, ways it is manifest and effect of policies on it**	**Hypotheses to be discussed in terms of the other company and the literature**
Care in a crisis	It has always been acceptable for employees to leave, often at short notice, to "sort out family issues". However care in 'business as usual' or facilitating the balance of routine work and family activities was not considered to be the company's responsibility. All employees said their managers would let them go to sort out a non-routine family circumstance. Part of the identity of company was that it was caring. Policies have reinforced 'care in a crisis' but have not transformed it into care in 'business as usual' in many areas.	For policies to effect a cultural shift towards accepting the validity of 'care in 'business as usual', there must be a) high awareness of policies' intent to do that and b) a critical mass of well-managed take-up.
Emphasis o n autonomy	There is a strong preference throughout manual and non-manual staff to work with a minimum of supervision. This occasionally took the form of various 'us' and 'them' oppositions eg. between manual workers and management. **In the manual workforce**, arrangements meeting operational requirements such as shift working and time off in lieu, allow employees to self-manage their work and non-work responsibilities without recourse to policy and are far more popular mechanisms. Many **non-manual employees** have a strong sense that they know how they could get their work done in the pattern that they would adopt if allowed greater time sovereignty, but policies are not considered to accommodate this and the culture of autonomy has not been reinforced by them.	The manual workforce is unfamiliar with policies *per se* and, due to its traditional and homogeneous working conditions, is unaccustomed to requiring the kind of working patterns covered by policies. As policies are perceived to reduce autonomy there will continue to be little take-up so their effect will be minimal. For non-manual employees, greater time sovereignty has to be managed in the context of an emphasis on equality in which policies are seen as an equalising device (see later).

(Table 6.2 cont'd)	**EngCorp**	
Facet of Culture	**Where the facet comes from, ways it is manifest and effect of policies on it**	**Hypotheses to be discussed in terms of the other company and the literature**
Primacy of Work	The company's reputation is built on doing things "right first time" to an established standard of excellence. Underlying these values is the assumption that work comes first, expressed in certain groupings in terms of professionalism. Being 'professional' and elevating one's work identity above all other aspects of selfhood can cut against employees' willingness to use policies to work reduced or flexible hours. In high-pressure departments the demands of the business are usually deemed to supercede individual requirements for 'care' of either type. The cultural imperative that 'work comes first' seems to have remained unaffected by the implementation of family-friendly policies.	Due to these disincentives to the take-up of policy this is perhaps the hardest facet in which to see a shift because a) organisational survival appears to depend on it to a large extent and b) it is most closely associated with the ideal worker image and has the greatest personal implications in terms of people's identity.
Importance of Equality	Possibly a result of the heavily unionised nature of the company this emphasis manifested itself, for example in BU2's removal of the distinction between 'staff' (non-manual) and 'works' (manual). Systematisation of policy is seen as a means for ensuring consistency and fairness. Respondents felt that there should be clear guidelines for managers to follow so that their discretion (which is not removed by policy) does not lead to inequality. This facet has been reinforced by policy and continues to act as a bar to take-up. For example, in high pressure areas which require long working hours, working flexibly is perceived as not pulling one's weight. Some employees' flexibility has decreased due to policy's equalising effect.	This facet of culture has to be seen alongside the emphasis on autonomy. Where the equalising effect of policies is accentuated this can clash with the culture of autonomy if it results in a lower level of flexibility in isolated cases. In order for it to be acceptable to *take up* policies (which, of necessity, will result in different working patterns) there will need to be a shift in this emphasis on equality. A presentation of policy which makes explicit the high level of recognition that EngCorp gives to diversity and plays down the consistency or equality of treatment which policies can achieve (which is questionable as they still depend on manager's discretion) may be effective in changing the culture of equality.

(Table 6.2 cont'd)	**EngCorp**	
Facet of Culture	**Where the facet comes from, ways it is manifest and effect of policies on it**	**Hypotheses to be discussed in terms of the other company and the literature**
Gradualism with respect to change	Strongly conservative company with preference for change which is a result of "evolution not revolution". The image projected to all stakeholders is of reliability, predictability but also constant improvement. Flows from nature of engineering. Managers may be initially resistant, even with policies in place, to changes in working patterns but become more willing to permit them when they become more familiar with the underlying concept and intent. Little shift in the emphasis on gradualism, indeed policies are implemented very gradually.	Policies need to be more generous than the minimum necessary in order to change the conservative culture. This hypothesis can be further refined to suggest that policies need to be generous and implemented to their fullest extent in order to change the conservative culture. This may be an aspect of EngCorp which is fairly immutable and for policies to have an impact on the company at any cultural level there will have to be an acknowledgement that the culture of gradualism will have to be accommodated.

6.5 PharMerger's imperative for change and EngCorp's preference for gradualism

The research and development process in the pharmaceutical industry is extremely time-consuming and very slow moving. From the synthesis of a compound to its first launch as a drug takes between ten and twelve years, with clinical trials typically lasting five years (Froud et al 1998). Engineering project timescales are shorter but still slow moving. The average length of duration of projects in this field is five years (Gale and Brown 2003). Both industries thus have a significant level of what Weick (1970) termed overload, which he defined not as the amount of demands that are made on a person, the input, but as the relation of that input to the timing of output. Mintzberg considered that managers, who are taught to handle things quickly, as they arise, have very little overload even though there are continuous demands on them (Weick 1974) but scientists, for example, who are running experiments, cannot dispose of these tasks quickly and there are long periods before a tangible output appears. In pharmaceuticals therefore, and to a similar extent in engineering, people in positions of responsibility have to sustain pressure over long periods but also have high levels of input. The stakes are extremely high, especially in pharmaceuticals and high profile stories of failed projects abound in the industry, such as when Boots Pharmaceuticals was sold after its replacement for Manoplax failed in clinical tests after fourteen years of development and an investment of £100m. Business schools treat the British pharmaceutical industry as an exemplar of managed success (Froud et al 1998) but this success is precarious because of its basis in best-selling ethical products with expiring patents whose replacements may not sell. PharMerger has to project an image of solidity and guaranteed shareholder return but managerial insiders are only too aware that in reality the company is only as good as its next drug.

EngCorp managers operate in similar conditions and are under pressure to deliver the next world-class engines on time but without compromising reliability as, in their field, many lives depend on the product succeeding first time, every time. Such anxieties are typical throughout industry and partly explain why a long hours culture is embedded in career ladders for managers and professionals (Lewis 1997) and thus why their level of dissatisfaction with working hours has doubled since 1992, compared to the relatively more modest increase of 30% for the rest of the workforce (Keep & Westwood 2002).

The literature emphasises the importance of managers as gatekeepers to policy (Buck et al 2000, Yeandle et al 2003, Bond et al 2002) and in both companies those who had negotiated reduced hours cited the decisive difference which a supportive line-manager could make. Both case studies also revealed the influence of work-life balance 'champions' further up the organisational hierarchy and this is well documented (Bailyn 2003, Rapoport 2002). In PharMerger continuous initiatives (such as policies and supportive statements) emanating from the senior management board itself, were considered to be essential for further progression towards a family-friendly workplace, in order for it to be retained as a priority in the midst of widespread change. However in EngCorp leading by example was considered to be more important. One HR manager said,

> The irony is that the people that enact philosophies and procedures are inevitably the company seniors who are the ones who have made the most sacrifices in terms of the hours they have worked. You look at the main board directors on second, third marriages and there is the risk always that "if it's good enough for me to work sixty hours and week and not see my kids, if you want to get on in the company you've got to do the same." Now when it happens it's talked about, "it's like wow, can you believe that?" There is an expectation now amongst company seniors that they have a right to a family life as well as a career. We have had a significant senior appointment of an individual who has a young family and is walking the walk, adamant that he has work-life balance and showing his team that and I view that very positively. (AL22)

Communication of policies had not, he said been "rolled out with any great fanfare. I think it is still fairly implicit and muted in the way it has been communicated." In this as in other ways, EngCorp, though image-conscious to a certain extent, emphasised 'being good' rather than looking or sounding good. If people had a model or example to follow this would exert more leverage on reluctant managers or those hesitant to take up policies than a highly visible information campaign. One female engineer said that seeing more women working part-time would make it easier for others to do it and that EngCorp's family-friendliness was limited by the fact that managers are often seen to be working very long hours.

In contrast, in PharMerger the issue of work-life balance would be kept at the forefront of people's thinking if someone at a senior level was "heralding, blowing the trumpet,

making sure that everybody's wellbeing is taken care of" (LDFF). When looking at how change in the cultural facet of autonomy might be effected in PharMerger by policies, I hypothesised that autonomy would continue to be reinforced and become more evident as awareness of flexible working policies and arrangements increases and legitimises individually determined work and family accommodations (see Table 6.1). In this company there seemed to be a need for the right things to be *said* at senior management level whereas in EngCorp, although there was lower awareness of policies, it appeared to be more important that the effect of policies be *seen*. However these two things are by no means mutually exclusive. Although PharMerger employees wanted a high profile to be given to the subject (so that awareness of the legitimacy of taking up policies was heightened) they will be less constrained in their choices (and be able to act more autonomously) if there are good role models to follow who are working in non-traditional patterns. Conversely, although EngCorp personnel eschewed a high-profile presentation of policy on the grounds that their staff were not impressed by grand statements which were not backed up with tangible and visible success stories, (such as senior managers who were supporting the intent of policies by ensuring that they had a good work-life balance) this was not by itself an effective way of raising awareness across the workforce.

One senior manager said that homeworking has become more acceptable and this indicated that EngCorp is gradually becoming more family-friendly. However managers and senior personnel who work from home also travel extensively so only those relatively close to them may be aware that their absence is due to them occasionally homeworking. They will be exercising the right to flexibility that comes with seniority rather than by implementing a policy but their reports would feel more empowered to adopt a policy if managers' action legitimised it. If senior managers' actions are invisible to all but their inner circle the diffusion of change through the organisation will be very slow. Although this 'fits' with the cultural emphasis on gradual change (which I have suggested may be a fairly immutable facet given the nature of their engineering specialism which places a very high premium on reliability and predictability) employees resented its implications for the amelioration of work stressors. Women who found their managers unenthusiastic

about part-time working knew things would eventually improve as EngCorp "initially tolerates change but then becomes more committed to it" (MFF12). It was, however, a concern to them that by the time this 'buy in' was obtained they would have missed opportunities either to spend more time with their families or to advance in their careers. Policies have therefore to be presented in a way that *compensates for* rather than accommodates the conservative culture.

In this particular area the usual pace of change is unacceptable so the championing of work-life balance that was undertaken by a member of the PharMerger board which meant that the subject was given a high profile (albeit for a limited period of time) might be necessary in a modified form in EngCorp. I hypothesised in relation to EngCorp's conservative culture (see Table 6.2) that policies need to be generous and implemented to their fullest extent in order to change the conservative culture. In the light of these recent comments this might be further refined to include the notion that an unusually high profile should be given to senior management exemplars and to the take-up of policies such that people are made aware of success stories. If policies are generous and fully implemented but large sections of the work force are not aware of them then change will be glacially slow. Returning to the PharMerger hypothesis regarding the culture of autonomy, this too could be refined by looking at the other case. It is not sufficient merely to have a high level of awareness of flexible working policies (and PharMerger's intent) which may be generated through the championing of the subject at the most senior level. Not only is it hard to sustain the focus on a single area of organisational life in the midst of widespread change but if effort is made to raise awareness of *actual* and not merely potential arrangements then people will feel empowered to take up policies themselves.

A key theoretical insight emerging from this section therefore is the notion that, especially in high-pressure working environments (characterised by high inputs and high overload) simultaneously "walking the talk" and "talking the walk" will be more effective in organisations than emphasising only one or the other.

6.6 EngCorp's 'care in a crisis' and PharMerger's sense of entitlement

The issue of awareness has salience for other facets of 'root' culture, namely EngCorp's emphasis on 'care in a crisis' and PharMerger employees' sense of entitlement. The importance of managers was again made explicit by respondents who considered that the training which they are given to facilitate family-friendly working is not sufficient (and this comment was made about managers of both non-manual and manual workers either by their reports or by more senior personnel). Looking at the national scene, Keep and Westwood (as noted in Chapter Two) argue that one of the largest skills gaps in UK management appears to centre on the ability of managers to handle people issues in constructive and innovative ways and to put to best use the skills of those they employ. They say that the problem has become more acute with the move by many organisations to devolve responsibility for large areas of people management to line managers, many of whom have been singularly ill-prepared to deal with these new-found responsibilities (2002:22). Certainly in both organisations it is the line manager who makes decisions about changes in working patterns with the HR function fulfilling more of an advisory role but this need not imply that such decisions are always made with greater consideration of the impact on business than on the human dimension. In PharMerger a senior HR professional stressed that when flexible working applications are submitted, the "convenience of the proposed arrangement to the employee is not usually an overriding factor in the decision" (HR2) However another, less senior member of HR who advises managers who receive requests for flexible working said that typically they had two reactions. One was that they wanted to and felt they *should* accommodate the request (which indicates the high sense of entitlement in the company) but their second reaction was to ask "how the heck am I going to cope".

It would appear in PharMerger that managers do feel they should promote the interests of their reports and may even be more motivated to do so than HR. This is consonant with the trend identified by Poole et al (2003) who found that managers in 1990 considered that customers' interests were their most important priority, followed by those of owners and shareholders but by 2000 customers remained the highest ranking interest group but the second highest ranking group was that of other employees. Before EngCorp

introduced its flexible working policy one respondent found that her manager had agreed to her proposed pattern only for it to be rejected once it had gone to HR. Although 'us' and 'them' oppositions were identified in EngCorp, these tended to reflect the unchanged and deep-rooted occupational differences between manual and non-manual workers (Taylor 2002:8) where the construction of group identity in the latter is on the basis of injustices done to them rather than on their achievements (Gabriel 1995:488). Most EngCorp employees had positive attitudes towards their managers but did not consider that they are in a strong position to implement flexible working, either a) because of low awareness of policies b) because of the work pressure managers are under themselves or c) because of unfamiliarity with different arrangements.

Where there is a high sense of entitlement, managers may feel as if they have no choice but to accede to requests covered by policy as was the concern of one PharMerger employee who was taking three months of personal leave. In PharMerger I hypothesised that in such a competitive industry the need to provide 'leading edge' policies has to be balanced with the requirement to work in the most efficient and cost-effective ways and will constantly clash with the principle of the primacy of work (see Table 6.1). I will now look at that alongside the hypothesis I made concerning EngCorp's culture of 'care in a crisis' which stated that for policies to effect a cultural shift towards accepting the validity of 'care in 'business as usual', there must be a) high awareness of policies' intent to do that and b) a critical mass of well-managed take-up (see Table 6.2).

I wanted to see how a high entitlement culture compared with a culture that *qualified* or set implicit limits to entitlement. Everyone in EngCorp expected to obtain leave to sort out urgent family issues and, where there was disgruntlement with management, such leave was cited as the lowest common denominator of care. In PharMerger despite the high sense of entitlement there was no such lowest common denominator of care and some respondents referred to managers who grudgingly allowed reports to leave to sort out family emergencies (such as children's sickness) and expected them to return very quickly. The emergency leave allowed a maximum of two days per year, at manager's discretion and once this was introduced some employees (who were aware of it) felt more

able to leave under these conditions and did not feel so obliged to hurry back. However such respondents indicated that they used this policy defensively in order to gain an advantage over their manager. Policies reinforced the sense of entitlement and could lead to a heightened sense of injustice (Hegvedt et al 2002) or victimhood (Gabriel 1995) if managers' discretion precluded their implementation, in other words when the primacy of work was the more dominant consideration. Bailyn and Fletcher (1996) argue that a mutuality in approach is qualitatively different from the atmosphere of entitlement that often characterises employee/company interactions in the work-family arena. Instead of self-protective measures (such as the defensive use of policy cited above) they stress the importance of both sides actively working to make a more family-friendly workplace possible. As stated earlier, HR personnel resent any suggestion that their policies are not generous enough, stress the overriding importance of the primacy of work and are aware of the high sense of entitlement (and have it themselves). Both 'sides' therefore occasionally exhibit defence mechanisms so that employees feel that they are having to battle for something that is rightfully theirs and gatekeepers to policy feel that they have to 'hold back' a tide of entitlement in order to preserve the emphasis on the primacy of work.

The way these two facets of 'root' culture clash with each other is reminiscent of Parker's formulation of culture (see Chapter Two) as a process of making claims about difference and similarity between persons in an organisation, making divisions between 'us' and 'them' (2000:217). Although the majority of PharMerger's workforce is white-collar and relations between managers and staff are reportedly cordial and non-conflictive, in the area of employee benefits, latent opposition becomes apparent. In order to obtain the mutuality recommended by Fletcher and Bailyn this opposition must be transcended. Alternatively these cultural facets might be seen as two extremes which must be held in continual tension, where each is a necessary corrective to the other. My hypothesis suggests such a balance and if the perspective of extremes held in tension is accepted, its

final phrase could be refined to read "and will *necessarily* clash with the principle of the primacy of work."[1]

In regard to EngCorp, I describe what might effect a shift towards a greater sense of entitlement, such that the company's 'caring' identity is not just expressive of their willingness to accommodate emergency, crisis situations but becomes evident in the extension of care to 'business as usual'. The high level of ambiguity in this 'root' cultural facet results from the current and implicit limits of care. At present there is a high level of agreement that the company is caring and many people perceive that policies have effected little change because the company has always been distinctive in the extent to which it expressed its care. One employee who felt that EngCorp was less caring than in the past said that "the people in the company who want to portray that image are not the people what's making the decisions. It's more of a personal thing with the immediate manager" (ALRS) and a senior manager admitted that "at any given moment in time it doesn't always deliver [care] as well as it could or should but I think the desire is there" (AL11). Throughout the study there was consensus surrounding what one HR manager described as EngCorp's "very good corporate intent" even where the caring ethos is not outworked. However when people tried to take advantage of policies for example, to reduce their hours on a long-term basis, they often found that the penalties of so doing were disproportionate to the benefits. This was either because of a) the financial implications of the effect on pensions or lieu day entitlement, b) the career implications because it is almost unheard of for team leaders to work part-time or c) expectations that a full-time job can be completed in reduced hours, because work would not be reallocated or someone else brought in on the days the incumbent was not present.

One part-time engineer said that the organisation historically assumed that part-time meant two and a half days per week which may be the rationale behind disallowing all lieu days to people working less than full-time hours (which meant that reducing one's

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[1] It is, to some extent, understandable that workers in the UK pharmaceutical industry have a high sense of entitlement. As mentioned already in Chapter Two, Froud et al (1998:568) contend that "the pharmaceutical business in the UK has been a licence to pay dividends which delight shareholders," and, in such a high-profit industry employees consider that their benefits package is either proportionately generous or disproportionately low when seen in the light of shareholder return.

hours by just one day per week resulted in the automatic loss of all six days.) She, and a full-time male engineer, also reported the mild jibes that leaving early elicits from other workers. It could be argued that this is just 'male bantering' but both respondents agreed that there were "undertones" to the remarks. The culture of equality militates against the acceptability of people working different hours but so to a lesser extent does the limited sense of entitlement implicit in 'care in a crisis'. Many full-time peers of part-time workers consider this limited care to be completely acceptable but feel that working reduced hours is extending this to care in 'business as usual' without the latter having sufficient legitimacy.

In PharMerger many non-managerial employees who are not parents themselves, expressed a strong sense of *vicarious* entitlement, that conditions should be made as easy as possible for parents to manage domestic responsibilities alongside work. This was almost completely lacking in EngCorp and was evident in the difference in attitudes towards the lack of onsite childcare. In both organisations non-manual respondents said that their employers would be more family-friendly if a crèche were provided but in EngCorp its lack was only resented by one person who was extremely disgruntled about a wide range of issues. In PharMerger however the crèche had been a contested issue for many years and many of those who would never use it were as vociferous as parents in calling for one to be established. When Grover and Crooker (1995) researched the impact of family-friendly policies on the organisational attachment of parents and non-parents their central finding was that people are more attached to organisations that offer family-friendly policies, regardless of the extent to which people might personally benefit from the policies. They draw on social information processing theory, which holds that we form attitudes about organisations from seeing and hearing about others' experiences with the organisation, and suggest that some workers may vicariously experience some sort of positive affective response to the organisation when it treats coworkers well. They also refer to social justice theories which predict that employees will have more positive attitudes (such as greater commitment) towards organisations that are perceived as

treating employees fairly, for example when people are made redundant.[2] EngCorp are explicitly concerned about retaining experienced and highly qualified staff so it is important to consider how these two sets of theories relate to data gathered there.

EngCorp's emphasis on equality colours perceptions of 'fairness' and reactions to seeing other people treated well. People may resent what they consider to be preferential treatment for parents, whereas in PharMerger the high sense of personal and vicarious entitlement is satisfied when people are seen to be treated well and, given the other cultural tendency to treat people as discrete individuals, this also appears to be satisfied when the measure of fairness is applied. In organisations where there is a strong culture of equality, Grover and Crooker's findings might not be replicated. My original hypothesis suggested that policies might effect a shift towards accepting the validity of care in 'business as usual' if there is high awareness of their intent to do that and a critical mass of well-managed take-up. A presentation of policies which explicitly states their intention to accommodate some people's daily non-work responsibilities on the grounds of treating people well and fairly, clashes with a culture which values equal treatment regardless of circumstance. However if other aspects of culture were appealed to, this tension could be resolved. Gradual and constant ameliorative change (or improvement) is valued at EngCorp, as is the right to autonomy. If the cultural acceptability of 'care in a crisis' (which all people may need) is to be extended to care in 'business as usual' (which only some people may need) then people have to perceive that such a shift is the product of gradual improvement which is aimed at facilitating greater employee autonomy.

A "critical mass of well-managed take-up" requires more detailed specification. By "critical", I mean of sufficient size to indicate that policies are not just for organisational outliers. For take-up say of reduced hours working, the "well-managed" employee would not be expected to do a full-time job in fewer days or habitually stay late to finish work. The commercial manager who wanted to work four days predicted that she would be required to work late into the evenings on these days, thus sharply reducing her family

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[2] A senior EngCorp respondent (quoted in Chapter Four) used this very example of an instance when he realized he was glad he worked for the organisation.

time during the rest of the week and increasing the opportunity cost of reduced hours working. Increased and better managed take-up of policy could indicate to employees that policies were part of a process of gradual, ameliorative change to facilitate greater autonomy. Presenting then as such could encourage further take-up and facilitate a self-perpetuating cycle.

To summarise key points emerging from this section, it seems clear that although line managers appear to be the key decision-makers and mediators of policy, they are operating under a variety of structural and cultural constraints. There is considered to be a national skills gap in managers' ability to handle people issues and the need for managers to be trained in administering family-friendly policies confirms this prognosis. Latent opposition existing between them and their reports or between them and HR on the subject of employee benefits may be, to a certain extent, inevitable as these different parties represent different interest groups. Employees in different organisations will emphasise different preferences for enhanced provision and existing policies may be somewhat flawed in their application, such that the opportunity cost of take-up is too high.

6.7 The effect of policies on attitudes towards change

At this point we need to consider if and to what extent the cultural imperative for change could be similarly harnessed in PharMerger to enable employees to make greater use of policies. As with the culture of 'care in a crisis', this is a facet with a high degree of ambiguity which becomes more evident as it is compared with EngCorp's cultural attitude to change (see Table 6.2). Both companies work in industries which require constant readiness to respond to changing conditions. In EngCorp this requirement is acknowledged by all employees but far more reluctantly than in PharMerger. In EngCorp it is far more culturally acceptable to complain about frequent reorganisations. Even further up the hierarchy there is a wry acceptance of the change imperative which contrasts with the distinct enthusiasm for change that appears to be evident at more senior levels of PharMerger. Part of the latter's identity is that they welcome change whereas EngCorp talk more in terms of awareness of the need for it. Complaining about constant

change does not tarnish an individual's image as an ideal worker in EngCorp (albeit partly because this is less clearly typified than in PharMerger) whereas in PharMerger someone who is ambitious and seeking advancement will appear to have an appetite for change.

An HR manager admitted that the enthusiasm for change which was apparent in much of the workforce after the takeover and later merger is beginning to wane. I first visited PharMerger soon after work-life balance had been given a high profile within the company. Eighteen months later attention had been diverted from this issue in order to effect the latest major reorganisation at all levels in the organisation. Senior managers are signaling that the current organisational priority is the imperative to change and their subordinates are working the extra time to make it happen. Tension has resulted from the fact that the historical emphasis on work-life balance is still fresh in people's memories and there are "a lot of words put on paper" about it but their enactment is not being encouraged. The same HR manager talked about the longer hours and increased travel which have resulted from the reorganisation. "After Christmas a lot of managers said to me "my wife's new year's resolution for me is to spend more time at home" because of too many evening events, meetings abroad." (7AFF) When I asked her to what extent there was willing collusion with such work demands (because of the cultural emphasis on the primacy of work) she replied "I think it is reducing. When we merged it was all very much 'let's roll our sleeves up and make this work'. Now three, four years down the line people want to get back to a bit of normality." The imperative to change is now even more pronounced but people are finding it harder to tolerate its sustained effect.

There is further ambiguity in this facet of culture in that there does not appear to be enthusiasm for innovative working practices, again, in spite of the rhetoric of policy. When the company first introduced flexible working (nearly a year before they were required to do so) they, like EngCorp, explicitly did not want what they termed a 'big bang' or high level of response. On the one hand the concern that "it would be difficult to manage because everyone would be requesting some weird and wonderful arrangement" (HR3FF) is understandable in any large organisation, especially in the more conservative

EngCorp where it was also voiced, but on the other, it reveals the lack of enthusiasm for any profound change in working patterns. Again, the emphasis on the primacy of work delimits the effect of the imperative for change in this area. The ideal worker continues to conform to the traditional pattern which often includes long hours. Earlier I hypothesised that for policies to modify further the cultural imperative to change such that its effect on employees' quality of life is acknowledged, statements of organisational support for their implementation, *especially* at times of greater duress, need to be made more frequently and forcibly (Table 6.1). Statements of organisational support for their implementation which suggested some innovative working arrangements and explicitly emphasised that these would be acceptable would decrease the contradictoriness of certain cultural facets. Employees seem to be aware of the inconsistencies in this facet of culture and consider that the company is not at the forefront of family-friendly provision despite their progressive image which aggrieves their sense of entitlement. If PharMerger made it clear that changing times require changing work patterns and higher levels of support for work-life balance, this would encourage take-up of policies and partially resolve these cultural tensions.

A key insight from this section is that companies which appear to welcome change may not, in practice, genuinely encourage innovative working practices (although change is, in itself, a source of work-related stress, to mitigate which policies have been designed). This may provoke a sense of dissonance in employees, especially if the changes which are taking place are requiring them to work long hours. They may feel exhorted to embrace change but not to effect it to ameliorate their own work-life balance.

6.8 Policies' effects in cultures which treat people equally or as discrete individuals

When considering these two cases together, what I have termed the *plasticity* of policy emerges. The meaning of policies does not inhere in their textual content but, "arises out of organisational members' experience of the policy in the context of communication and interaction with other organisational members who engage in or have some contact with the policy" (Locke 2001:22) because, as Bryman (1996:286) states, "organisational members are not passive receptacles but imaginative consumers of...manipulated cultural

artefacts." The effect of policies, like that of symbols[3], is extremely contextually dependent. In some settings they were constraining, in others they legitimised greater autonomy. One of the findings of the EngCorp study was that its culture of equality seemed to act as a bar to take-up of policy (Table 6.2). I hypothesised that a presentation of policy which makes explicit the high level of recognition that EngCorp gives to diversity and plays down the consistency or equality of treatment which policies can achieve, may be effective in changing the culture of equality. I want to consider this in relation to my hypothesis about the analogous facet of PharMerger culture, the emphasis on treating employees as unique individuals. I stated (see Table 6.1) that the net effect of policies on the culture of individuation is to reinforce it and to act as a counterweight to one driver of homogeneity, the promotion of the ideal worker type. However this will only occur in environments where the ideal worker type is *not* strong relative to the culture of individuation. Where it is strong it will be harder and take longer for policies to strengthen the culture of individuation such that it acts as a counterweight to it.

Bailyn (2003) stresses the need to refine the concept of equality and to see it as just one facet of *equity*. Conflating these two terms assumes that the workplace is completely separate from the rest of life and thus ignores the fact that people have lives outside of their work. She describes how the inability to respond to differences in external constraints or even to understand that they exist is a prime source of *in*equity (Bailyn 1993), as equal opportunities in the workplace are not equitable if constraints are very unequal. Her argument is based on fairness, rather than equality, as equity will not be possible if there exists one group of people (who have caring responsibilities) who are unable to meet the requirements of the ideal worker who can give a larger proportion of his time and energy to his or her occupation. An equitable situation should entail equal opportunities and equal constraints (Bailyn 2003:140) and take an employee's life outside work into account. However, she goes further in arguing for an integration of the public sphere of economic work and the private sphere of family on the grounds that if policies have been put into place to mitigate the effects of these constraints but they have not

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[3] As stated earlier, Hatch (1993) argues for a fourth operational level of culture, that of symbols. Sometimes the literature refers to policies as artefacts, sometimes as symbols.

altered the underlying expectations for career advancement, for example, the way in which the ideal worker type is constructed, then take-up of policies can lead to serious career consequences. She, like Lewis (1997), cites Marks' (1977) work on the scarcity of time and energy (resulting from unequal commitments and over-involvement with occupation as a source of identity) in calling for acceptance of the 'integrated worker', who contrasts with the current ideal worker type whose sole and principal priority is to paid employment (and I will return to his work in the final chapter).

Different aspects of her thesis have salience for each of the two cases. In PharMerger there was very little emphasis on equality and more on the individuating tendencies in the culture which legitimised to a greater extent the consideration of people's external circumstances. However, where the promotion of the ideal worker type is strong, although there is cultural legitimacy for taking individual constraints into account, it is tacitly accepted that the ideal worker type has not been conformed to and that there may be career implications to take-up. In PharMerger, either the ideal worker needs to be reconstructed as an integrated worker as Bailyn suggests, or, where there is a weak ideal worker type but a strong emphasis on taking individual circumstances into account, even more recognition could be given to the fairness of acknowledging different constraints.

The ideal worker image is less evident as a model for action in EngCorp. If policies are presented to EngCorp gatekeepers in terms of their ability to deliver greater workplace equity this would necessitate acknowledging differences of constraint on certain groups of workers. One employee whose flexibility has been reduced since policies had been implemented is widowed with two school-age children. The constraints on his life are far greater than the more usual circumstances that policies have been designed to accommodate. Managers need to look beyond the guidelines and attempt to implement them in a way which considers fairness as well as equality. Currently, the cultural emphasis is on equality, so a deliberately greater stress has to be laid on fairness. To summarise Bailyn's thesis, where the ideal worker type is strong but it is culturally acceptable to take individual circumstances into account, fairness may be less of an issue than policies' need to legitimise the integrated worker type. Where the ideal worker type

is not strong relative to the culture of individuation it is important to consider if and how policies facilitate fairness. Having considered the effect of policies on PharMerger's individuating culture, my hypothesis stressed their importance in strengthening this facet of culture as a counterweight to the homogenising effect of the ideal worker type. However Bailyn's work suggests that policies could also emphasise either a) a more relational model whereby people's situations are considered alongside each other so that fairness can be established or b) a greater acceptance of the integrated worker so that people who place a high priority on non-work commitments are not only accorded respect as individuals but also as candidates for promotion. I would therefore refine my hypothesis by saying that policies could either appeal to the culture of individuation in a way which emphasises fairness or concern themselves less with strengthening this facet of culture than with changing the way the ideal worker is constructed. The hypothesis concerning policies' effect on EngCorp's culture of equality which stated the importance of in some way undermining it could, by considering Bailyn's three-stranded concept of equity, be refined so that policies acknowledge differing constraints and do not attempt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Looking beyond these two cases, important insights from this section include the need to be aware of the plasticity of policy, that if we treat policies as symbols this helps to explain why they are highly contextually dependent. Also, organisations which make no distinction between equity and equality when designing and delivering policies will find it difficult to effect a shift in culture such that family-friendly working practices become more acceptable and embedded.

6.9 Autonomy in PharMerger and EngCorp

In both companies there is a cultural emphasis on autonomy as has already been stated. In PharMerger I refined my hypothesis to state that as policies have already facilitated greater autonomy, this trend can only continue if there is increased awareness of policies and of actual arrangements negotiated through them (see Table 6.1). A very different situation pertains in the EngCorp manual workforce where policies are not taken up because they are perceived to reduce autonomy (Table 6.2) and among non-manual

employees the autonomy or time sovereignty that might be granted by policy is tempered or limited by the emphasis on equality already described. The desirability of autonomy has been extensively explored in the literature where it is often implicitly conflated with flexibility. Bauman describes how modernity replaces the determination of social standing with "compulsive and obligatory self-determination" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:xv) and Beck explains how the Western type of individualised society tells us to seek biographical solutions to systemic contradictions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:xxii). Some authors argue that complete time sovereignty is the precondition for the biographical solution (Reeves 2001) but Sennett (1988) contends that this generates rather than solves what he considers to be the essential contradiction in post-industrial societies. That is, the revulsion against bureaucratic routine and the pursuit of flexibility has produced new structures of power and control instead of creating the conditions which set us free. (One element of these "new structures" is the tyranny of having to prove one can constantly change as stated earlier.) Beck takes up a similar theme when he states that the flexibilisation of working hours directly intrudes upon family life as it "produces irregular and fluctuating temperatures that do not correspond to such requirements of living together as continuity, stability and coordination" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:91) and complete time sovereignty is arguably an unattainable ideal in the context of any intimate relationship.

Studies conducted in high-commitment environments in which the majority of people have more modest desires such as control over their work schedules, less hectic and demanding jobs and greater security of tenure, Berg et al (2003) have found that parents who had greater autonomy in these areas in their jobs reported appreciably less conflict, less stress and better coping than other parents. However Bailyn (1993) describes sources of resistance to the granting of such autonomy by employers such as their basic mistrust of the willingness and ability of employees to take responsibility for the work of the organisation if they are also giving high priority to their private lives. What she terms the "disbelief in intrinsic motivation" (1993:144) seemed to be clearly evident in the refusal of EngCorp's management to allow early finishing on Fridays. They were adamant that everyone would want to have Friday afternoon off and there would be no cover, whilst

employees were just as adamant that they could and would organise this cover within teams. She also described the fear of the precedent that flexible arrangements will set, that could have extensive and uncontrollable consequences, which is anchored in the presumed necessity for set procedures applied in uniform ways, whatever people's personal circumstances. Family-friendly policies are unique in that they can take employees outside of organisational boundaries (or even, in the case of on-site childcare) bring families inside these boundaries, which requires a greater amount of trust on the part of management and the relinquishing of control (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000:1108).

Although flexibility is an essential factor in understanding twenty-first century jobs (Eaton 2002), and self-determination is arguably "compulsive and obligatory", when considering EngCorp's manual workforce it is particularly unhelpful to conflate autonomy with flexibility. Policies are considered to be something for *non*-manual staff, especially women, and shift patterns and team-based working allow people to manage non-work responsibilities. (The security officers in PharMerger also reported that their shift patterns enabled them to spend a satisfactory amount of time with their families without recourse to policies.) In their survey of attitudes to flexible working among members and shop stewards of the Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union, Houston and Waumsley (2003) found similar patterns to those in EngCorp. Paid time off for emergencies was cited as one of the three most popular employment rights and benefits, alongside a contributory pension scheme and maternity leave (all three of which are more or less taken for granted in EngCorp) and skilled or semi-skilled male workers were less likely than women or managers to use flexible working in the future. AEEU stewards, in common with EngCorp union reps, considered that traditionally male patterns of working, such as shift work and overtime, were threatened by flexible working. Houston and Waumsley concluded that flexible working is likely to require greater promotion among male workers to avoid further segregation of men and women in the workplace. However female manual workers in EngCorp also showed very little interest in taking up policies and talked about informal ways of making up time which could be facilitated by the overtime system.

> It would help me if maybe you could take an hour out or a couple of hours out in the week but then maybe do it on a Saturday or a Sunday where maybe your kids are gone out or visiting. You could actually make your time up when it's more convenient rather than I don't know having an hour off on a Monday and then making it up on the Tuesday. There isn't always overtime so the building isn't always open [at the weekend] but that would help me. (AL2)

This employee wanted *ad hoc* and occasional, rather than official, flexibility and said that such informal arrangements are now easily accommodated by teambased working because coworkers cover for each other and supervisors do not have to be consulted. However my sample of female manual workers was not large enough to draw anything more than highly tentative conclusions and this is one area that requires further study. Scarborough and Kinnie (2003) found that the development of teamworking was associated with the emergence of distinctive microcultures at shopfloor level, cultures which were sometimes at odds with established workplace norms among both managers and workers in other parts of the production process. Moreover teamworking was being implemented in highly pressurised environments that demanded a higher order of flexibility from employees. These microcultures might be more or less supportive of flexible working practices than the norm which a company like EngCorp is trying to establish. Moreover, as the trend for employees to be more flexible for the companies benefit seems set to increase, individuals who require flexibility in return may find themselves in an enclave of intolerance of flexible working that could a) seriously impair their ability to manage home and work responsibilities and b) be contrary to the company's broad intent in the provision of policies.

I conclude this section by returning to my hypothesis which suggests that very little change will be seen in the way autonomy is pursued in the manual population. Policies are unfamiliar mechanisms to these employees for securing autonomy and there is little *apparent* demand for the kinds of working patterns they cover. However Houston and Waumsley (2003) suggest that more effort be made to promote flexible working in order to prevent further gender segregation. As EngCorp's manual workforce is highly male-dominated, women may perceive that there are barriers to joining the company which include the non-acceptability of flexible working and there may be teams in which

someone's right to work flexibly may now, or in the future, require the protection of policy. For take-up of policies to become acceptable in this workforce they would have to be presented in a way that a) challenged the assumption that they were primarily intended for female non-manual staff and b) made it clear that take-up need not diminish but can preserve and increase culturally valued autonomy.

This section has highlighted the danger of conflating autonomy and flexibility and has raised again the need to appreciate the negative implications of the latter term. This pertains not only to manual employees but also to other workers who are caught up in the constant need to demonstrate ability to change. Where there is a lack of trust on the part of employers that their staff are self-motivated to be responsible for the company's interests, limited autonomy will result, whilst at the same time a high degree of flexibility might be expected. Finally, teamworking, whilst permitting greater autonomy, is also associated with the formation of microcultures, which may constitute enclaves of intolerance of individualised working arrangements.

6.10 Culturally acceptable expressions of the primacy of work

The remainder of this chapter will examine the ways in which the primacy of work is currently expressed in both companies, the effect of policy on this common facet of culture and the hypotheses concerning the future direction of change. As I have indicated in earlier chapters, although it seems obvious that any viable commercial operation must assume that work comes first, the way this is expressed by individuals and teams in both organisations is possibly the most complex part of the study. From the outset it must be stated that the assumption is not being made that people single-mindedly serve their organisations by 'putting work first'. Career advancement is often achieved by a concern with status rather than task, which is at the expense of the work itself (Bailyn 1993). Giving one's role as a worker a much higher priority than other roles may serve instrumental and emotional purposes for the individual. It may allow them to perform a preferred self (Reissman 2001:701) in which they are in control to a far greater extent than they are in their role as parents or partners (Hochshild 1997).

Sennett's theory about the corrosion of character and Beck and Giddens' reflexive modernisation thesis constitute two dominant theories about the contemporary relationship between identity and work (Wajcman and Martin 2002) which have provided fertile ground for empirical research. The reflexive modernisation thesis (Beck 1992, 1994, 2000; Giddens 1990, 1991) argues that there has been a decline in the power and legitimacy of authoritative norms, a corresponding rise in a new form of identity formation which becomes oriented around the lifelong 'project' of constructing and exploring identities, and an associated decline in the capacity of social institutions to dictate people's biographies. These changes represent a kind of 'freeing' of individuals from institutional and normative constraints but they also make people much more susceptible to the risks of their life decisions, notably in the labour market. Under the terms of the new psychological contract (Smithson & Lewis 2000, Guest and Conway 2001) guaranteed and orderly promotion and a "job for life" have been exchanged for the opportunity for individuals to participate directly in managing their careers where "security no longer comes from being employed, it comes from being employable" (Kanter 1989). The importance of obtaining qualifications exemplifies the ongoing project to remain employable outside the current place of work. The reflexive modernisation thesis also suggests an entirely unprecedented and explicit intrusion of previously 'private' goals and aspirations into the 'public' world of work as people pursue their life projects.

In practice, this melding of the public and private should mean that groups like managers give meaning to their careers primarily in relation to the personal project of self-formation and that previously personal goals and aspirations will gain a new legitimacy as the basis for both family and career decisions. In contrast, Sennett (1998) is pessimistic about the contemporary experience of work and argues that the possibility of sustained, predictable, usually lifetime, engagement with a workplace has been the foundation of people's identities – what he calls their 'character' – throughout the history of industrial societies. By removing this security the new capitalism has removed the basis for the formation of sustaining identities, resulting in a growing malaise as people search in vain for a place to anchor a meaning for their lives. As he suggests that 'private' identities are

dependent on 'public' ones when the new capitalism undermines the formation of character around work, it also disrupts private identities.

Both theories have been extensively critiqued (see for example Perrons 2003 and Wajcman & Martin 2002) and there is not room here to enter this particular debate but they are introduced to validate the claim that people have, historically, established their identities through work, but personal, non-work activity may be increasingly important in the individual's identity building project in what has come to be known as the era of boundaryless careers (see Arthur & Rousseau 1996). Fondas (1996:290) states that people "will have to define success not only as a job well done but as a live well lived", and that this "life's work" will be in terms of their roles as spouse, parent, volunteer or neighbour, among others. Fletcher and Bailyn (1996:265) argue that a new vision of a model employee is required, one whose value lies not in their ability or willingness to put work first but in their ability to operate as an individual who reconnects work and family in ways that benefit both. Currently, however, many employees have unequal commitments and an over-involvement with occupation as a source of identity which, as stated earlier, leads to the experience of a scarcity of time and energy (Marks 1977).

Buck et al (2000:30) more recently researched the relation between time and personal identity and described how some newly part-time workers felt that when they had more time for parenting they had a more complete identity. This was in comparison with the more fragmented image they had had of themselves as full-time workers who felt absent and dissociated from home life and from their corresponding identities as partner and spouse. However some felt that by being part-time they were not a full-time anything. Buck et al concluded that for some people working full-time was a constant reminder that other parts of life were not receiving enough attention, for others it connoted professionalism, and commitment to work. As mentioned earlier, differing personal orientations to work have received attention, for example in preference theory (Hakim 2000), but the focus of my analysis is on the extent to which the ideal worker image makes it easier or harder to take up policies, for example, in order to work part-time in either EngCorp or PharMerger.

Both these organisations are populated by many workers who would describe themselves as high-achieving professionals (especially now that the term is used more loosely) who are subject to what Dent and Whitehead (2002:2) describe as the culture of performativity, the belief in the veracity of apparently objective systems of accountability and measurement, rather than the subjective judgement and specialised knowledge of the individual. "Whatever trust and respect is accorded the professional now has to be *earned* [my emphasis] through their ability to perform to an externally given set of performance indicators." 'Professionalism' used to signify a greater than average degree of autonomy over one's own time but such control has partially been lost to this audit culture (which was alluded to by respondents in both companies) and also to the prevailing ideology governing professionalism which dictates that work can and should take precedence over family (Bailyn 1993). Change at the level of work practices is difficult because it challenges the importance of work in people's lives (Rapoport et al 2002). The ideal worker is someone for whom work is primary and who demonstrates commitment by making personal sacrifices, spending whatever time is necessary to get the job done – and being seen to do so (Rapoport et al 2002:169) This was not only the case among non-manual and managerial/professional staff. Manual staff in EngCorp and PharMerger expressed pride in their work and a belief that work should come first. In Houston and Waumsley's (2003) study of members of the AEEU, many of whom were blue-collar, 79% of workers did not agree that flexible working would lead to respect and promotion. It is possible that this is because it does not fit with the ideal worker image. Working part-time in both organisations is considered to result in curtailed ambition, either for the duration of the reduced hours period or even indefinitely.

It is important to establish to what extent EngCorp and PharMerger are "greedy institutions" (Brandth and Kvande 2001:253) which seek "exclusive and undivided loyalty and attempt to reduce the claims and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries" (Coser 1974:4) or if the patterns I describe above result from their employees' inner compulsion to work in ways which have a negative impact on their personal lives. The issue of motivation is highly complex and individually determined and although people in the same organisation are influenced by similar

cultural assumptions, the way these are outworked is, according to Parker (2000), dependent on people's identity, on the various 'us' and 'them' divisions they make, the claims about difference and similarity between them and others across the organisation. By adopting the ideal worker type an individual is making a statement about their identity which has the positive component of what he or she is (such as hardworking, ambitious, professional, committed) but also the negative component of what he or she is not (for example, time-serving, complacent, unprofessional, less committed). Currently the adoption of reduced hours working makes people look as if they are embodying the negative rather than the positive traits. A part-time PharMerger HR manager implied this when she said that "A professional who works part-time needs to be emotionally strong" (HR2) and a part-time manager in EngCorp described how

> people are measured by how many hours they put in, by how much travel they do. It's worse if you are part-time, you feel you need to keep on top...there is still a stigma attached to working part-time. I think it is tolerated rather than promoted. There might be more women managers, more women engineers if it was different. Women go off and have a family and suddenly they've got two priorities in their life, if they would make it easier to actually balance the two I think they would get more of an interest. EngCorp says it's family-friendly but then meetings are called at 8am and you've got to be there. With a lot of the talk the actions don't go with it. (M9FU)

This quote highlights the difficulties part-time workers face in establishing their validity as organisational contributors when assumptions are made about how commitment is expressed (for example, by attending early meetings). The unspoken fear is that by suggesting a later time, one's professionalism will be called into question. This is possibly more of a problem in larger organisations where people are less familiar with each other, know each other less well and are continually in the position of having to prove their worth. The issue of the size of organisations was referred to by Hegtvedt et al (2002:398) who state that workers' responses to family-oriented policies in the context of their own work also must take into account the nature of the organisation or industry in which they are employees. Variations in size, in the proportions of male and female workers, in the degree of racial diversity and in the formal and informal predominant work culture are cited by them as important influences on employees' reactions to the implications of work family policies. The image-consciousness of PharMerger is

reflected in and possibly determinative of the stronger ideal worker type that is more evident here than in EngCorp.

The latter has a higher proportion of male workers and is in a more traditional industry and the norm is to *not* need to use policies, work reduced hours or structure one's work around the constraint of family. Constructing sameness is, according to Douglas (1987:60) an essential activity that goes unobserved. The ideal worker type appears at first sight to be the enemy of diversity in working practices, a homogenising device at the service of the greedy institution. However, people need reference points, indicators that they are, in important ways, the same as others. This need is perhaps even more acute in today's more 'risky' and 'flexible' working environments in which "the normal biography becomes the do-it-yourself biography, always a risk biography, indeed a 'tightrope' biography which can swiftly become the breakdown biography" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:3). Sennett (1998:46) refers his readers to the fifteenth century use of the word 'flexibility' which, like a tree bending in the wind, includes the implication of a return to the original position. Today's flexible organisations, he says, require too much bending but give little heed to restoration so that the present becomes discontinuous from the past. Contradiction and ambiguity, sources of job-related stress in themselves (Feldman 1991:145) are bound to be present in organisations which are going through the transition from work being the dominant priority of the majority of employees' to it being one of competing priorities. I shall return to Sennett's treatment of flexibility and to the subject of the risk biography in the final chapter.

Expressing the primacy of work is bound to be harder for employees who have other commitments which need to be fulfilled at times that fall within the traditional working week than for those who do not, but managers need to be able to measure whether or not staff are genuinely fulfilling their work responsibilities. White et al (2003) investigated practices that employers regard as important for their own success which may exacerbate people's difficulties in managing work and home commitments irrespective of the positive contribution of family-friendly policies, and found that practices such as appraisal systems, teamworking and performance related pay "all contribute to the

imposition of the public sphere on the private" (White et al 2003:191). A part-time chemist formerly at PharMerger described the pressure which the appraisal system had put her under because a) her bonus depended upon her reaching certain targets that often become obsolete over the year and b) it was the main indicator for her of the worth of the work she was doing. She said "It should have been recognised, that this target has not been met because you're no longer doing that but it's hard to actually feel that you're perhaps doing a good job" (ITH) and she considered it to be one dimension of the bureaucratic tendency, the need to systematise what was actually a very dynamic situation in which people were constantly moving around within the department and doing different things.

The flexibility of the work context made it very difficult to audit yet, paradoxically, the auditing system was considered essential for the appraisal of staff but was not inherently flexible enough to capture the complexity of people's contributions, They could feel as if they had underachieved and be under-rewarded as a result. EngCorp's appraisal system was considered to be far more "relaxed" in comparison but teamworking, in both the manual and non-manual workforces, potentially restricted people's ability to work in ways that were individually optimal. I have already described how one commercial manager felt unable to work shorter (but still contracted) hours because of the long hours worked by others in her department. In the manual workforce work teams of a certain size are required to perform tasks, so although the system allows the informal flexibility of coworkers covering for each other, this tends to be on a very occasional basis, to meet crises, not routine caring responsibilities. White et al (2003:192) conclude that "flexible and family-friendly practices to promote the work-life balance look feeble by comparison" to what they term the forces arrayed against them which are the other, high performance practices organisations implement to promote the primacy of work.

Having looked briefly at the literature on the subject, I will return to my hypotheses about the primacy of work and the ideal worker type in both companies. In EngCorp I stated that there were significant disincentives to the take-up of policy which were directly attributable to the principle of the primacy of work (Table 6.2). Being 'professional', as

described earlier, entails elevating one's work identity above all other aspects of selfhood (Kerfoot 2002) and appeared to act as a disincentive as did the requirements of the business in high-pressure departments. It is hard to disentangle this set of factors. If the individual is the agent of his or her own identity-making and livelihood (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:203), acting in a way that emphasises and does not undermine their professionalism necessitates serving the organisation's interests in as unconstrained a way as possible. EngCorp are not insisting on an undivided and exclusive loyalty (Coser 1974:4) but the norms of behaviour suggest that the closer the approximation to this ideal an individual can achieve, the better. By taking up policies they are explicitly acknowledging their divided loyalties. Many employees, such as mothers with young children, have had to make this explicit acknowledgement but resent its implications. They feel that by working part-time this implies less commitment, less loyalty and a lighter load but this does not match up to the reality of their existence. As Bailyn (1993:109) says, "commitment can emerge as a response to a firm's accommodation to one's private needs" and "commitment transforms an instrumental contractual relationship into an open-ended moral bond" (1993:107). A popular management phrase argues that if you "give them an inch then they'll give you a mile". Employees whose other roles are accommodated tend, as the review of the literature indicated, to be more committed, more loyal and more hardworking (Boyer 1993) but this has not yet become widely recognised. I would reiterate that this is the cultural facet in EngCorp in which it is hardest to see a shift for the reasons stated above and because organisational survival *appears* to depend on the unambiguous assertion of the primacy of work.

Turning to PharMerger, the hypothesis (stated in Table 6.1) refers to the more complex picture represented in Table 4.2. The imperative of not severing the culture of an organisation from its historical context (Parker 2000:214) was especially important to follow in this case study because an appreciation of the tendencies of the different eras (see Table 3.1) was essential for typologising attitudes towards the primacy of work. I suggested that where individualised working patterns are not perceived to put people at a disadvantage (in terms of career success) then any stereotypic model of how to be an 'ideal employee' begins to be discredited. Under these circumstances, policies which

legitimise such patterns therefore change the way in which the assumption of the primacy of work is expressed. The corollary of this is that policies will not change the way in which the primacy of work is expressed if individualised working patterns are considered to be symbolic of lower commitment that is, where the ideal worker type is unchanged.

Again I would reiterate that the homogenising tendencies in PharMerger (which flow from an undue emphasis on qualifications and the prevalence of the ideal worker type) contradict the individuating tendencies in the culture. If policies are taken up in greater numbers in the future they will be a source of *de facto* heterogeneity but the concern here is the extent to which they will be at the same time, a source of *de jure* heterogeneity in the sense that they legitimise different working arrangements which will include not only reduced hours but also career breaks. One of the challenges facing the organisational world is the need to encompass this discontinuity and heterogeneity in careers and work patterns and to rethink taken-for-granted procedures and underlying assumptions (Bailyn 1993:139,141). I have described above the underlying assumptions in PharMerger and the way these articulate with each other. Where managers and employees are in what is called the ForeignCo (FC) mode the ideal worker type is more weakly expressed than where they are in the UKPharm/BigPharm (BP) mode (see Table 4.2). Policies have, to a greater extent, 'fitted' better with the cultural emphases on entitlement, individuation and autonomy and have reinforced them at the expense, so to speak, of the strength of the ideal worker type. That it has been further weakened was evident in the increased incidence of homeworking.

However where the ideal worker type is strongly expressed, the take-up of policy is implicitly frowned upon as it is considered to be evidence of an unduly high sense of entitlement. Women who take all their maternity leave as well as their accrued holiday are, by this very fact, not considered to be so committed because of the time spent away from the department. In such cases PharMerger itself is considered also to be at fault, to be too generous, which contradicts, again, the notion of a greedy organisation. In such contexts the ideal worker type is minimally affected, it may even be reinforced. Where people's identity, how they see themselves, and their image, how they want others to see

them, are bound up with their performing the role of the ideal worker, taking up policies will seem in some way to a) betray those ideals and b) reduce deliberately their chances of career success which appear to depend on conforming to the accepted norms of behaviour.

Advocates of the need for cultural change to take place if organisations are to become genuine facilitators of better work-life balance rest their case on the continuance of such norms where basic assumptions are not challenged. As stated in Chapter Two, Kirchmeyer (2000) argues that many work-life initiatives seem to be driven by pressures to comply with industrial and local trends, and that organisational decision makers have failed to develop genuine strategies to help workers balance life and work domains. Such a strategy has to be a coherent, unifying and integrative pattern of decisions and she says that "the act of strategic positioning forces decision makers to identify key beliefs and convictions" (2000:80) that is, to develop a conceptual framework that examines basic assumptions. Once these basic assumptions, what I have termed here 'facets of 'root' culture', are articulated, a unifying strategy of consistent objectives can be built.

Although I would agree with the need to identify basic assumptions, my findings suggest that a "unifying strategy" may also founder if it does not consider the many dimensions of workforce heterogeneity. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work even in a single organisation because of the differing needs across working groups. The relative strength of cultural facets in PharMerger described above indicates that policies will mean different things to different people as they articulate non-uniformly with the different emphases to which people are accustomed.

However when I returned to the data to see what had actually changed among employees working in an FC mode environment, although policies had made it easier for them to work in a way that did not conform to the ideal worker type, in the period of recent organisational duress the lack of senior management emphasis on work-life balance had made it harder to work in a way that was not, effectively, saying that "work came first". One manager reported that a recent project had necessitated that people work long hours

"so we are at risk again....we had issues more than two years ago and we managed to stabilise those with all the work-life balance programmes and we need to be careful again that we are not running into a pressurised situation and have our eye on how can we improve things, how can we best support people" (LDFF).

In the light of this data, I have concluded that the earlier part of the hypothesis perhaps over-stated the extent to which policies change the way in which the assumption of the primacy of work is expressed, if they legitimise individualised working patterns such that the ideal worker type begins to be discredited. In times of duress and where there is an absence of senior level support for the continuing treatment of work-life balance as a key organisational priority, people may feel they have no choice but to revert back to 'safer' ways of working which will involve long hours and a willingness to sacrifice personal time for the sake of work. Arguably this is not adoption of a particular type or image, it is just the 'natural' response to a high volume of work. Yet if, as Kirchmeyer suggests, a unifying and integrative strategy had been adopted, it would have taken fluctuating workloads into consideration so that, for example, a recruitment process or other solution would automatically be initiated when pressure rose. However, because the ideal worker type is or has been constitutive of many people's identities, its characteristics seem, in the short term, to be reliable indicators for action when other circumstances become uncertain. Moreover, the boundaries between departments and teams are thoroughly permeable to each others' influences or an FC mode manager may report to someone in the BP mode who will be more determinative of the actions of the former's reports when the company is going through challenging times and individual survival appears to be less certain. "Epochal changes are occurring but they exist more in people's consciousness and on paper than in behaviour and social conditions" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:203). Alternative models, such as Bailyn's integrated worker type, are apparently available but without sustained attention from key organisational influencers, the transition to a point where they become as familiar and legitimate as the current ideal worker type may take a very long time.

This section has covered a lot of ground and it is necessary to itemise the key implications it contains. Firstly, people may serve their own interests by 'putting work first' by using this practice in the construction of their own identity. As shifts occur in the normative construction of identity, such that the personal gains a higher priority, the preoccupation with work might be expected to decline accordingly. However, ideal worker types (which serve the important function in organisations of constructing sameness) have not yet registered this shift. Taking up policies is tantamount to the explicit acknowledgement of divided loyalties but firms which recognise that this need not have negative implications stand to reap dividends of loyalty and commitment. The difference between *de facto* and *de jure* heterogeneity is an issue for workplaces and, if the latter is an organisational aim, this may render a "unifying strategy" (which assumes an integration perspective on culture) problematic.

6.11 Concluding comments

In conclusion, the cultural imperative that 'work comes first' seems to have remained largely unaffected by the implementation of family-friendly policies in both companies. In PharMerger it was more clearly and commonly expressed by adopting the behaviour of the typical ideal worker but this was not always the case. Occasionally respondents would make it clear that innovative working practices would be acceptable as long as they were not so much outworking the strong sense of entitlement as genuinely serving business interests. However, even in areas in which it was not necessary to project the image of the ideal worker type in order to be successful (FC mode), when the company went through periods of unusually high pressure, people began to work very long hours and, in other ways, appeared to conform to the ideal worker type. This was partly a result of influences from other parts of the company and partly because of the 'naturalness' of the ideal worker type as a model for action for professionals and 'committed employees'.

In EngCorp there has been very little discernible shift in the way the primacy of work is expressed. Part-time professionals are not considered to be available for promotion in all but exceptional cases; expectations about early morning and late evening availability have not been adjusted to take people's family situations into account. Returning to Lee

et al's typology of organisational paradigms, which they treat as a continuum along which firms can be located (see Figure 6.1), both PharMerger and EngCorp appear to be at the point of elaboration. They still privilege full-time workers but have made some progress in investigating the feasibility of flexible working and accepting a range of new patterns. However they have not changed their status quo in terms of the way they organise and structure work and career (despite the presence in both of an underlying assumption that an organisation must adapt and realign itself continuously) and they "have not yet achieved an ongoing cycle of experimentation in which improvements in the way work is done are linked with changes in working arrangements which make them more family-friendly" (Lee et al 2000:1220). They are willing to consider requests for flexible working but are not treating the process as an exercise in organisational learning.

However there were indications in both companies that the trend is moving further away from the accommodation end of the spectrum (see Figure 6.1). In PharMerger the notion of core time is adapting to increasingly legitimate infringements such as gym usage and homeworking. In EngCorp, characterised by "evolution, not revolution", the expectation is that part-time working will become more acceptable and will eventually not be seen in the same career-limiting (that is, career-delaying) way that is currently the case. The newly appointed senior manager with a young family, who is adamant that he and his team will have a life outside of work, is refusing to have meetings in his diary after 5pm which will "send more ripples down the organisation, but it's going to be slow." (ALFF22) One of the key similarities of the two cases, regardless of their differing cultural attitudes to change, lies in the anticipated slowness of the shift in assumptions about what it means to put work first, how the ideal worker should behave. Moreover, there were indications that a linear, unidirectional path towards the transformation paradigm was an oversimplification. In times of uncertainty and duress, PharMerger employees reverted back to patterns of long hours and high visibility of commitment. Policies have contributed to shifts in other facets of culture and I suggested ways in which they might be presented and implemented in order to encourage further movement.

This final section yields the insight that, to be successful, employees need not necessarily conform to an ideal worker type, although when thresholds of pressure are passed this may no longer be the case. Even organisations which pride themselves on the *de jure* heterogeneity of working patterns during periods of relative calm may find that a *de facto* homogeneity is evident in difficult times. Also, organisations which are not seeking systemic changes may slowly begin to take on characteristics of those which have adopted a transformation paradigm. The influence of the wider culture, the cross-fertilisation of management trends from other sectors and the further development of work-life balance legislation will all tend to pull organisations away from the accommodation end of the spectrum.

In the final chapter I will take a closer look at the work of the advocates of systemic change, who suggest that it is only firms with a transformation paradigm, or those who link improving the way work gets done with creating more options for employees' pursuit of fulfilling personal and work lives, who will see profound cultural change. I argue for a more evolutionary model, especially in large firms, for which widespread job redesign would be yet another major change programme with the stress and resistance that this entails. I also revisit the suggestion that the ideal worker type should be replaced with the integrated worker type (Fletcher and Bailyn 1996, Rapoport et al 2002) and examine the extent to which this has taken place in either organisation and its future feasibility.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion and theoretical issues arising from research

7.1 Introductory comments

In the course of this thesis I have mapped out the cultures of the two case study organisations, paying especial attention to those facets of culture which have most salience for understanding the impact of family-friendly policies. In what follows I shall revisit the issues considered in the introduction to be potentially significant and, with reference to them, make clear how my findings refine existing theories and how they might contribute to the generation of new ones. At this stage in the analysis, what Ritchie et al describe as the final tier in the analytic hierarchy (2003:257), wider applications should be sought as essential components of the analytic output from the study. These need to be strongly supported by evidence and a lucid exposition of how the inferential or explanatory accounts have been developed, which involves, once again, the iterative movement between case-based and thematic analytical data.

From the outset the intention was to identify the common, underlying assumptions which underpinned values and actions within the organisations, to examine how these different 'root' cultural facets tended to articulate with each other and with artefacts such as recently introduced policies. The research question asked whether or not cultural change has taken place as a result of the implementation of family-friendly policies so I was looking for *shifts* within the different 'root' facets of culture and in their articulation with each other. Some facets seemed to conflict with others and, in so doing, create areas of inconsistency and ambiguity in the belief system of the organisation. The extent to which policies aided in the resolution of conflict or exacerbated it was described in the last chapter and is revisited periodically in this conclusion. Sites of conflict in other aspects of the organisation were to be investigated to see if they exposed areas of differentiation in terms of attitudes and access to policies. I wanted to determine whether or not adjustments in working arrangements facilitated by policies created new 'us' and 'them' oppositions within the organisations as "the existence of divisions within organisations over responses to change is central to the constitution of local cultures" (Parker 2000:214). The possibility of a division along family-situational lines, which meant that

those with caring responsibilities experienced the organisation in a qualitatively different way to those who did not, was of especial interest. I also wanted to determine whether or not a strong ideal worker type existed at a cultural level within the organisations, how its influence affected the take-up of policies and, conversely, how policies had affected its construction. Theorists have suggested that the replacement of the ideal worker type with the integrated worker type (Fletcher and Bailyn 1996, Rapoport et al 2002) is an essential precondition to the development of genuinely family-friendly workplaces. I will consider to what extent the integrated worker type was evident, even as a minority model, in either organisation and the likelihood of it becoming culturally acceptable, given the current direction of change. Leadership was another concern in the investigation as role models can act as important change agents due to the breadth of their influence. Insights gleaned from these case studies would be expected to have applicability to other organisations which share similar 'root' cultural facets or are comparable on other grounds such as that they are in the same industry or have workforces of a similar gender composition.

7.2 Divisions within the organisations

When sites of conflict within EngCorp were investigated, it became clear that a simple generational divide on the subject of family-friendly working was not easily discernible in the organisation. Older managers are often considered to be more understanding about their employees' non-work responsibilities than younger ones. There are differing explanations for this. Respondents suggested that older managers know their staff better, have more established relationships with them, are more experienced in managing people generally and know whom they can trust not to "swing the lead". It also became apparent, however, that older managers are usually higher up in the organisation than the younger ones, who are "nearer the coal face" and handling the day-to-day difficulties of part-time and flexible working. In other organisations it is worth bearing in mind that older managers might be agreeing in principle to something that others will have to outwork in practice (although line managers may be closely involved in the final decisions). Whereas the workforce is not clearly divided along generational lines in PharMerger either, some of the older managers are in what I have termed the UKPharm/BigPharm (BP) mode (see Table 4.2). Their attitude is that "we are here to work," the company is too generous and

the full implementation of policy imposes additional stress on departments which are working at full stretch. Such an orientation often looks backwards towards a previous era when the primacy of work was unchallenged. Gabriel describes nostalgia as a state arising out of present conditions as much as out of the past itself (2000:175). Reminiscing about the past, when "work was work" and employees did not expect their domestic responsibilities to be accommodated by workplace policies may partly, but not completely, be due to what many referred to as the much faster pace of work today. The pressure that PharMerger 'BP mode' managers and others now work under appears to be exacerbated by policies which they do not approve of. As a result they suffer to a certain extent from what has been termed "injured narcissism" (Gabriel 2000:186) whereby individuals who are unable to 'buy' the organisation's own ideal may create an alternative ideal based on the past, when the norm was that staff were more or less constantly available and were not frequently benefiting from paid leave provided by policy. This may be in spite of other accounts which suggest a somewhat different reality, as was the case in PharMerger where the whole working environment was a lot more relaxed, people worked flexitime and were often (but not always) allowed time off to deal with family emergencies.

BP mode managers appear to 'blame' policies and PharMerger's oft-stated ideals about facilitating work-life balance and family-friendly working, for additional stress in high pressure working conditions. The strong ideal worker type which is operating in such circumstances has not been weakened by policies and the latter may even, as the last chapter suggests, serve to reinforce this construct by operating as a marker of difference. Those who wish to conform to the ideal worker type are discouraged from taking advantage of policies. However as the working environment now appears to be more generally pressurised, the actual contribution which policies make to departmental stress may be less significant than they claim.

The majority of managers, of whatever age, appear to be less antagonistic towards the take-up of policies and those in FC mode are extremely supportive of their implementation, especially in times of greater duress. The attitudes of BP mode managers

cannot be explained purely in terms of generational differences but appear to depend to a greater extent on the strength of the ideal worker type and the amount of pressure that they are working under. Assuming that resistance to policies is a result of generational differences may be an oversimplification in other organisational settings. Occupational/professional and spatial/functional divisions are more evident in EngCorp than in PharMerger and have already been described. These take the form of the typical and enduring (Taylor 2002) 'us' and 'them' oppositions between manual and non-manual workers, and between manual workers and their managers. Union representatives are more concerned with maintaining good working conditions and obtaining the best rates of pay for their members. They are not pursuing an explicitly family-friendly agenda and are, in the manual workforce, ambivalent on the subject of flexibility. Respondents from BU2 indicated that there is some resentment of BU1 which is considered to be the most progressive section of the company and had access to family-friendly policies before the rest of the company. Although it could be argued that rolling out policies across large organisations has to be done in stages, where there is a strong culture of equality this may make their introduction unnecessarily contentious. EngCorp took several years to produce a booklet of policies which applied across the organisation and this was considered, more than anything else, to indicate tangible improvement in provision. Policies have therefore not changed this emphasis on equality but their 'success' has, to a certain extent, been interpreted as such by virtue of this 'root' cultural facet. There are surely lessons in this for other companies which have an equality culture.

The most apparent division within PharMerger seemed to flow from the high sense of entitlement which inheres in most employees once they have been with the company for several years (and have, according to an HR manager, forgotten what other firms' pay and conditions are like). It is a division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and partly results from the fact that it is hard to have an organisational career in the pharmaceutical industry. A large percentage of employees are highly qualified but they cannot all progress within any one company. Firms typically project the image of an 'employer of choice' and imply that career development is made a priority but dissatisfaction is experienced in this area when companies appear to overpromise and

underdeliver. Many employees have unfulfilled aspirations but are, on a daily basis, confronted with people who have successfully progressed within the company and who are earning the kinds of salaries which are commensurate with the enormous profits which pharmaceutical companies appear to earn. There appears to be little difference between those who achieve success in PharMerger and those who do not, progression was referred to as a "bit of lottery" and such conditions appear to generate what Alain de Botton has recently described as "status anxiety". He quotes David Hume's *A Treatise on Human Nature* from 1739 which states that "it is not a great disproportion between ourselves and others which produces envy but, on the contrary, a proximity" and says

> Our sense of an appropriate limit to anything - for example to wealth and esteem – is never decided independently. It is arrived at by comparing our condition with that of a reference group, with that of people we consider to be our equal…we will take ourselves to be fortunate only when we have as much, or a little more, than the people we….work alongside…and identify with in the public realm. (de Botton 2004:47)

When the possible rewards seem so great and other employees seem to be obtaining them, some people will work long hours irrespective of need, in the hope of making their mark. Even if companies like PharMerger, which are not merely paying lipservice to policies, are not asking them to do so, they may in some situations be complicit in perpetuating a long hours culture when they too "flog the willing horse". However, other staff may be explicitly requested to work in a way which belies the intent of policies and will do so, partly in return for a higher than average salary or for other reasons such as their sense of professionalism. As has already been stated, where reduced-hours or flexible workers experience difficulties in establishing their validity as organisational contributors, and individualised working patterns are considered to be symbolic of lower commitment, policies may have little impact on aspects of culture which are concerned with the way the primacy of work is expressed.

A divide did not appear to be forming along family-situational lines in the case study organisations and the high sense of entitlement in PharMerger occasionally manifested itself vicariously, when employees who did not have potentially conflicting work and home priorities contended that working conditions should be made more conducive to

balance for those who did. As stated in the last chapter, policies reinforced this sense of entitlement and could exacerbate a sense of injustice if the primacy of work appeared to be the more dominant consideration in a department. In EngCorp some resentment was occasionally expressed when people worked reduced hours, partly because of the cultural emphasis on equality, but this could not be said to constitute the kind of backlash that Burkett (2000) has suggested (she critiques what she considers to be the pro-family culture in the United States and claims that non-parents are increasingly discriminated against in the workplace and elsewhere by the family-friendly policies which accrue no benefits to them) and this confirms Dex's (2003) conclusion based on her meta-analysis of nineteen work and family projects, that feelings of inequity and resentment are rare.

7.3 Shifts in the ideal worker type

I was interested in the extent to which an integrated worker type was emerging as a legitimate model for action within either or both companies and where latent conflict between this model and the ideal worker type might arise. In EngCorp there are examples of both men and women who are known to work their family circumstances around their hours and travel. It is quite common for the company to employ married couples and, if they are both managers who travel, their respective secretaries will consult with each other to ensure child-care cover before booking time away. These non-work responsibilities are considered to be a legitimate organising principle of work on many occasions but, as in PharMerger, the parent who works part-time is at a career disadvantage. Part-time professional respondents often said that this need not be the case, that they could perform adequately in more senior roles without being officially full-time. They are aware of the need to uphold the principle of the primacy of work and expressed this in similar ways to an ideal worker. Although they are unable (and unwilling) to engage in presenteeism, to work unnecessarily long hours, they prove that they are committed by allowing a high level of intrusion outside their contracted hours, such as on their days off. They effectively work far longer than contracted hours but their part-time status means that they are not required to be constantly available on-site to the same extent as full-time colleagues.

There does not appear to be conflict between people working in this more integrated way and those who are constantly available for two main reasons. Firstly the integrated workers repeatedly prove that they uphold the principle of the primacy of work. In comparable situations (such as in PharMerger) resentment can be generated when people's sense of entitlement appeared to compromise their willingness to put work first. Secondly an implicit trade-off was acknowledged, that those who are working flexibly, who are not expected to be constantly available, will *not* progress so fast. In PharMerger a manager of six staff, who works flexibly herself, disagreed with the request of a far more senior (male) colleague who lived a hundred and fifty miles away, to work compressed hours so that he could have a three day weekend. Her attitude was that he was paid to carry full-time responsibilities, he had to be constantly available to justify his status and salary. Within all organisations subtle calculations will be made as to the merits or otherwise of people's working arrangements relative to reward. At present the career limits which working flexibly imposes, are considered to offset the lower demands which are being put on the reduced hours worker. If they were to claim a full-time salary on the grounds that they homework in evenings or at the weekend but are less available than colleagues who have to be on-site during the typical working week, it seemed apparent that this would lead to conflict in both of these companies and this could more widely be the case.

Writers may argue for complete time sovereignty and the need to abolish the distinction between work and leisure (Reeves 2001) which would mean that we all work flexibly and move between domestic and working responsibilities in a seamless manner, but in large organisations this is unrealistic, even for knowledge workers, because of the high degree of coordination required. Such prescriptions are intended to minimise the stress that comes from being tied to a workplace between certain times but, as stated in Chapter Five, many respondents described the creative tension, the "buzz" which such time pressure can provide. Although there is, in both companies, a softening of firmly drawn organisational boundaries (Perry-Smith and Blum 2000) and many professional and managerial respondents indicated that notwithstanding the occasional day of homeworking, which gave relief from commuting and interruptions and increased their

productivity, they are aware that they are paid to be available and interruptible. Those writers calling for a greater acceptance of the integrated worker type argue that the dichotomy between the public domain of work and the "closed and exclusive sphere of intimacy, sexuality and affect characterizing the modern nuclear family" (Martin 1992:113) is false but many respondents, especially men, may want to preserve this separation of spheres to a large extent, as they did in the case studies. Some boundary permeability is acceptable, but many prefer to go to work and concentrate almost exclusively on that sphere and then return home and experience minimal if any intrusion from occupational responsibilities.

Although childcare responsibilities need not be the exclusive concern of the mother, women continue to adapt their working arrangements around them far more commonly than do men and, throughout both of these companies, this is not an obvious cause of resentment. Women did occasionally express dissatisfaction with the lack of opportunities this implies but only when they were of the opinion that such curtailment need not be the case. Such women tended to be more senior and have more managerial experience. Part-time female engineers, at an earlier stage in their careers, considered that their lack of availability *necessarily* imposed limits on their involvement in certain projects and are willing to progress more slowly as a result. The ideal worker type is stronger and more prevalent in PharMerger than in EngCorp and those wanting to work flexibly considered that this might put them at a permanent disadvantage as it sent the signal that they were not as committed as full-time employees. As Hewlett observes, "outside the fiction of HR policies there is the belief that a women who allows herself to be accommodated on the career front is not a serious contender." (2002:71) In companies like EngCorp career prospects may be limited whilst reduced hours are being worked but restrictions will be lifted when full-time status is resumed. The integrated worker type was, therefore, a more acceptable model in EngCorp than in PharMerger and I would theorise that in companies with a weaker and less obvious ideal worker type, this would also be the case. However it might, as it does in both of these companies, imply a curtailment of progress.

Although the perception that by taking advantage of policies one tarnishes one's professional image is rooted in culture (Hewlett 2002:71) and may be unjustifiable given many reduced-hours employees' tendencies to uphold the principle of the primacy of work (wherever they are in the company hierarchy), certain industries and occupations can more easily facilitate part-time careers than others. Professor Carol Black, president of the Royal College of Physicians talked recently about the dangers of feminising the medical profession, citing the downgrading of its reputation which this trend has led to in Russia. She contends that the damaging effects of such feminisation could result from an overemphasis on the ability of doctors to have career breaks and work shorter hours. This is the case in lower status jobs but it is still necessary to sacrifice life outside work to take on the enormous commitments required to *lead* the medical profession and to take on the extra-curricular activities (research, leading professional organisations, chairing committees and so on) that ensure its continuation. Although she acknowledged that medicine needed to find more ways of helping women doctors balance work and family, some professions will always have more rigid career trajectories which are less "forgiving of interruptions" (Hewlett 2002:73). Even where the integrated worker type is more acceptable, such as among FC type managers in PharMerger, in times of organisational duress people revert to giving work a greater priority in their lives by working longer hours, thus being more available and resembling more closely the ideal worker type. They do this to get the job done, either because competitiveness in the wider industry requires that tight time scales are met, or because of heightened uncertainty, fear of redundancy or fear of being passed over for promotion. I would hypothesise therefore that people in high pressure working environments actually 'toggle' between the ideal worker and integrated worker type rather than make a permanent shift (and policies might be important facilitators of this 'toggling').

7.3.1 The effect of leadership

I was also interested in the way role models affected the construction of the ideal worker type as commitment from the top is considered to be one of the four key aspects of good practice contributing to culture change described earlier (Lewis and Taylor 1996:113). In both organisations senior people were identified who occasionally and deliberately act in

ways which indicate that they are not constantly available to meet the demands of the organisation. Examples were given of important meetings missed in order to attend family events and of a refusal to attend meetings during atypical working hours (that is, before 9am and after 5pm). However such role models do not appear to have changed the way the ideal worker is perceived to behave further down the hierarchy. Senior managers are implicitly understood to have more flexibility[1] and to have proved their worth to the organisation, by virtue of their position. They may legitimise certain practices such as the deliberate and conscious scheduling of meetings in work time, rather than in what was traditionally considered to be family time, but there is so far little indication that they are changing the habits of the majority of managers for whom organisational commitment is indicated partly by a willingness to be available more or less at all times. People expressed a reluctance to "push the system", to pioneer would have taken the writing of a risk biography (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:3) beyond most people's threshold of what they considered to be sensible. Moreover, within a department, a senior figure who is working reduced hours may not so much set a trend within that department as make it necessary for everyone else to work full-time. This was evident within one working area in PharMerger where a manager already worked part-time. A request came from an assistant to adopt a similar reduced hours pattern but the decision was taken that only one person could go part-time to guarantee that an acceptable level of coverage was provided in the department. In this case the manager had precedence because she had negotiated her hours before the new applicant, but there is a danger that more senior employees in firms might actually be seen as privileged and atypical employees with a higher sense of entitlement to the provisions that policies offer. Rather than them acting as role models, their flexible working patterns might be seen as markers of difference, and policies would not, in such circumstances, impact underlying cultural assumptions such as the construction of the ideal worker and the way the primacy of work is expressed.

The consensus in both organisations is that, on balance, the drive to build a genuinely family-friendly environment is aided by examples of respected, committed and more

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[1] Friedman and Greenhaus (2000:61) describe how "authority translates into autonomy – discretion in choosing what work to do, how to do it and even where and when to do it."

senior employees who are challenging the values of presenteeism and who are giving their own families a high priority. Such people have reputations for delivering high quality outputs and are less tolerant of an emphasis on face-time, the input of long hours irrespective of need. A senior EngCorp manager emphasised the power of individual actions from a long term, evolutionary perspective as they would, he said, trickle down through the organisation eventually. In other firms it should be remembered that such actions remain important because the cumulative impact of many individual challenges to the culture may, according to Goldin (1990:9) provide what she terms "ammunition" for subsequent leaders to prove to others that current assumptions are unworkable. I would theorise therefore that role models are essential if the integrated worker type is to become acceptable but in cultures where there are significant markers of difference in status, flexible working may be added to this category.

7.4 Linking cultural change with organisational learning

An ability to challenge basic assumptions and to engage in organisational learning is considered by Lee et al (2000) to be linked to firms' adaptability to change more generally. They suggest that the way firms respond to employee requests for flexible working is representative of more general organisational level variability in responses to change in the external environment, and represents firms' proclivity to engage in organisational learning. Returning once again to Lee et al's typology of paradigms, which can be considered as a spectrum along which firms are arrayed (see Figure 6.1), both PharMerger and EngCorp appear to be at the point of elaboration. They have not yet achieved an ongoing cycle of experimentation (Lee et al 2000:1220) in which improvements in the organisation of work are linked with alterations in working arrangements explicitly intended to make them more family-friendly. Lee et al's implicit assumption is that organisations could work as well if not better if the full-time model was no longer assumed to be optimal. It is possible, however, that firms which are willing to engage in organisational learning have considered the evidence and have concluded that maximal availability of personnel within typical working hours is essential for competitive advantage. Lee et al theorise that the way requests for reduced time are considered indicates the learning capacity and responsiveness to change of the

organisation. Both of these case study organisations showed a genuine concern to be adaptive but accommodating such requests may conflict with other essential priorities. A part-time EngCorp engineer stated that when negotiating hours it was always necessary to be assertive about the hours you were willing to work, as managers always wanted people to work as many hours as possible. This is not necessarily because of an assumption that full-time staff came closer to an ideal worker type, but because of the genuine need to have as many of one's team available during the traditional working day as possible in order to meet competitive deadlines. In other organisations it is likely that this need to have one's team available may also act as a constraint.

Although I would agree that an emphasis on long hours will remain as long as the amount of time at work is seen as a prime indicator of commitment and productivity (Bailyn 1993), it is important not to underestimate the extent to which long hours are genuinely necessary to get the job done in many organisations. Once people have reached a stage in their careers where overtime has been bought out, extra hours in addition to contracted hours carry no marginal costs to employers. The implications of this for the economy as a whole can be seen by looking at US figures (Hewlett 2002). The Fair Labor Standards Act which was passed in 1938 institutionalised the forty hour week from which only 15% of employees were exempt largely because they were of managerial status. This figure has now reached 30%. In some organisations the proportion of workers who are not paid for their overtime is much higher, and their extra hours make a decisive contribution to their company's competitive edge. Many employees consciously collude with the long hours culture as was seen in the significant numbers who voluntarily opted out of the working time directive. It is easy to treat this collusion as a structural impediment to the development of more family-friendly working and to gender equity because women have less time to devote to work as they still carry the main share of responsibility for care. However I would suggest that a preoccupation with gender equity is too narrow a focus upon which to base the case for profound organisational change. As its proponents acknowledge, the gender equity agenda exists independently from the organisation's agenda and there may not be a fit between the two (Rapoport et al 2002). In the case study organisations many people work long hours because they are genuinely interested

in their work, they enjoy being with their colleagues and their workplaces are pleasant, satisfying places to be. Many people in EngCorp, especially in the manual population, relied on overtime. A union representative made it clear that this is not because EngCorp do not pay a living wage, but because employees aspire to the higher standard of living that overtime afforded them. Significantly for this study, overtime allowed workers to build up time off in lieu which they preferred to use in order to meet their requirements for family time, because of the cultural emphasis on autonomy. They equated policies with going "cap in hand" to management and asking for favours, and, as policies are unfamiliar mechanisms to these employees for securing autonomy and there is little *apparent* demand for the kinds of working patterns they cover, their effect on the way this facet of culture is expressed was minimal.

Although we now have the example of France as an economy that has insisted upon the shorter working week, within these organisations the high level of collusion with the long hours culture, the emphasis on autonomy, professionalism and the desire to 'get the job done' did not indicate to me that there would be much support for a strict curtailment of working hours on the grounds that many people actually want to work the way they currently do. Women do appear to be disadvantaged in the current situation and if they had complete time sovereignty to work full-time contracted hours the playing field would, theoretically, be more level. However the impact on firms' competitiveness cannot be dismissed. They are currently accustomed to operating with a significant number of extra hours for which, they would argue, people are being paid, as managers and those whose overtime has been bought out receive 'all inclusive salaries'.

Unions are understandably highly suspicious when their members are offered all inclusive salaries, which depend on greater employee flexibility, partly because the loss of overtime deleteriously affects their bargaining position, but mainly because of the potentially unlimited demands that management may make on employee time. Aside from the economic implications for firms however, the regulation of working time would have major psychological implications for workers themselves that cannot lightly be dismissed. This is readily acknowledged in the literature which challenges the necessity

of working long hours. "Change at the level of work practices is difficult because it challenges the importance of work in people's lives. It requires dealing with mind-sets and feelings about commitment and competence that support established ways of working as well as the prominence of paid work in life. Such entrenched beliefs are particularly hard to deal with – even to talk about in work groups – because they touch on men and women's sense of identity and self-esteem" (Rapoport et al 2002:168). Not only are people's feelings of self-worth invested in the high level of availability they are willing to give their jobs but the latter is also bound up with notions of professionalism. Many of my interviewees manifestly did not want to be restricted in the way they performed work tasks because they enjoyed the sense of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) which the autonomy to work to task rather than to time afforded them.

As the review of the literature has already stated, academics working from within the collaborative interactive action research (CIAR) paradigm contend that widespread job redesign and large scale systemic change are required to pursue the dual agenda of greater gender equity and workplace effectiveness (see Rapoport et al 2002). Smaller firms such as the Derbyshire manufacturing organisation I visited[2] might be willing and able to put CIAR principles into practice on an organisation-wide basis if there was an obvious business imperative for doing so. However in sites and business units employing a thousand people it would be very difficult to generate the will and enthusiasm for such profound change unless the survival of the business depended on it. Even change programmes for which employees are well prepared and extensively briefed so that there is a good understanding of their need, are costly, time consuming and stressful to implement. In both case study organizations, values based on the underlying assumption of the primacy of work are usually appealed to when making the case for change. However, although one half of the dual agenda is concerned with increased workplace effectiveness, a rationale which is even only partially based on gender equity would be unlikely to attract support. Many women, including mothers of young children, want to continue to work long full-time hours. Childless employees may resent the equality of

[2] The MD largely ascribes the turnaround of an unprofitable business to what he refers to as "the cultural change" brought about by widespread flexibilisation of hours, such that everyone was allowed to work the hours they wanted as long as these were compatible with other team members.

access which is being suggested for parents, especially where they consider that they have made personal sacrifices in order to advance their careers. Managers who are aware of the profundity of change required will be uncertain as to how they can continue to deliver against business objectives at the same time as revolutionising the way their departments function so that no one is disadvantaged by their family situation. Even within an organisation like PharMerger where there is far more enthusiasm for and willingness to change because the imperative for it is established as an underlying assumption, an inherent *conservatism* is apparent when changes threaten operational competitiveness. HR personnel talked about being relieved that there was only minimal take-up of flexible working because mass take-up was considered to have the potential to jeopardise overall effectiveness. Earlier in the thesis it was made clear that tensions arising from contradictions between the cultural imperative for change and the emphasis on the primacy of work had produced a high degree of ambiguity concerning attitudes towards innovative working practices. Policies have not, in the main, resolved these tensions although they might in the future if PharMerger explicitly encouraged the adoption of a wide range of flexible working patterns.

7.4.1 Evaluating the enthusiasm for systemic change

Employees in both organisations expressed cynicism about managerial initiatives which seemed to be pandering to fads. Miller and Hartwick's (2002) work on management fads concludes that what distinguishes them from management classics is that the latter demand real organisational changes at significant cost and have lasting effects. They emerge out of practitioner responses to economic, social and competitive challenges, rather than from the writings of academics and consultants. Crucially they are complex, multifaceted and applied in different ways to different businesses. The kind of culture change which proponents of the dual agenda and the promotion of the integrated worker are suggesting does, they contend, depend on a focus on process rather than outcomes. This process requires actions appropriate to context at the organisational or even departmental level (Lewis and Lewis 1996:13). In this regard champions of the dual agenda are in no way proposing a one-size-fits-all, simple or prescriptive concept which characterises a management fad. Very often, when evaluating a business approach or

technique, managers need to ask if it has a track record for performance and measurable outcomes in similar companies facing similar challenges. As has been stated earlier, within the pharmaceutical industry companies track each others' policies and packages and, in the absence of salient organisational success stories, would be reluctant to pioneer more major, systemic changes. In engineering there did not appear to be such consciously monitored industry-wide trends in working conditions. EngCorp were aware that their main customers and competitors had crèches and allowed people to leave early on Fridays but appeared reluctant to make what they considered to be these quite major changes. The emphasis on the primacy of work appeared to be the reason behind the reluctance to allow this flexibility and acted against the culturally prized autonomy. The introduction of policies explicitly stating EngCorp's intention to encourage a more family-friendly environment did not appear to have produced a shift in the way these facets articulated with each other, certainly on this issue. Moreover they seem to have little incentive or appetite for pioneering systemic change. Managers will also need to consider whether a business approach addresses problems or opportunities that are high priorities for their company (Miller and Hartwick 2002:27).

Although employee sustainability (or what has been termed "individual resilience") should, arguably, be a long term goal for any organisation, the implications of the new psychological contract (described in the previous chapter) go some way to reduce, rather than increase, the expectation that firms need to do what they can to safeguard the health of their employees throughout their lifespan. With the 'job for life' becoming a thing of the past, it is far more likely that employees will have several different jobs and that their commitment to each one is partly on the basis that within their job function they are being equipped and trained so that they can move into other organisations to develop their careers. I would contend, however, that many people still have organisational careers, that so-called portfolio careers are still pursued by only a very small minority of people and that the trend to adopt family-friendly policies (which are part of a strategy to attract and *retain* good staff) runs counter to any tendency for companies to grow more callous. Work-life balance legislation is also making employers think more about sustainability and it is possible that legal cases may soon be pursued against employers who are deemed

to have injured their staff by forcing them to work long and stressful hours. However, management approaches intended to promote work-life balance will rarely, in themselves, appear to address high priorities for many large organisations. There are cases of large employers, such as BT, who have extensively adopted flexible working but in so doing they have addressed much wider business concerns. It serves BT's interests to have large numbers of homeworkers, to have twenty four hours a day, seven days a week cover because of the nature of their business. They are considered to be work-life balance champions but it has to be remembered that the development of a more flexible workforce has been successful across the organisation because it was required in order to survive. It will be tempting for some employers to make a virtue out of a necessity (and, although policies may have played a significant role, BT themselves tend to emphasise the importance of other drivers in changing their culture).

The final question which managers and change agents have to ask is whether or not the changes of a new approach are within the company's capabilities and resources. Many employees, including those in these two case studies, are accustomed to constant change.[3] If Sennett (1998) is to be believed, unrelenting change can make people lose sight of their essential selves, there is no return to an original position, no anchoring in reference points which engender a necessary stability. Job redesign to address the dual agenda of increased workplace effectiveness and gender equity could involve the greatest and most revolutionary change many people, especially those from the older generation, have ever seen. Cultural change is not as straightforward as many business books suggest. Schein himself admits that we do not know how to systematically intervene in a culture to create transformational learning across the organisation (Coutu 2002:103) and, as I described in Chapter Two, for learning to take place survival anxiety has got to be greater than learning anxiety. The resistance to the new, because of the threat it poses to our self-esteem or even to our identity, which inhibits cultural change, has to be overcome by the fear that without a profound shift in the underlying assumptions guiding action in an organisation it might cease to exist. This fear was not at all evident in the case studies,

[3] In their 2001 survey of a random sample of workers in the UK, Guest and Conway (2001) found that 49% had been through some kind of change programme during the past year and 22% specified cultural change.

reducing the likelihood that widespread cultural change and transformational learning will take place.

Although the explicit goal of policies is to make the workplace more family-friendly and conducive to work-life balance and this is popular in many sections of the workforces, this is not perceived to be essential for the future survival of either company. Moreover it is hard to see how a larger-scale change involving job redesign, could be 'owned' by managers and employees on the grounds that it increased workplace effectiveness when these grounds seem highly uncertain. Many people are happy that flexibility is available but reassured by the fact that take-up is small and that there has not been a 'big bang' since flexible working legislation was introduced.[4] Even in companies which have an appetite for change such as PharMerger there is distinct nervousness about change that is not unambiguously intended to give them a competitive edge. At present both companies are typical of many others in that they would consider the radical change proposed by dual agenda researchers to be potentially highly damaging to their other organisational goals. The belief that flexible working could come in the way of other goals was seen in the attitude of PharMerger's marketing company. It had decided not to make flexible working possible (in July 2002, before they were required to do so as a result of the new legislation) because their strategic aim was "to fulfil a certain marketing goal, and they won't let anything come in the way of that." (HR2) Where competitive advantage is seen to be threatened by flexible working, it is unlikely that the learning anxiety implied in accepting such major change would be overcome by the relatively low level of survival anxiety entailed in resisting it. It is for this reason that I contend that in companies where flexible working does not confer a clear commercial advantage, it will be easier to *evolve* culture in this area than it will be to change it and a significant role might be anticipated for policies in such an endeavour.

[4] This bears out Dex and Scheibl's (1999:33) conclusion from other research, (see Chapter Two) that employers' fears of an overwhelming response to policies are unfounded.

7.5 Evolution rather than revolution

An evolutionary approach is more obviously appropriate for firms like EngCorp which already have a cultural disposition towards gradual change, but without a very clear business case for the widespread take-up of family-friendly policies even firms which are driven by a change imperative will be wary of far reaching and profound changes in working practices. Although there are individuals who know that in their own particular circumstances their contribution to overall competitiveness is not limited by their working flexible or reduced hours and that this would still be the case if they were promoted, it is possible that they can work these hours precisely because so many other people are working traditional full-time hours (although any excessive hours which are a result of presenteeism are obviously unproductive). Gradualism is therefore preferable, that is incremental rather than widespread changes. It might be possible to accommodate only a minority in each department.

It is likely that the sense of entitlement to flexible hours will be heightened by the growing awareness across organisations and throughout British industry that people in comparable jobs are permitted to do them without the requirement to work full-time. Where jobs and organisations can genuinely accommodate flexible or reduced hours there are grounds for arguing for the removal of cultural barriers so that people are no longer pressed into what has been referred to as the traditional, male and increasingly anachronous model of work. However, it is vital that there is not undue emphasis on these barriers, but a more holistic view of the culture is obtained so that, to reiterate Schein, change agents can build on what is working rather than on what is not working. Appropriate models of change need to be identified for organisations which are seeking to be more family-friendly or accommodating of female workers (Lewis and Lewis 1996). These might involve full scale innovation but, where organisations resemble those studied here, it is more likely that incremental change over time will be more acceptable to a wider range of employees. It is easy to be blithe about transforming culture but major change involves the giving up of long held assumptions and the adoption of radically new

ones, a process which Schein describes as "unbelievably painful and slow"[5] (Coutu 2002:106). If employees are currently struggling with what they consider to be an inequitable situation because of their caring responsibilities, then small gains are better than no shift at all. I would like to explore briefly how small gains might be won by evolving rather than transforming the organisational culture.

7.6 Suggestions as to how a culture might be evolved

In what has preceded it seems clear that a simple focus on cultural barriers may ignore either aspects of culture which are compatible with widespread flexibility and can be built upon or genuine, job-related reasons why firms may find this difficult to accommodate. Where companies are encountering difficulties in managing flexible working I would agree with Rapoport et al's (2002) emphasis on working with operational units within organisations so that each working group can decide which changes need to take place. The importance of a certain level of availability has already been referred to. It may be the case that workers are occasionally required to be available to what they consider to be an unacceptable degree. The level of intrusion they and their families experience as a result of late night and weekend working and work-related phone calls may, in some instances, be putting the interests of work first to an extent that is difficult to justify. However, where availability is usually limited to the typical working day, this can still make flexible working problematic. Manual or non-manual teams may be composed of people who have all got different skills or who are each working on distinct aspects of a project. As was evident in PharMerger's team of maintenance engineers there are no 'spare' people in lean organisations and if someone is on holiday or routinely not working on certain days in the week, that can impose additional stress on other team members. However, where there is a straightforward choice between losing someone or retaining them on a part-time basis, other individuals may be willing to extend compensatory cover. The person who is requesting flexible hours may have particular skills which can be used on a part-time, consultative basis. It is possible that they could be used to perform what is termed in engineering, 'offline' tasks, which are not on the

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[5] Schein cites Proctor and Gamble's culture change programme which took twenty five years for its effectiveness to be evident (Coutu 2002:106).

'critical path': in a project which has a long timescale, there are many tasks which are essential to its successful completion but may not constitute a rate determining step for the whole endeavour.

When designing future project teams the need to accommodate flexible working could be built in from the outset by making teams slightly larger so that more than one person is working on a particular aspect. This need not imply inefficiency as two people could manage a larger aspect between them, but either would have the experience and knowledge to feed into wider team discussions if the other were not available. Small teams of specialists are especially dependent on maximum availability of all members, whereas larger teams with more generalists, who are interchangeable to a certain extent, will have a greater ability to cover for people working flexibly. It is possible that organisations might set guidelines for team size and composition such that each team could accommodate at least one flexible worker. Acknowledging the impracticality of large percentages of flexible workers might allay many fears and, as there was in neither case study a large volume of requests to work in non-traditional patterns, demand for flexible working need not always outstrip supply. Inter-team communication on the subject of managing flexible working might better facilitate the sharing of knowledge and help to raise awareness within each individual team that requests are part of a wider trend and not just local inconveniences. Giving teams the opportunity to discuss openly how they function and how flexible working would affect that might also be beneficial.

Among knowledge workers there are many 'accidental interactions', dynamic opportunities to share experience and insight into work-related problems. For example, EngCorp interviewees described overhearing conversations at the coffee machine which contained vital information or which revealed some flawed thinking which could have jeopardised progress. If teams rely on obtaining instant opinions from each other and hold many informal meetings, part-time workers can be missed out of important information pathways. It may be important to discuss the extent to which someone *must*, by definition, be less necessary to the team as well as the corollary of this which is the possible loss of status and even self-esteem for the part-time worker. Such far reaching

discussions may, as the collaborative interactive action researchers suggest, need facilitation by outside consultants and might also act as precursors to what might be called *flexibility audits* within each department, whereby the potential of each person's job to accommodate homeworking, seasonal or annualised working hours or some other non-traditional pattern is established according to externally determined criteria. It may be necessary to craft what Hewlett (2002:71) terms "more meaningful work-life policies." She contends that conventional bundles of policies are insufficient for professional women who want to have both a family and a career. She suggests a larger time bank of paid parental leave (such as three months, which must be taken before a child is eighteen), restructured retirement plans (which eliminate penalties for career interruptions), career breaks and reduced hours careers as well as alumni status for previous employees so that it is easy to harvest their knowledge by using them as consultants.

Speaking in cultural terms, such policies would only be widely acceptable if elements of the integrated worker type were grafted onto the current ideal worker model. Returning to the theory that replacing the ideal worker type with the integrated worker type is necessary for the development of a family-friendly environment, I would contend that this is only realistic in a competitive working environment if the integrated worker manifestly expresses the primacy of work. Without the assurance that employees have a strong commitment to organisational objectives it will be hard for managers to permit them to work in a way that increases workers' autonomy and relies upon a greater level of trust. It has to be remembered that employee commitment can increase when they are shown greater trust and understanding of family circumstances and allowed a high level of flexibility (Bailyn 1993:109) but managers in the case studies explicitly stated that informal flexibility was far more readily forthcoming for hardworking employees than for those who did not seem to "pull their weight". They measured this not on the basis of presenteeism or 'face-time' but on the level of outputs or contribution each member made to the department. I would contend that the complete replacement of the ideal worker type is unrealistic, partly because many aspects of it still serve organisational and

individual interests and the inability of policies to weaken a strong ideal worker type (in the PharMerger context) has already been described extensively.

For a variety of reasons many employees wish to preserve the current level of separation of the occupational and domestic spheres. However, it is incumbent upon all contemporary organisations to recognise and accommodate diversity. One aspect of diversity is family-situational in nature. Not only do people differ in the extent to which they have extra-work responsibilities which are potentially conflictive with occupational ones, but they also differ in how they want to manage these responsibilities. Some prefer to preserve the boundaries between work and home whereas others function better if those boundaries are more permeable. A desire to work reduced hours is not in itself an indicator that one's commitment to career or firm has also declined although where this is considered to be the case, permanent career impairment may result from the take-up of policies because of underlying, cultural reasons. Marks (1994) has shown how cultural systems differ in the extent to which they encourage balanced commitments. Some cultures encourage equally positive commitments to all roles whereas others have a zero-sum gain approach such that greater commitment to one's non-work roles must imply lower commitment to career. However he also argues (Marks 1977, 1994) that time and energy expand to meet the demands of roles to which we are highly committed and a balanced set of commitments is less stressful than over or under commitment to any one role. In the light of this Lewis (1997) contends that low stress organisational systems will be those which acknowledge that family and other commitments are as legitimate as occupational demands and activities (and might even go so far as to imply that careers can and perhaps should be interruptible). A shift in the construction of the ideal worker which acknowledges this altered view of commitments might be effected by emphasising the utility of the soft skills that are obtained in intensive family engagement. For policies to play their part in effecting this shift, it might be necessary when introducing or promoting them to acknowledge explicitly their merits in accommodating this engagement. Kanter (1989) describes how the skill sets refined in such extra-work activity are the very ones which are valuable in today's more relationally-based economy

(see also Rapoport et al 2002:38 and Bailyn 1993:150), and training programmes could be provided for managers which make this link explicit.

7.7 Suggestions for future research

Appropriate training for managers (Yeandle et al 2003) and the limitations of current management education (Keep and Westwood 2002) have already been mentioned. In standard courses curriculum design reflects the wider political conflicts within the field of management studies between the functionalists, who are business-orientated, and the more critical/ethical perspectives who are socially orientated. Interdisciplinary research (and teaching) rarely takes place between these two groups and it is unusual for human resources and organisational behaviour teams in business schools to work closely with finance and accounting teams (Keep & Westwood 2002:30). If the 'naturalness' of long hours working is to be challenged without ignoring the huge cost to industry which its elimination would incur, then ideological oppositions must be overcome in order to conduct further cost-benefit analyses (in addition to those which have already been carried out to establish the business case for family-friendly policies). Such collaboration could go a long way to remedy the present disconnect between these two different perspectives in the teaching on courses such as the MBA because "all subjects are related and the weakness of some courses is that there is an arbitrary separation of 'hard' and 'soft' subjects with the 'soft' tag generally taken to be pejorative." (Keep & Westwood 2002:32) Research might also be required on how best to remove this arbitrary separation.[6]

In regard to Hewlett's (2002) comment that some careers are less forgiving of interruptions in their trajectories than others (see previous chapter) and to concerns that significant proportions of flexible and reduced hours workers can downgrade the prestige of or 'feminise' certain careers, I would also suggest that research be carried out to establish how essential such rigid trajectories genuinely are. The 'naturalness' of

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[6] Moreover, the MBA itself may be an instrument of further workplace segregation. Upon graduation it achieves an average 27% rise in salary (People Management, 4th December 1997:12) but the intensity with which it currently has to be pursued made it an unattainable goal for many employees in the case study (especially women) who are managing a family alongside a career.

uninterruptibility may be illusory or, and this could be determined by looking at comparable examples in other countries, there may be critical underlying reasons why some careers conform to typically male models of continuous full-time employment from the end of education to retirement.

Attention should also be paid to working conditions at the other end of the occupational hierarchy. One strength of these case studies is that they included manual and non-manual employees and respondents throughout the organisation, partly in order to avoid a managerial bias. They yielded valuable insights into the higher value that is placed on autonomy than on flexibility among manual workforces and into the reasons for the low impact of policies on their working arrangements. As might be expected from the low take-up of policies, their effect on cultural facets has been similarly undramatic, but the low numbers of manual respondents were one weakness of the study. The wider applicability of this theory needs to be tested by further research. Secondary analysis of Houston and Waumsley's recent work with members of the Amalgamated Electrical and Engineeering Union (2003) might reveal a similar emphasis. Moreover they concluded that the views of union members contrast strongly with those of union shop stewards who are more negative towards flexible working, and that this mismatch between shop stewards and those they represent may hinder union recruitment and question the relevance of union representation to the workforce (particularly the female workforce who felt most positively about flexible working). Budd & Mumford's (2004) analysis of union activity in more than fifteen hundred workplaces (using WERS 98 data) found that the presence of unions was negatively correlated with the availability of homeworking and flexible working hours. Research into local and national union culture would reveal underlying assumptions which would help to explain this mismatch and negative correlation. By helping unions to understand their own culture and that of the people they represent, potentially anachronous ways of perceiving the industrial context might be exposed. The Trades Union Congress as a national body is taking a very active role in promoting work-life balance and family-friendly policies (TUC 2001, TUC 2002) and unionised workplaces commonly have a slightly better level of such provision (Dex and Scheibl 1999, Budd & Mumford 2004) but unions appear to negotiate more readily for

some policies than for others and it is important that the reasons for their preferences, which may differ from the actual requirements of their members, be understood.

7.8 Final comments

To conclude, large organisations may not be struggling to learn how to be family-friendly so much as struggling to survive and to retain a competitive edge. In such circumstances it might be anticipated that successful change programmes will be those which treat locally determined operating requirements as a high priority. There may be unnecessary and culturally rooted impediments to changing working arrangements, which could be identified and openly discussed. Cultural studies can identify people's basic assumptions, so that policies can be presented in ways which help to resolve underlying contradictions and which do not in themselves provoke greater clashes either between 'root' cultural facets or between oppositional groups in the organisation. Moreover the harnessing of other aspects of the culture may reinforce the intent of family-friendly policies. In building a rationale for a more flexible workplace an emphasis on these could be highly beneficial so that as many change agents as possible can be willing partners in a process that may more closely resemble evolution than revolution.

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APPENDIX I - Interview guides for all three interview phases

First phase interview guide (for formal and informal track)

Introductory

1. How many years have you worked for [organisation]? Supplementary questions: a) briefly can you describe your job function and b) do you manage anyone?

2. Do you have responsibility for family members or other dependents which you are managing alongside work?

3. On average, how many hours do you work per week?

4. Describe your perception of [organisation] to me in 5 words or phrases.

"Family-Friendliness" questions

5. Is the term 'family-friendly' one you would use when describing [organisation]? (if they don't use it in response to 3.) Can you be specific about why this is/is not your perception? For example can you give me any examples of experiences which have demonstrated to you that [organisation] runs a family-friendly environment?

6. a) [If response to 1. is "more than three years"] do you think that [organisation] has grown more 'family-friendly' over time or has it always been 'family-friendly'? In what ways?

b) [If response to 1. is "less than three years"] is [organisation]more family friendly than your previous company? In what ways?

7. [Organisation] offer a range of family-friendly provisions. Which of these are you aware of? b) In your opinion, how supportive are [organisation] when women want to return to work after maternity leave?

8. How does the flexible remuneration scheme affect you? (PharMerger)

9. Re. Personal leave (PharMerger)

a) Are you aware of how this scheme operates?
b) Under what circumstances might you use this arrangement?
c) Would anything deter you from making use of this arrangement? If yes, what?

10. Re. Flexible working (PharMerger)

a) How aware would you say you were of the details of the flexible working arrangements that became available in July 2002?
b) What would encourage you to take make use of these arrangements?
c) Would anything deter you from making use of these arrangements? If yes, what?

10. Re. Flexible working (EngCorp)
Since April 2003 [organisation] has had to comply with government regulations on the subject of flexible working.
a) Are you aware of the details of these flexible working regulations and how [organisation] has responded?
b) Under what circumstances might you use these arrangements?
c) Do you envisage making use of these arrangements (if not then why not)?

11. Re. Well being facility (PharMerger only)
a) Are you aware of PharMerger's well being facility and its services? *[If the answer is "no" then do not ask any more questions as this can be a sensitive subject.]*
b) What do you think about the well being facility?
c) What do you think is the general attitude among staff towards the well being facility?

11. Re. Career Breaks (EngCorp BU1 only)
a) Are you aware that EngCorp has a career break scheme? [If answer is 'no' then describe very briefly and move onto c)]
b) Do you know how this scheme operates?
c) Under what circumstances might you use this arrangement?
d) Do you envisage making use of these arrangements (if not then why not)?

12. (EngCorp only) How have changes at EngCorp affected
a) your ability to balance work and non-work responsibilities?
b) your performance at work?
c) your willingness to stay with the company?

13. How could [organisation] be more family friendly? *[If interviewee says that a crèche should be provided then ask them for an additional suggestion.]*

14. How can flexible working help the company better meet the needs of its customers? (EngCorp)

Cultural Questions
15. What would you say are the core values of [organisation]?

16. Is [organisation]"distinctive" from other organisations in which you have worked? If so, in what ways?

17. Can you think of an occasion/event/practice that sums up to you what it means to be part of this organisation?

18. Is there a strong sense of team on the site or do you think individualistically in the way you do your job?

19. Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

20. What motivates you most powerfully in your work?

Second phase interview guide (typical questions)

Both organisations
If you suddenly have to go off "on spec" because of children's illness, do you have to make up the hours?

Do managers continually stress the importance of teamwork or is the importance of team implicit?

For those who travel: How effective or truly important is the travel you do for the successful execution of your job function?

Do people tend to have to change their jobs if they come back part-time eg. after maternity leave?

Do people tend to come back part-time or full-time after maternity leave. Have you noticed a trend?

In general how do people, eg. managers, at [organisation] react if people make mistakes?

Is there greater awareness of the availability of flexible working (9 months after policy/legislation came through)?

Do you think there is undue emphasis placed on having a higher degree (eg. a doctorate)? Could less qualified people do the same job in many cases?

How would you describe the level of trust between management and staff on this site eg. to get the job done with a minimum of supervision?

PharMerger
Can team leaders take advantage of the flexible working arrangements that became available in July?

Do you think there are different cultures eg scientific, engineering, support services areas?

EngCorp
Is it your impression that there are a lot of part-time managers or only a handful?

Why do you think people don't come back to social things in the evenings/sit in the canteen at lunchtime?

(BU2) Do security issues make it harder for you to work flexibly, eg. to take work home?

How have manpower reductions affected you?

Are you very aware of the union presence on the site? Do they speak out on the subject of w-l b? What percentage of employees are in a union would you say?

Third phase interview guide (typical questions, both organisations)

I first interviewed you in [approximate date]. Have there been any changes in your circumstances specifically regarding your responsibility for family members or other dependents which you are managing alongside work?

Has anything changed for you in your working life?

Are all jobs advertised as being fulltime, do part-time positions tend to be created by people who are adjusting them under the flexible working scheme?

Although part-time staff did feel that [organisation] was good to them, they felt that, culturally, part-time work itself was not highly rated within the organisation and that there were problems for people wanting to work part-time. What is your perception of part-time work within [organisation]?

Do people tend to work longer than contracted hours?

Is it quite common in your area to work from home? If you wanted to work one day at home every week do you think your manager would be quite happy for you to do that (work requirements permitting)?

[Having read out what they said re. their perception of organisation from first phase transcript....] Does that still sum the company up for you?

What currently stand out for you as being core values of [organisation] which are not just expressed but also implemented or lived out?

Do you think that [organisation] has grown more 'family-friendly' over the last 18 months?

Can you point to any specific policy changes during the last 18 months which have made it easier for you to manage your work and family responsibilities? Would you say it is now more or less culturally acceptable to take your family into account when organising your work?

Re. Flexible working
a) How aware would you say you *now* are of the details of the flexible working arrangements that became available in July '02 (PharMerger)/April '03 (EngCorp)?
b) What would encourage you to take make use of these arrangements? When I last interviewed you, you said [read out] about flexible working arrangements at [organisation]. Is that still your view and if not, why not?
c) Would anything deter you from making use of these arrangements? If yes, what?

In terms of general awareness of policies, do you think that has improved or stayed the same

Will you be going to Pharm Day this year (on a Sunday)/Did you go to the recent EngCorp (family) celebration day?

APPENDIX II - Report from pilot study at funding charity

"It's an Ethos Thing!"

Report from Pilot Study carried out at Care for the Family, November 2001

Samantha Callan
Research Consultant
December 2001

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Summary of Findings from Pilot Study at Care for the Family (CFF)

- The overwhelming majority of respondents had no complaints about the 'family-friendliness' of their working conditions.

- Loyalty towards the organisation and its aims was clearly strong at all levels of the hierarchy.

- Over the last ten months the organisation has been reformulating their employment policies and contracts in order to meet legislative requirements and deal consistently with increasing numbers of staff, some of whom work away from the headquarters building.

- Not everyone understood what was meant by the expression 'family-friendly' and not everyone was aware that CFF considered itself to be a family-friendly employer. The connection between its aims and employment conditions was not obvious to some of its employees. This was not because they had any complaints in this area, it was just that they hadn't made the connection.

- Even where there was an acknowledgement of CFF's family-friendly orientation, employees still wanted a bit more. That is, unpaid travel time was an unpopular policy on the grounds that this too was time away from family.

- Salaries were not necessarily competitive with other local or comparable employers but employment at CFF afforded a higher quality of life which was compensatory.

- The charity has to hold two things in tension; its family-friendly ethos and responsibilities towards its support base. The latter would not be best served by an over emphasis on the former. CFF's employees should not be 'let off lightly' when private contributors are supporting their employment.

- Many respondents talked about having a sense of vocation in their jobs but almost all said that there were limits to how much they gave to these jobs. The importance of maintaining boundaries between work and home life were mentioned frequently. Even those who seemed most committed to the organisation were aware that for their own effective and sustainable functioning they needed to be able to keep work and home life separate.

- The words caring and understanding were frequently used when describing the organisation's historical and present attitude to personal and family issues and difficulties.

- None of the respondents considered that the charity tried to create a sense of family within the organisation in order to coerce people into giving more to their jobs than might otherwise be the case.

- Within the organisation there was more of a sense of team than of family although many talked in terms of "team plus" or "more than team but less than family."

- A long hours culture was definitely discouraged by the practice of lock up at end of office hours. However if, as happened occasionally, a project required it staff were expected to work as long as necessary to reach targets.

- Overtime is unpaid but the lieu system reimburses time to employees.

- Flexibility was a feature of working conditions in many teams and the team leader's discretion was a significant factor in the outworking of an overall policy of flexibility.

- As the organisation has grown they have been able to allow greater flexibility as teams have more members to cover for absences.

- The charity organises family days to which the staff can bring partners and children. These are not always popular with single people, who organise their own events, but there is no perceived 'career' disadvantage to non-participation in family days.

- Taking lieu time or benefits like paternity leave are not considered to be a sign of weakness or lack of commitment.

- Abuse of the system does occasionally take place. Usually this is of a minor nature and where people take undue advantage of the flexibility allowed this is not necessarily done consciously.

INTRODUCTION

Care for the Family is a charitable organisation which has been in existence for more than 10 years. It exists in order to address the fact that family life is under pressure. The organisation's own publicity states that "With that pressure comes pain - and, often, a dreadful sense of isolation. Perhaps you've experienced that pain yourself. But something can be done. We are committed to strengthening family life, and helping those who are hurting because their family has broken up. That's the heart of Care for the Family. More than 25,000 people are helped every year by our events, workshops and support. Together, we really can make a real difference." I have included this self-introduction because it suggests that Care for the Family is a unique organisation in which to do a pilot study on family-friendly policies. If it is their raison d'etre "to strengthen family life" then employment policies within the organisation might be expected to reflect that fact. My relationship with this organisation also needs to be clarified. I am contracted to work as their Research Consultant and as part of my contract they are sponsoring me to carry out this PhD research. There were obviously problems associated with doing a study in an organisation in which I also worked. I shall describe these problems and go on to explain their resolution. Firstly the question of bias must be raised. Would I be able to look at the responses I gained in a sufficiently objective manner? Secondly, would people treat me as a serious researcher who would respect confidentiality or, since the research consultant is a member of the directors' management team, would I be treated as a fairly senior employee with whom it would be unwise to open up too much. Thirdly, because of the uniqueness of the organisation's position with regard to its overriding concern with the well-being of the family, would it be too unrepresentative even to be the subject of a pilot study?

To be offset against these problems were the obvious advantages entailed both in my relationship to the organisation and in its raison d'etre. As they are sponsoring this PhD and therefore investing in this research any assistance they could give me would be mutually beneficial. The usual problems of access to an organisation were largely overcome from the outset because any time which their employees gave me was effectively being used to benefit the company. Not only were they investing in the PhD but they were also obtaining information which they had been wanting to gather. Within the last 12 months the organisation had experienced significant change in the

area of human resources. Firstly the number of employees had risen to the extent that a dedicated personnel officer had been appointed. He had moved from within the organisation to take up the post in February 2001. Prior to this the personnel function had been a shared responsibility spread over several people.

Secondly, and in response to recent legal changes the organisation decided to hire a consultant to evaluate the personnel practices which had evolved over the years and to ascertain what their legal position was with regard to the new regulatory framework. As a result of this consultation three main developments can be identified. Firstly a review of written employment policies has been undertaken, secondly new contracts of employment have been written and thirdly a staff handbook has been compiled. When I conducted the pilot study all three of these developments were almost ready for signing off by the Director. The key stage which they had still to go through was that of a staff meeting staff meeting/consultation. The personnel officer expected to have these policies 'in place' by the end of the first quarter of 2002 .

The written employment policies were an important source of data to which I was given unrestricted access although the proviso was repeatedly stated that these policies had not yet been signed off and had not been discussed with staff. The policies which had been formalised addressed issues such as recruitment, equal opportunities, domestic incident leave, compassionate leave, parental leave, paternity leave, maternity leave as well as many others which were not relevant to this study.

For almost one calendar year therefore the personnel function and conditions of employment had come under close scrutiny. Having invested a significant amount of resources into this exercise the charity's directors were enthusiastic about the prospect of a relative outsider taking a close look at the way these policies were being outworked in practice. Returning to the possible disadvantages I faced in doing this pilot study, it must be stressed that I was actually in a somewhat privileged position for this task. Although the organisation has sought to include me as much as possible in various 'team building' events and update meetings, the fact is that I spend very little time in Cardiff. I meet up with individuals from the organisation in London and elsewhere but I am not usually seen at the charity's headquarters. I would not be considered a stranger to the workforce but neither am I a familiar figure. As a result I

was treated more as an external researcher than as a member of the management team and I was able to look at the charity in a fairly detached way. I had the advantage of a reasonable level of prior contact which, when added to the two days of intensive interviewing, yielded a workable quantity of data.

The final concern with the appropriateness of the organisation for a pilot study became trivial as the research was conducted. It became clear that this was an ideal environment in which to test out hypotheses and generate insights. Findings from this pilot study will be incorporated in my PhD thesis but the main research will be conducted in two other organisations, neither of which will be in the charitable sector.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before undertaking the two days of field work I requested and received information specifically related to the consultant's work on the charity's policies. This included emails which had been sent to the personnel officer outlining formal changes which needed to be made to comply with regulations as well as draft policies for special leave (paternity leave, compassionate leave, parental leave, domestic incident leave, maternity leave and miscellaneous leave) and equal opportunities. Also included were extracts from the written statement of terms and conditions of employment. The latter outlined holiday entitlement, loyalty awards, the time off in lieu system and standard working hours. It was useful to have this written data before designing the interview guide as it generated most of the questions which I posed to the personnel officer and one of the questions for the interviews with staff. This written data complemented my own knowledge of the charity's employment practices although I was aware that the personnel officer had selected the content. As I have already stated, once I was on the premises it became clear that I could have copies of any policies and contracts as long as I treated them as drafts which still needed to be discussed with a staff and cleared at director level.

As well as designing the general interview guide and compiling a list of questions for the personnel officer I also prepared a short evaluation questionnaire for respondents to complete after their interview. It was structured in such a way that it could be completed in a very short space of time if necessary but more expansive answers could also be accommodated. With regard to data protection issues the tape

recordings were coded, all other data will be locked up and a destruction date has been set. Although the real name of the charity is disclosed in this report, it will not be published in any other context and a pseudonym will be employed instead.

Over the course of the two days I interviewed the personnel officer and ten other members of staff across a spectrum of job functions and levels of responsibility. These semi-structured interviews aimed to build a picture of the prevailing culture in the charity and to indicate how 'family-friendly' the employment conditions were, as experienced by people with a diversity of family responsibilities. Interviewees were chosen fairly randomly, mainly as a result of an informal conversation in which I asked someone in Care for the Family for the names of any employees who had significant domestic responsibilities which they had to juggle alongside work. Added to those names were at least two people for whom this 'juggling' was not an issue, so that their perceptions could also be ascertained. During the course of the two days I also had several informal conversations about family-friendly working practices. A final interview took place at a regional office in Loughborough where I talked with one of the charity's senior personnel. This person travels extensively with their job which does not require them to be based at the headquarters in Cardiff although they do make regular visits there. The interview guide is included in the appendix, as is the list of questions for the personnel officer and the evaluation questionnaire.

FINDINGS

These shall be presented more or less in the order in which they were collected. That is, I shall refer firstly to the responses received from my time with the personnel officer and then concentrate on the main bulk of the interviews. Some of the questions raised with the personnel officer were also included in the main interview guide so where appropriate I will alternate between these two sets of data. In so doing a picture begins to emerge of the management and employee perceptions of the organisational culture.

1. Policies and Contracts

When I asked the personnel officer if he had noted a change in practice since their policies had undergone revision he explained that the provisions of the old contracts were still in force until the new policies and contracts had been signed off by the

Director. Most of the 'family-friendly' provisions contained in the new policies and contracts had been available as part of the old contracts. He stated that their sickness arrangements had undergone improvement and that the qualifications for special leave had been more clearly defined. In general, he said, "We always try to be as sympathetic as possible to people's circumstances." In his opinion Care for the Family's commitment to flexible working was best exemplified in their mix of contracts. Employees could work full-time, part-time, in job share programmes and on a casual basis. Staff are nor expected to work long hours and are actively discouraged from doing so because the building is locked up at 5.30pm (5pm on Fridays) and permission to stay longer has to be officially obtained. (From my interviews with the managers it became clear that some did occasionally take work home with them, but those who did placed no demands on their staff to do the same.) Certain specific questions were then asked about how the so-called family-friendly policies work in practice. For example, the Domestic Incident Leave policy statement allows room for managerial discretion in decision making. The question of who makes those decisions was asked and, if it is line managers, how much consistency is achieved throughout the organisation on this issue. He explained that all the managers were expected to show sympathy and support for those experiencing difficulties which required time off whilst keeping operational requirements in mind. The line manager would make the decision to give a couple of days' paid leave to an employee for family reasons if there was clear provision in the relevant policy to do so (probably after consultation with the personnel officer). However if the particular circumstances were not specifically covered by the policy but the manager considered that such assistance should be extended to the employee, then the general manager would be consulted. By using policy guidelines in the decision making process or the general manager as the final arbiter in ambiguous cases, consistency was likely to be maintained.

2. Employee Expectations

The concept of 'ethos' came up several times over the course of the interviews. The personnel officer explained that "Care for the Family sets its own ethos. This meant that there was an expectation that the pro-family message which they were promoting would be evident in employment practices. This was especially relevant for the issue of potential abuse by employees of a pro-family employment philosophy. There is an expectation of a high level of support from colleagues and managers when the need is

there. "Some people use the support mechanisms to the full," he said. Many respondents, when asked if the charity's family-friendly approach was ever abused, considered that the word "abuse" was inappropriate. The personnel officer disliked the conscious intention implied by the word "abuse" and considered that it was more often the case that people were "merely thoughtless". (The new miscellaneous leave policy has to some extent been written with such unintentional thoughtlessness in mind. For example, under this policy paid time off is given for medical appointments but it is clearly stated that these should be booked at the beginning or end of the working day to allow minimum disruption.) Some of this thoughtlessness he put down to the fact that many employees had not worked in a "less understanding" organisation and as a result expected a lot from the charity because of their perception of what Care for the Family does. One senior manager admitted that although he didn't like the fact, 'abuse' was the right word for what went on when "certain personalities see 'family-friendly' as a weakness. Some people work the system to their advantage." Although the issue is slightly tangential he used the statistics for absenteeism due to personal sickness as an example. "Surely our sickness record is worse than the average company of 60-70 employees." Another senior manager described the "mild emotional blackmail" which he considered was sometimes practised on the charity by those who wanted more consideration for family issues than the contract allowed. "Some people see the contract as their minimal entitlement" again, because of the stated aims of the charity. Further down the hierarchy there was less agreement that abuse took place. One respondent thought that there was a lot of "leeway" so occasionally people took advantage of the relaxed working environment. Another used the same argument to claim that there was no need to abuse the system because it *was* so inherently flexible. The alternative (to demonstrating high levels of trust) was deemed unacceptable. The overall impression was that the system was open to abuse, but it would be "bizarre" if any other system were in place. The person who used that word admitted that Care for the Family was not necessarily a good model for other businesses but its unique ethos dictated the profile of employment conditions. Other respondents claimed that many felt a deep sense of loyalty to that ethos and would therefore not want to take advantage of the trust which was implicit in their relations with managers whereby people were always given the benefit of the doubt about absenteeism due to sickness. The implication was that for those people who saw their job "as a job like any other" might abuse the

flexibility offered. Again however, it was not a major problem and some respondents claimed that they had never seen any employee overstep the boundary between using and abusing the system.

Although there is a clear expectation from managers and staff alike that employment practices will be "family-friendly" there was also a general awareness in most of the people I interviewed that a balance had to be struck. There was business to be conducted and as the charity is dependent on and accountable to its financial supporters there had to be a very real upper limit on the support which was available because of its impact on the efficient functioning of the organisation. For example some employees have very little flexibility in their hours because they are answering supporters' phone calls across the working day.

3. The Time off in Lieu System

It was stated in the employment conditions that the charity does not pay overtime but operates a time off in lieu system. Events take place outside office hours, at evenings and weekends. Although travel time is not usually covered in the lieu system, working time at these events is returned to employees as time off. Where it has been necessary to work longer hours to complete projects etc, time off in lieu is also granted. One senior manager described how they used this system to curb their workaholic tendencies. If they worked extra hours over an extended period they would record those hours and claim them back through the lieu system in order to give themselves and their family necessary time. The personnel officer described how managers as well as employees were expected to abide by the lieu system. The point which came across repeatedly was that people who claimed back extra time and, as usual practice, kept to their contracted hours, were not considered to be less hard working than if that were not the case. The prevailing culture did not value long hours for the sake of appearance but it was understood that everyone would pull together and work the hours necessary to meet a deadline. The word "ethos" was used again in this context by one line manager who said that she saw her job as a vocation and would be willing to give tasks whatever time and effort was necessary to execute them appropriately. Although she was aware of her family's needs she was motivated to give her job maximum effort because she believed that she was contributing to a venture that changed people's lives for the better. Although her function involved a lot of travel

time for which she wasn't paid or compensated in the lieu system she described the informal 'give and take' which meant that she occasionally came in an hour late.

The lieu system officially states that approved time off should be taken within one month of overtime being worked and this tends to work in practice. The previous manager and almost everyone else whom I interviewed reported that they took time off as soon as possible. The lieu system, which as already stated, obviated the need for paid overtime, was "strongly implemented" according to the personnel officer and loyalty awards for length of service took the form of extra days' holiday as well as financial bonuses. When asked whether economic considerations underpinned the policy of no paid overtime the personnel officer described how the lieu system served more than one purpose. He pointed to the flexibility which it afforded the individual and the organisation. In addition, lieu time had to be agreed before extra hours were worked so the system allowed for managerial planning. Looking at the system objectively it appeared to give employees the opportunity to balance their work and home responsibilities within boundaries that were culturally acceptable in the organisation.

The personnel officer deemed the holiday entitlement to be generous (in that the five weeks paid holiday per annum increases to six after two years' continuous service). This appeared to be another indicator that management expected employees to perform their jobs efficiently within working hours so that plenty of time would be made available for all the other priorities of life, which included family responsibilities.

4. Examples of Family Friendly Provision

As stated earlier, some of the questions which I put to the personnel officer were also included in the eleven semi-structured interviews. Before I began to work through the interview guide I asked each respondent how long they had worked for the charity and how many people were employed by the charity at that point. I did this because the first person I interviewed had seen the size of the charity grow from six to sixty employees, having worked for them for eight years, and they reported a very high level of support and understanding from them in terms of family matters. They had been visited in hospital and visited by the director and his wife when their house was

burgled. It seemed clear that these examples were taken from the earlier days of their history with the charity when they described it as more "relaxed organisation" than it is now because it had got so much bigger. However this person's child is less than three years old and they stated that they had also been given a lot of flexibility with time off for the child's illness, "because they knew that I would give that time back." This would then be a far more recent example of an experience which had demonstrated to them that Care for the Family runs a genuinely family friendly environment. By asking respondents when they joined the charity I was hoping to capture any changes over time in the family-friendly culture which was implicit in their stated ethos. One respondent was a founder member of the organisation and the rest of the respondents had lengths of service which varied from less than six months to around eight years. Despite this variability in length of tenure it was clear that all employees had concrete examples of occasions where they had been shown flexibility over family issues. One respondent had requested that he not have to attend a Saturday meeting because of family reasons and this had been granted, although it was inconvenient to the others concerned. He described how he had been "freed" from the work commitment in a way that did not make him feel that he had threatened his position or made people doubt his commitment to the job. Other respondents, one of whom had been with the company for less than six months, described the flexibility which they had been granted in order to care for sick or disabled relatives. The respondent who worked offsite described how they were immediately released to look after their three grandchildren for a fairly indefinite period on the understanding that they would get as much work done as possible from their daughter's house. Similarly another of the most senior respondents had been told by the director to clear their desk and leave in half an hour to deal with a crisis involving one of their teenage children. All eleven interviewees could state tangible examples which demonstrated to them that their working environment was genuinely family-friendly. At the same time the concept of a 'family-friendly' working environment did occasionally need to be clarified. Misunderstandings were evident when respondents explained tentatively that they would be loath to bring their children to work and that Care for the Family had not provided "hands-on, practical support" for *their* family. Some respondents' questionnaires made it clear that a definition of what was meant by 'family' and a 'family-friendly working environment' would have been helpful from the outset. Before I embarked on the pilot study I thought it would be interesting to see how

familiar the concept of 'family-friendly' working practices was to a wide range of employees and these responses made it clear that the phrase is not yet universally understood.

5. Trade-Off

Two of the questions in the interview guide addressed the issue of 'trade-off'. Respondents were asked if they felt that their work involved a lot of 'give and take', were they often asked to work unsocial or simply extra hours for which they were granted flexibility when required. If they did perceive that this trade-off was a regular feature of their employment conditions then they were asked to describe how it worked in practice. (Employment contracts made it clear that a lieu system was in place but there was no paid overtime.) There seemed to be a lot of variation in responses according to job function. Almost everyone mentioned the lieu system and seemed completely familiar with its working. A very clear procedure was in place whereby forms were filled in for the line manager to approve, which stated the amount of extra hours worked. Staying anything up to an hour late did not usually generate an application for time off in lieu. This extra time constituted an informal 'time debt' which the charity redeemed by letting people attend medical appointments during work time or by letting them leave early to meet occasional (and usually family-related) commitments. The lieu system existed to compensate people for working at evening and weekend events.

6. Travel Time

In the main travel time was not paid by the charity or compensated for by the lieu system and this constituted the only tangible grievance which these charitable sector workers had with their conditions of employment. Several people mentioned that salaries for comparable work in other companies would probably be higher. However everyone who mentioned pay balanced this assessment almost immediately by explaining that the nature of the work they were doing and the quality of life which their working conditions allowed were of overriding concern. As one respondent said "it's an ethos thing" – she considered that she was doing a job that was somewhat vocational and that financial reimbursement was accordingly prioritised lower down the scale than might otherwise be the case.

Travel time was an issue to line managers and their staff, but it was never mentioned by more senior management. Whilst people couldn't understand why, for example, you might have to travel down somewhere on a Sunday afternoon and not be able to charge time to the lieu system until you actually began to work, it did not seem to be an issue which was generating a lot of resentment. Rather, it was my perception that this seemed to be one issue which delimited the charity's family-friendly approach. When asked if Care for the Family was as family-friendly in its policies and practices as it claims to be (by virtue of its raison d'etre) one senior manager replied, "we should be pace-setters in this area but our need to be as professional as possible has not allowed us to do this." He was talking more about being innovative, giving other workplaces an example to follow and mentioned onsite crèches but his response epitomised the two extremes which must be held in tension by this organisation. On the one hand their guiding commitment is to strengthen families (and all of their employees have families) but they are also dependent on supporters. These supporters may be individuals who are contributing (often) large sums from personal incomes. Alternatively funds have been forthcoming from leaders in business. Most if not all of these contributors have worked extremely hard themselves in order to generate a surplus for charitable endowment and would not appreciate it if their generosity was allowing the recipient's workforce an 'easy ride' in terms of employment conditions. Perhaps the minor discontent at unrewarded travel time results from the tension between these two considerations. Pragmatism dictates that there must be a cut-off point in the pursuit of a family-friendly environment.

7. The Charity as Family

Following on from this idea of a cut-off point it is worth looking at responses to the questions "Do you feel that there has to any extent been a replacement or supplementation of your own family by the charity itself?" and "Do you feel that Care for the Family tries to create a sense of family and incorporate you in it?" It must be stated here that this was my most problematic question. Some people needed it to be so carefully explained to them that the responses were suspect because it was clear that they had no intuitive understanding on which to base them. However all respondents, including those who immediately understood that I was trying to ascertain if the boundary between work and family life had been broken down in any way by employment practices, reported that no matter how dedicated they were to

their work function they had a clear sense of where work ended and affinal/consanguineal* family life began. Relationships with work colleagues were described as "more of a team and less of a family, we all have the same sense of purpose and commitment," and "there's a stronger sense of team than if we were in a 'normal' job, call it team plus." The charity organises family away days to which employees are encouraged to bring partners and children. However respondents all considered that these were genuinely optional. Non-participation was not considered to reflect poor job commitment. On-site employees meet twice weekly, en masse, to hear about issues which concern everyone, staff are taken away for team-building activities which are occasionally overnight, but there is no sense in which this made respondents feel that the organisation was trying to involve employees in a corporate family. People talked instead about the care and support which all of these measures were intended to demonstrate. (Although one person who had been single when they joined the charity described their initial irritation with 'family days' because they felt they were a bit inappropriate if you didn't have children.)

By careful explanation I could, where necessary, make most respondents understand that companies might try to incorporate employees into a corporate family in order to generate a higher sense of company loyalty, but it seemed very clear that all respondents had a completely benign view of the charity's intentions. This view was based on personal experience of being granted flexibility for dealing with family issues which was occasionally inconvenient for management. I asked more senior managers what they would say were the costs to the charity of fostering a family-friendly working environment. Had any attempt ever been made to quantify such costs? All of them agreed that problems of consistency and continuity arose from time to time because of their willingness to grant flexibility where needed but as one manager said "humans aren't robots and the alternatives to our approach are less acceptable." No attempt at quantification had been made according to all relevant respondents because they couldn't see any other way of working which didn't make a mockery of their raison d'etre. One manager pointed out that they were probably retaining staff because of their employment conditions so there was possibly a net gain. Another manager acknowledged that the charity's generous holiday entitlements

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* That is, family life based on relationships of marriage and blood.

made it difficult to coordinate leave with appropriate levels of office cover and that there always seemed to be someone off to the dentist or whatever. At the same time they also described the very strong sense of team in their department which did not actually allow a large degree of flexibility because of the need to take phone calls throughout the whole working day. The consistent impression was that managers did face operational difficulties arising from the organisation's desire to take people's families into account. However these were not insurmountable and did not seem unreasonable because of what all members of the organisation were trying to achieve.

CONCLUSION

The aims of this charitable organisation would seem to dictate that its internal employment conditions are not detrimental to the family lives of its staff. However its management is constrained by economic considerations in the outworking of their general ethos. Policies and contracts have recently formalised many of the employment practices which granted high levels of flexibility where necessary. Although the organisation has grown from a handful of employees to well over sixty (based at the headquarters building) there has been a consistent desire over its eleven year history to show trust and understanding when dealing with staff's family issues as they impinge on working commitments. There is a high level of employee satisfaction in this area, with unpaid travel time being the only source of mild grievance which arose. One recently employed member of staff had never heard the managers or directors claim that the organisation was 'family-friendly', so this self-image is not constantly being promoted in the way main aspects of corporate culture usually are. However this ethos is implied in many more subtle ways. For example long service awards take the form of additional weeks' holiday. Overtime is unpaid but people are rewarded instead with time off in lieu. Contracts and working days are constructed in such a way that people's family responsibilities are taken into account where operational requirements permit. There is however an assumption that is shared by management and staff that the ethos of the charity will itself be served where necessary by occasional periods of intense work, often of a long duration. Long hours are not encouraged for their own sake and people are not deemed to be hard working because they habitually stay late. However, when necessary everyone is expected to give the job whatever it takes in terms of additional time and willingness to show versatility of function in order to serve the aims of the charity.

APPENDIX TO REPORT

Questions/Clarifications for discussion with Personnel Officer

Care for the Family recently employed a consultant to reformulate their employment policies. Have you noted a change in practice since this reformulation or do you find that previous (perhaps informal) practices still prevail?

Your written policies allow room for the use of discretion by CFF eg. In their allocation of time off for domestic incidents. Who makes these decisions? Is it the line manager, general manager or does it vary? If it varies how much consistency would you say you achieve in similar cases?

Would you consider that most employees are generally aware of your employment policies eg. Family leave entitlements, or do they only tend to become aware of the detail when they need to be implemented?

Parental leave entitlements seem to conform to minimum legal standards. (Do you know which other entitlements fall into this category?) Where a minimum standard is specified does this tend to be exceeded in practice or is it adhered to fairly rigorously?

The holiday entitlement is five weeks paid holiday per annum (as well as stat/public holidays). The entitlement is increased by an additional week following the completion of 2 years recognised continuous service. Do you perceive this to be high – is this because you expect a higher level of flexibility/unpaid overtime? Do people tend to use their holidays instead of unpaid parental leave (where domestic incident leave is inapplicable?)

Approved time off in lieu should be taken within one month of the overtime being worked and in accordance with operational requirements – do you find that the time off in lieu system works in this kind of formal way or is it, in practice, much more of a give-and-take between employee and line manager?

What would you say are the costs to CFF of fostering a family friendly working environment? Has any attempt ever been made to quantify the cost of this 'orientation'?

Do you feel that employees ever abuse your family friendly approach?

Interview Guide

Do you have responsibility for family members or other dependents which you are juggling alongside work?

Re 'Trade-off'
Do you feel that your work involves a lot of 'give and take'? For example are you often required to work unsocial or simply extra hours for which you are compensated by being granted flexibility where required? Are you ever contacted at home for work reasons?

If trade-off is involved
How does this sense of 'give and take' work in practice? If you work extra hours do you take time off in lieu fairly automatically (*there is no paid overtime so there are written policies for time off in lieu*) or do you work longer hours in the understanding that when you need time off this will not be questioned. Alternatively is there a sense of vocation involved in your work which makes you willing to give the job whatever it takes because you know that you are working for something worthwhile?

Would you describe your working conditions as being 'family friendly'?
(*If the answer is yes*) Can you be specific about why this is your perception? For example can you give any examples of experiences which have demonstrated to you that CFF runs a genuinely family friendly environment?

Do you feel that there has to any extent been a replacement or a supplementation of your own family by CFF itself? Do you feel that CFF tries to create a sense of family and incorporate you in it?
If yes,
How do you feel about this?

Do you feel that employees ever abuse your family friendly approach?

Higher management only: What would you say are the costs to CFF of fostering a family friendly working environment? Has any attempt ever been made to quantify the cost of this 'orientation'?

Have you experienced problems of consistency and continuity as a result of granting flexibility to your staff?

Evaluation Questionnaire – this can be filled in anonymously if you would prefer

Name: (if you wish to give it)_____

Did you feel that the questions were clear enough or were you unsure what information the interviewer was trying to obtain?

Did the interviewer do enough to put you at your ease? If the answer is 'no' then could you give any suggestions for improvement?

As the interview was about 'family friendly policies' in Care for the Family, were there any questions that the interviewer did not ask which you felt would have been relevant?

Would you like to add any other comments?